

AUTUMN ROCKET

Seventy five year old Simon Frazer lay dead in the, landmark Dunston Rocket. Simon had been a controversial figure during his fifteen years as a tenant, attracting comments like:

'He's a furtive sod, I wouldn't let him anywhere near my little boy.'

In a way you could understand residents apprehension, he was withdrawn, silent, with piercing eyes that locked on a subject and stripped them bare. The woman with the little boy reported Simon for loitering in the lift, resulting in him being taken to Gateshead police station for questioning. He was released without charge but the woman instigator stirred up hatred behind his back, but then possibly being the mother of a very sick child caused her fears to be exaggerated.

Simon was unaware of the hostility because residents were quietly polite to his face, hypocrites, but aren't we all? Every weekend he caught an early morning bus to Swalwell, disappearing on the Derwent Way heading towards Rowlands Gill. Tongues wagged, with talk of spying on courting couples, to meeting male partners deep in the woods, rumours that increased until the day he died.

'Thank God he's gone,' the woman with the child said as undertakers carried Simon's body through the entrance door, after which life settled down as they waited to identify another victim.

It was early December when a letter dropped through the Rocket resident's letter boxes.

'When anything happens to me I would like you to know how grateful I have been for your quiet understanding of my rather offhanded manner. I moved into the Rocket to relieve the pain of losing my wife and you helped me in that way. The other consolation has been the peace nature has provided on my walks at weekends and I ask you to share with me some Autumn thoughts:

Still days when leaves fall to form circular carpets, shed from the weary mother trees.

Grass trampled around bramble bushes, with clusters of black jewels so high that only the blackbirds can taste their sweetness.

A chunky branch thrown into the conker tree hoping it will bring down this years champion nut.

Mini green hedgehogs give up their sweet chestnuts to bury in a tin for Christmas.

Meadow mushrooms picked on a dewy morning, their pristine white caps hiding hundreds of wiggling maggots gorging themselves on your breakfast.

The pleasure of kicking clouds of harlequin leaves into a strong westerly wind.

You gasp as the first frost turns meadows into a huge jeweller's window, lit by a low, bright sun.

A country cottage, curtains closed emitting a warm golden glow out to a cold night. The moon shining on a pencil of smoke spiralling into the darkness, where silence is broken by the sound of a village dog barking in the distance.

Finally my heart goes out to the young mother and her poorly son, she carries a huge burden that money will not take away, but I am leaving my life's savings to them, it should ease her passage through adversity.'

Simon.

The residents read the letter and identified their new enemy.

John Frostick.