



DAFFODILS

I wander'd lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host of golden daffodils,
Beside the lake, beneath the trees
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretch'd in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced, but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee: -
A poet could not but be gay
In such a jocund company!
I gazed - and gazed - but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought.

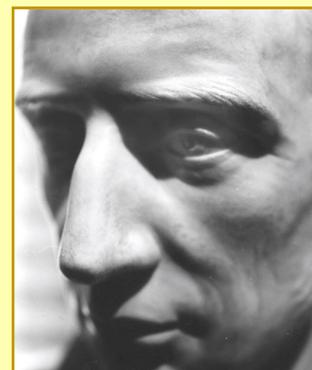
For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills
And dances with the daffodils.

William Wordsworth

Narcissus pseudonarcissus,
the daffodil native to the Lake District



This famous poem, suggested by Liz Langley, is timely, not only because last week was the 250th anniversary of Wordsworth's birth, or because a few daffodils are still out in Lymington, but mainly because it is a poem about solitude. In spite of the opening line, however, Wordsworth was in the company of his sister Dorothy when they saw the daffodils in woods on the shores of Ullswater. He wrote the poem two or three years later, with the help of Dorothy's description in her Journal:



"When we were in the woods beyond Gowbarrow Park we saw a few daffodils close to the water side... I never saw daffodils so beautiful they grew among the mossy stones about and about them, some rested their heads upon these stones as on a pillow for weariness and the rest tossed and reeled and danced and seemed as if they verily laughed with the wind that blew upon them over the Lake, they looked so gay ever glancing ever changing."