

Today – September 28th 2017 – is National Poetry Day. This year's theme is 'Freedom'.

To celebrate, the **Friends of Fortune Green** and the **Friends of West Hampstead Library** asked **Ted Booth**, who has served as Writer in Residence for both organisations, to write a poem.

Carpe Diem

The boys have been led
into a corridor,
long walls hung with photos.
Alumni, class after class,
year after year.
So what have they all
got in common,
asks the teacher.
Rich, famous, successful,
hazard the boys.
No, says the teacher,
they are all dead.
So this is the lesson boys,
carpe diem ¹

Carpe diem, an exhortation
given great poignancy
by the fate
of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe.
Held in an Iranian jail,
she and her fellow prisoners
have written down
their hopes and fantasies
for the first, longed for
day of freedom.
Their notelets hang beribboned
from a tree on Fortune Green. ²
They dream of tomorrow
to keep the energy for today.

For us the fortunate ones
who are not incarcerated,
nor staring at a ceiling
from a hospital bed,
nor staring across
a care home lounge,
tomorrow is our next,
first day of freedom,
to choose our coffee,
shut the front door
and cross the green
and go to our chosen work,
which is not, dear Phillip ³
a toad which
squats upon our back.

In the evening
we will return
to re-cross the Green
and open the front door,
having seized another day
of freedom.

Ted Booth

1. Robin Williams - 'Dead Poets Society'

2. www.freenazanin.com

3. Phillip Larkin - 'Toads'