

## Poem

### Barrow

David Whitwell



The young doctor was amazed.  
Did you really work at Barrow?  
He looked at me, as though from another age,  
and then we met a woman, brought in by the police,  
and she knew me – you were at Barrow, she said.  
And she smiled as though we'd shared something good,  
even though on different sides.

I went back to Coombe Villa once  
just for old time's sake,  
trying to recall that far away feeling,  
of a place apart.  
But it was boarded up, the garden overgrown,  
like a field coming right up to the windows,  
and someone had scrawled across it,  
*Where have they gone?*

I meet them still, in town,  
and I know they're freer now.  
No one keeps you in  
a moment longer than required:  
it's a human right.  
They wouldn't go back for anything  
to sitting there for weeks on end  
waiting to be discharged.  
But sometimes they tell me how much they miss it.  
And I remember the slowness of it all,  
we took such time.  
It's a slow process, I used to say.  
It was another age,  
we did things differently then.

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