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poem

The Patella Hammer

Michael Henry

Family legend has it he packed it
in his rucksack to hammer in tent-pegs
when he went hiking in the Zugspitze.
Almost an international incident –
Liverpool medic stranded in Germany
at the outbreak of war.

Where his ancestors quarried stone
he worked in bone – trading their crude tools
for something neat and silver.
He tapped my childish reflexes –
mostly in fun – always
the same knee-jerk reaction.

Once when my injured leg unnumbed
he placed a football at my foot
and tapped my knee-cap
and when I kicked the ball
he clapped and clapped as if
I'd scored a goal for England.

Michael Henry has been published by Enitharmon Press, his most recent collection is *After the Dancing Dogs*. This poem is from *The Hippocrates Prize 2011*, published by The Hippocrates Prize in association with Top Edge Press. ©Michael Henry

Chosen by Femi Oyeboode.

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