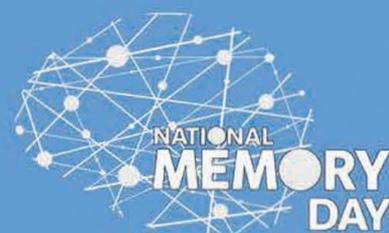


# National Memory Day 2018 Poetry Prize

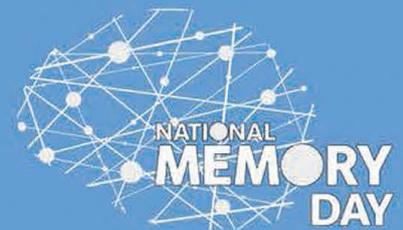
Winners



Celebrating the power of  
poetry and the positive  
impact of creative  
engagement with those  
affected by memory loss



# Poetry Prize winners



Best poem: 1<sup>st</sup> place Sarah Barr

## **Fog**

Near things look the same: the pavement  
I'm walking on, the litter, the wet road.  
But now, the clear notes of a bird on a branch  
become muffled as it flies away.  
Further ahead, a man with white hair  
and long, dark coat is a character  
from a street in Montmartre.  
A cottage drifts sideways into fleeciness.  
The church tower blurs around its edges  
and the line of yews looms, then fades.  
Occasional chimney pots float in the air.  
Behind is as opaque as in front,  
a forgetfulness wrapping round me.  
Though this brume traps particles  
of pollution which I'm breathing in,  
I like the way it blots the details out.  
Just trees, house, church and forms of people.

2nd place: Janet Lesley Smith

### **At The Hotel Metropole**

She feels a flowered breath of summer breeze that fills her cheerless room with ghost bouquets of fresh-cut garden blooms; most loved of these white jasmine, probes her mind's uncharted maze.

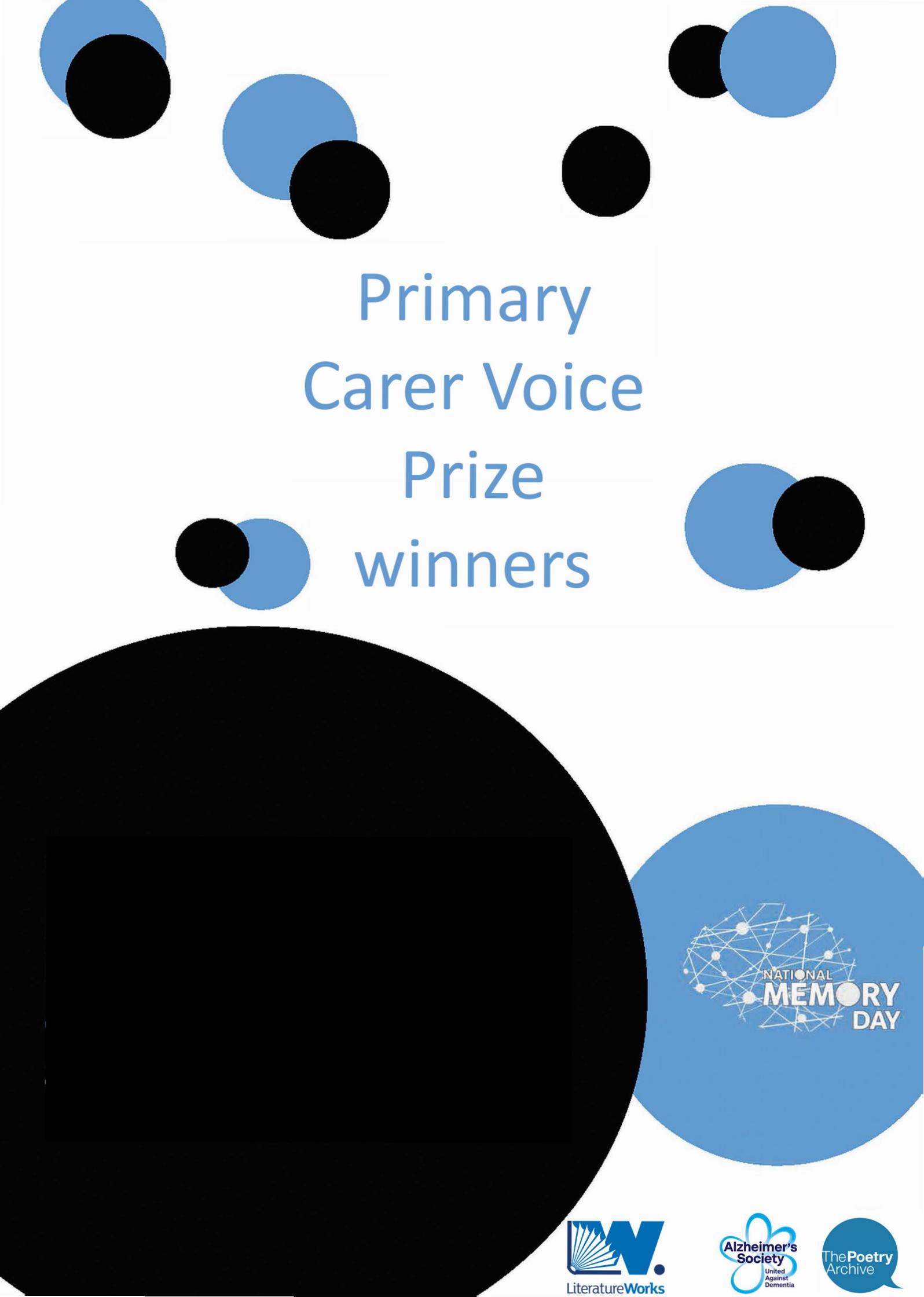
At cocktail hour young Turkish boys appear, barefoot, pristine in starched, white-shirted guise, close-shaven heads, skull caps of shadow, clear above the darkness of unfathomed eyes.

And for a few piastres, scented sprays of jasmine blossom grace each lady's place along the Metropole bar's smoky haze, as minders hurry boys to their next base.

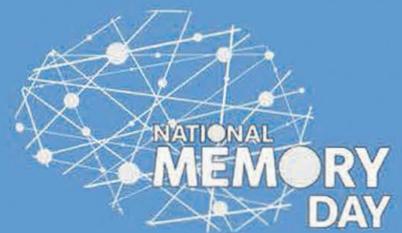
Perfumed, she sips her drink and savours it, a touch of bitters, then the crystal sweet from sugared glass's rim, that first tart hit of lemon, before brandy's fiery heat.

She is refreshed, not by those summer airs but by tea served at an appointed hour, which disappoints the lady who declares her anger and demands a Brandy Sour.





Primary  
Carer Voice  
Prize  
winners



1<sup>st</sup> place: Tony Ward

**'What will survive of us ...'**

- Philip Larkin, An Arundel Tomb

How can she forget  
the month of her birth?  
*Mini-mental 28/30: Indication.*

As now we talk  
her hand holds her hair to one side,  
her head tilted, her eyes puzzled.

*Is the tumble-drier switched off?*

How can she forget  
the three words given?  
*Mini-mental 24/30. CT Scan. MCI: Medication.*

As once we walked  
on the hillside, it was the summer breeze  
that held her hair to one side,  
her head tilted, her eyes sparkling.

*Is the tumble drier switched off?  
What day is it?*

Why does she struggle  
to copy that shape?  
*Mini-mental 21/30: Progression.*

Her eyes sparkle now, but is it tears?  
Is she searching my eyes  
tenderly, urgently, desperately,  
for lost reflections ...  
me straightening my tie, she fixing her hair,  
nights to remember.

*Is the tumble drier switched off?  
What day is it?  
Is my mother dead?*

*MRI Scan. PET Scan: Confirmation.*

With each embrace, is it now fear  
that binds her arms  
ever tighter about me?

*Is the tumble drier switched off?  
What day is it?  
Is my mother dead?  
Are you my husband?*

Plaques, tangles, blocked pathways,  
stumbling through shadows,  
lost in her mind,  
but for all time in mine.

2nd place: clio burroughs

twenty-four hours

now clean shaven  
i wave goodbye  
you sit and wait

wait  
for time to yawn  
and stretch its arms around the day

wait  
for the earth to turn  
its weary way toward sleep

short distractions come  
and go  
curtains are closed  
and opened  
the hubbub rises  
and falls

but there is silence in your head  
you are deaf to all but  
the rhythm of your heart  
as it ticks a metaphoric ageing beat  
like a constant ringing phone it grates  
dragging across your every nerve

you stare and see nothing  
your eyes glazed  
like dirty windows on the world  
a blurred TV screen  
which cannot be tuned  
trapped between the stations of past and present

food comes  
something with custard  
joy has left your mouth  
even your saliva tastes of sawdust

i know you hold death at arm's length  
though your arms are tired  
and riddled with rheumatism

so i trap your breath in my heart  
till i hurry back  
knowing

you sit  
and wait

3rd place: Pamela Swain

Lily

It starts so gently that I hardly notice,  
An appointment missed now and then,  
Forgetting where we are meant to meet,  
But we laugh about it, yet again.

Sitting up all night watching TV,  
Then your neighbours start to complain:  
You, banging on doors at midnight,  
Or, no coat in the pouring rain.

In the microwave I find some old fish?  
Charred and as hard as board.  
You lay for hours after a fall in the night,  
Forgetting to pull the cord.

The day you tried to come downstairs,  
With your shopping and walking frame,  
To the shop to ask when bingo starts,  
And now you've forgotten my name.

And that January evening, so cold and dark,  
Your neighbour phoned me to say,  
You'd gone out alone with your trolley,  
Very soon we were on our way.

Time passed in slow motion, as my son drove us round,  
His wife and son waiting at yours,  
We arrived back almost together,  
Thankfully all safely indoors.

You'd found your way home, cold and scared,  
You'd been 'around the world' you said,  
We warmed you up with blankets and tea,  
Then you gladly went straight off to bed.

It broke my heart to break my promise,  
That I would never put you in care,  
But it broke my heart even more to see,  
The mother I knew was no longer there.

