

They chopped the bloody trees down

There used to be a farmhouse on the edge of Hurling Drive,
it was crumbling but it wore a crooked smile,
and it perched amongst the pine trees – someone counted sixty-five –
and the paddocks spread around it for a mile.
Then one day the farm was sold to be divided into blocks,
'cause the Council had approved a new estate,
the machinery was auctioned and the buildings turned to rocks,
and the farmhouse would be next to meet its fate.

And they chopped the bloody trees down and they chopped down every one,
'cause they said that they were dangerous and old,
and they turned them into sawdust, into firewood by the tonne,
and the farmhouse looked so lonely and so cold.
And they chopped the bloody trees down, every single bloody one,
though they swore that the department had been told,
but I could not understand how they could do what they have done
as I watched this awful tragedy unfold.

We used to have a property: an acre, maybe two,
where the greenery was lush on every side,
and the trees were quite exotic and the birds were fine to view,
and a row of giant gum trees lined the drive.
Then we got a handsome offer from an agent - minus fees -
so the land could be divided into four,
and the blocks would be substantial and incorporate the trees,
so we took the deal and headed for the door.

And they chopped the bloody trees down and they chopped down every one,
'cause they found a way to squeeze more houses on,
and they made a flashy entrance, and the gum trees – there are none,
and I don't know where the darling birds have gone.
And they chopped the bloody trees down, every single bloody one,
and their only motivation was their greed,
and they turned a sweeping parkland into roof-tops in the sun,
and it feels like it was us that did the deed.

By the roundabout in Stirling where the autumn colours blow,
a grove of elms are slain before their time,
on a new estate in Barker where a phony lake would go,
ancient gums are flattened in their prime,
on a creek within the city where exotics made a glade,
the Council is the culprit of the crime,
and in Nairne, across from Chapmans, where the gums provided shade,
removed without a reason or a rhyme.

And they'll chop the bloody trees down and they'll chop down every one,
'cause they reckon that they're old and had their day,
or they're feral or exotic or they simply block the sun,
or it may be just because they're in the way.

And we'll chop the bloody trees down, every single bloody one,
if we cannot find the means to make them stay,
and the landscape will be empty but for buildings when we're done,
and I fear that in the end we'll have to pay.

Sandy Clark July 2008