

Let there be stones – on the centenary of the loss of *HMS Hampshire*

Let there be a tower of stones.
A monument to a man and more.
A refuge from the inhospitable sea.
Hewn from rock,
Raised by the people of Orkney.

Let there be a tower of stones.
At the nearest point of land.
The highest point of survey.
A beacon of solidity.
A fixture for generations to come.

Let there be a tower of stones.

Let there be a wall of stones.
Gathered in an arc.
The curve of horizons
and protective arms.
The shelter stones of harbour
and safe passage.

Let there be a wall of stones.
Built on solid foundations,
strengthened against the battering wind,

and fashioned by hands who know how to neighbour
rocks.

This is no hasty undertaking.

Let there be a wall of stones.
To better remember.
And on this wall,
let every name be etched.
Every name recalled,
every life valued and mourned
in grief and gratitude.

Let there be a wall of stones.

Let there be living stones.
People cut and crafted in different places.
Forged in different fires,
pressed in different circumstances.
Gathered in reflection.

Let there be living stones.
Succeeding generations
of survivors, of relatives,
of locals.
For voices that were silenced
may the stones themselves cry out.
Recalling details and dramas long since played out.

Petitioning the wind for forgiveness.

Let there be living stones.
Men and women who stand
against all injustice,
against all hatred and tyranny.
Against every act of oppression,
whose lives are prayers for peace,
Vital poems of compassion
and monuments of mercy.

Let there be living stones.

David McNeish
www.brokendavid.com