



# In Violet

John Paul Kirkham

# **In Violet**

**Poetry**

**by**

**John Paul Kirkham**

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Cover image: *The Three Graces* by Jan Kalinski

## Introduction

This collection of freestyle poetry and prose includes works from the 1970s up to the present day and those poems which have factually based themes were historically true in the period that they were written as in *Sarajevo*.

The reader will find herein a revealing eclectic mix of poems that are autobiographical, nostalgic, environmental, occasionally lyrical, reflective and thought provoking.

The poetic style varies throughout and placing the work alphabetically allows the reader to discover things in a more spontaneous way.

Born in the 1950s, growing up in Merseyside, from art college days in Birkenhead and as a photographer in Liverpool, the north west of England is a special place with hints to nostalgia that can easily be identified in poems such as *I Dreamed of Going to Sea*.

As a photographer, capturing the environment's light or bleakness has always been a fascination and likewise with poetry whether it's *Ghosts of the Atlantic* or the anti war allegorical *The Punt Gunner* there is something visual about verse that can make a stark or abrasive subject appear serene.

Blake Morrison (poet and author) once interviewed me for a feature in the Sunday Independent Magazine and I ended up being a real life character in one of his stories in the book *Too True*. This taught me more than ever that real people have a place in poems and nearly all of those in my work truly existed like *Lawrence* and *Mr Moon*.

So as photography frames an image, poetry transforms the mind and whilst we think we see and understand what we see and read, the best bits are often at the fringes of the scene; so when we look at a beautiful panorama we see in clear shades of blue skies or green landscapes but right in the corners or the edge of the spectrum lies violet, barely discernible but there just the same.

*John Paul Kirkham is a poet, writer, photographer and selected published book's include official biographies of St. Clare of Assisi and St. Gemma Galgani of Lucca. John Paul has written journal editorial, film and book reviews and has appeared both on television and radio.*

## **And thank you**

To my friend and artist Jan Kalinski based in the south of England for his cover painting *The Three Graces*. Jan spent many years teaching drawing and painting in Western Canada and works in oils and acrylics.

In 1992 Jan was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis (MS) resulting in permanent numbness of his fingers. He can no longer hold a fine pencil or write his own name but will not let go of a paintbrush and his work today continues to be stunning as ever. Take time to visit his website and gallery at [www.jankalinski.art](http://www.jankalinski.art)

## **A Game of Football**

Not far from Grange road  
there's a park and a field  
where they play Sunday league  
all proper and skilled  
we went for a stroll  
me and my Gran  
just around the corner  
with mothers and prams

Whilst watching the teams  
I blew my tin whistle  
the players stopped dead  
annoyed and puzzled  
the referee in black  
furious and wild  
screaming *"you bugger  
where is that child"*

I tried to look innocent  
but ready for a maul  
then Gran said ever so calmly  
*"pick on someone your own size  
after all, its only a game of football"*

## **A New Clear Day**

The early morning clear violet sky turned suddenly brighter than a thousand suns

People caught, fraught, unaware

running in the dust of a blistering heat

odours arose to dull the senses

a pain, a pounding

and then ..... serene

## **Absent from a Friends Wedding**

On this a special marriage day

I will be seven thousand miles away

So from some far flung eastern shore

I wish you well and love some more

## **After Midnight**

The sun goes down

the city is dark

The damp streets are silent

a cold wind blows

A lonely stranger

walks on

looking for someone

to love

## **All for an Empire**

All for an empire

loyalty and lies

setting sail by the moon

at the turn of the tide

Battles in the sand dunes

fought for an empire

landings at dawn

thrusting forth the sons fire

Charging and crawling

through wire and trenches

all for an empire

and hearts that are wrenched

All those left behind

touched no more and the reason why

all for an empire

a plume of ash in a blue sky

## Arabian Nights

The 2.00 am skies are clear as we descend  
fairytale lights punctuate the night  
sparkling off white minarets and marble domes  
shimmering on the waters of the Gulf

Excited and tired many passengers resist  
the adventure in transit  
and prefer to sleep whilst others reap their bargains  
from within these caves of Aladdin

The doors open to the desert  
a hot furnace wind wallows round the apron  
tonight its Dubai, last time Sharjah  
and alas Abu Dhabi and Bahrain  
the rules are always the same

Duties done announcements are made  
*"Please go back now to the plane"*  
and those brave explorers of the night return  
clutching their clinking carton treasure

Time at last to settle down to sleep perchance  
and gently dream  
and ascend into a distant ruby tinged dawn  
as the Emirates drift and fade  
with the rising of the sun

## **Ariana**

A foreign land times are hard

Politician's shuffle cards

east or west has a better hand

what about the people in a foreign land

A highway heading north leads to heaven

a child puts a rose in an AK47

the days are cold the skies are blue

there is a man on the mountain watching you

People queue all day for a loaf of bread

a soldier's belly's full with a piece of lead

Ariana waits with her DC10

she's the last one out with the all the president's men

## **Arm in Arm**

Arm in arm, lets arm an army  
arming theirs, harming ours

Are we the hosts? or are we the hostiles?  
selling arms and preaching peace

Alms for the poor, arms for the powerful  
listen to the man for anything is possible

Fighting for a cause or dancing for your master  
fuel for our engines to drive us to disaster

A man of peace talks to liberate  
whilst forces wait to seal his fate

There are plenty of shells but no mother of pearl  
as we follow a light to the end of the world

## Autumn

As autumn gathers round the meadow fair  
the smell of wood smoke fills the air

The heather turns crimson, berries cherry red  
teardrops like diamonds in a spider's web

An auburn landscape slowly yellows  
farmers gather in the long tall shadows

As dusk dances on sienna fringed leaves  
a golden orb silhouettes the trees

## **Avalanche seen from a Dam**

On top of the world across a mirror glass lake  
a faint tremor sounds

The sun melts the spires  
of ice and snow  
as it turns into a tumbling whoosh

The avalanche speaks straight and sharp  
an echo ..... then silence

## **Bangkok Blues**

Blurting a cacophony of noise

phut phut tuk tuk chariots to drive

Inhale the blue polluted haze

rising at dusk as smoky waves

## **Beneath the Surface Lies**

Those who polish their car at night in November  
in the dark have many secrets

Those who sit patiently at traffic lights  
are caught in impassive emotions

Those who observe those  
will never know

## **Bruges**

Church spires and tall brick towers  
ringing bells chime the hours

Silent twisting cobbled stone lanes  
dark beers, chocolate and lace

## **Bury**

From the end of Grange road  
we would often take the bus up to the Rock  
alighting to the smell of them black puddings  
floating like bloated hoses in huge steaming cauldron pots  
on a Saturday morning under tarpaulin canvas  
on a busy Bury market

Then to Sam Taylor's toy store  
a treat to explore  
wide wooden stairs  
glass cases with awe  
containing treasures and more  
or summat promised to me

The moist days that often seemed like most days  
made the soggy garden too sad to play out in  
the only games would be dominoes and cards at the table  
and coal rescued from the drizzle would cough, spit and hiss  
so a teaspoon of gran's gin kept at bay the damp chills

On match day at Gigg Lane rickety turnstiles cranked  
the creaky wooden stand benches where home to the fans  
rain coated, flat capped and smoking old men  
watching the "Shakers" the best game in the land

Grans shop on the corner sold lucky bags and sherbet dips  
Cadbury's Bar 6 and much later the Twix  
then skip over the old railway bridge  
to Elton reservoir and breeze rippled waves  
distant grey dinghy's with bobbing white sails  
legs dangled on the water slapped wall  
where my father chiseled his name in 1944

On Sundays a visit to Granny Grimshaw and her sister May  
in the Radcliffe flats on the council estate  
greeted by the smell of gas on the hob, kettle whistling away  
to play contented with the ashtray the one with the button  
propeller like centre for fag ends a dungeon

Auntie May would tell me tales of her life in the twenties  
of far away exploits and romance in the Fiji's  
South Pacific adventures and Island natives  
then returning home to a landscape of chimneys  
clutching hand tinted pictures of dreams forsaken  
a box of memories, letters and proposals untaken

## **Butterfly**

Stinging nettles

singing boys

with nets on poles

they capture souls

of little angels

with coloured wings

who gently whisper

don't crush my heart

oh! can't you see

our time is short

please set me free

## **Cheese on Toast**

I used to live off

cheese on toast

simply melted under the grill

hot and gooey giving the taste buds a thrill

Today it's trendy paninis and flatbreads

or two artisan slices welded together

with a molten pepper pesto roast

how I long for cheese on toast

## **Chelsea Pensioner in a Chinese Restaurant in Greenwich**

Sitting alone in a corner of "The Vietnam Restaurant"

I thought it was Father Christmas

he looked like Father Christmas anyway

Dakota red coat, cuff trims and bushy beard

I heard him order a pork bun dim sum

and some more, sweet and sour

I wanted to thank him for

fighting for

in a war

but I somehow got distracted

by his arriving plate of hot sizzling beef

Well done, well cooked I saw

not like meat that drips blood

he's probably seen enough of that

I struggled to guess his age

calculating by wars fought

Sword Beach, Korea or Aden maybe

As I was leaving I sneaked a farewell peak  
over my left shoulder  
of a Chelsea Pensioner in a Chinese Restaurant in Greenwich  
keeping warm in a corner  
with his memories of far flung eastern places  
or a jungle perhaps

## **China's Star**

Rhyme and song the dragon nears

China wakens people's fears

rhyme and song the lion's dance

torches light Hong Kong hands

Midnight approaches seconds away

China's elders on parade

midnight falls red flag hauled

for the Governor departure calls

As fireworks celebrate

the end of an empire slips away

## **City of the Dead**

Tenant's of the tenement tombs

lying under lichen green

liken thee

to a merchants dream

Beneath the dark granite Mossman stone

where legions froze

Glaswegian's roam

in circumspect solitude

Mausoleums weather beaten

old empire decaying griled museums

toil now soil thy rich bequest

angels guard the souls at rest

in this the great Necropolis

the memorial City of the Dead

## Comet

A clear April night  
amid the sky and stars so bright  
there gleamed a comet  
haloed by a misty tail of white  
captured from afar a light  
a streak and stream of paleing glare  
now and in ten thousand years

## Conversation with a Ghost

It was that Jubilee summer of 77  
and despite several misty Mersey mornings  
Liverpool was preparing to receive a Queen

My task, to shoot the past  
recording the architectural nuance splendour  
of wood panels and light of an empty Birkenhead Central Library

A casually dressed handsome young man from an era distant appeared and was  
captivated by

my contraption on stilts

*“well I say this is quite marvellous for 1935, just last year the King opened this place  
and everything was just ... well so big*

*what does it do?”*

*“It captures you”*

Our parallel chat across forty years revealed we had

just down the road

a mutual abode

the Villa Arcadia in the park

which inspired the builders of New York

Later that day frame by frame  
I searched in negative vain  
to find a trace but only found perfection  
of vintage oak and glass

The only proof, the only truth  
the memory of my brief conversation with a ghost

## Convocation in Cambridge

A cold bright and sunny morning in May  
families dressed to the nines like a wedding parade

In Caius College square stands a rosemary tree  
defying the years standing wise valiantly

Measurements taken for hundreds of gowns  
red hemmed and purple the cream of our towns

The queue finally moves towards the great hall  
creaky benches and chairs within academic walls

Hours of Latin from masters with ease  
a thankful reciting and decrepitation of knees

To spectate the partaker rise in elation  
clutching the parchment at their convocation

## **Coup**

A so called bloodless coup leaves a bloody mess  
neighbours watch with interest

Passports and tourists airlifted to safety  
the rest the innocent eventually wasted

Borders closed there is no solution  
only years of war and revolution

Mortars and rockets overhead  
children huddle together on rags for beds

Those left behind will never thrive  
each day a race a battle to survive

## **Curriculum Vitae**

If all one achieves

can be written on a page

is the sheet worth more

or does its value decline with age

## **Dawlish before the Great Storm Came**

This day in May

Brunel's tracks are and tunnels are still as safe  
from wind and rain and dirty grey crested waves  
crashing and splashing through iron rails  
when gulls squawk and rise above the diesel engines  
ticking and humming of the Great Western

The black swans preen mid stream  
in ballet trance along the brookish Dawe  
and trail in vanity with lipstick beaks in furly pouts

Permian orange sandy cliffs and sad worn sea faces  
peer over star crossed lovers who beam and dream  
as wild violet's await a longed for arrival or departure

## Death of My Father

My ageing father is in his final throes in the critical care unit  
and we have been summoned to see him one last time  
he is hanging on to see us before letting go  
he fights now to prolong his last lap and survive for one more day  
as each ascending hour of breath brings more pain  
and he wishes no more to go on any longer

The East Midlands train from Liverpool to Norwich that is carrying us to him  
crosses a lifetime as its diesel engines shuttle, puff and belch slowly for five hours  
across thirteen counties

The flat midwinter fenlands  
that my old dad knew so well these last nineteen years  
look forlorn and barren  
the wind turbines stand silent, still and mournful under greying skies

The fields once more at Welney are flooded  
bathing the stark skeletal trees  
aged stumps leaving their mark on this weary landscape

The Chaplain came to see him late last night  
and after 83 years of unbelief he makes peace with God at the end  
he remembers clearly his own granddads death  
when he was given half a crown to spend on summat good  
and last night he said his own dad who died 50 years ago came to him  
and is ready and waiting to take him home  
this entreaty made him weep for the first time  
as we wobbled and welled up as well at the bedside

The nurses turned a blind eye  
as we smuggled in a bottle of Adnams Lighthouse pale ale as a last request  
*"I have no need of nothing now ... at all"* you say after all your years of hoarding  
*"take it all or give it to the Red Cross in black sacks  
all my shoes and neatly packed shirts, jumpers and jackets  
unless you find a flat cap that fits"*  
no more only the memories of all that retail therapy  
at John Lewis and TK Maxx as you would always ask  
*"is this a good buy lad clutching another bottle of cologne to add to your collection"*

Your hands are quite warm, it's mine that are cold  
as we clasp them together  
in thanks for all your support  
and helping us out with new telly's, meals out and such like  
for giving more and taking nought  
but my grumpiness sometimes  
Malcolm your grey blue cat  
who strayed over your threshold three years ago  
looked desperately sad as he watched you taken away in the ambulance  
never to return to the bungalow  
today he mooched about eating crumbs from the carpet  
that had tumbled off my Greggs egg and cress butty  
before climbing, curling and sleeping again on your faded brown leather chair

You have made sure that your final wishes are to be  
cremated  
wearing an eccentric bobble hat  
the one that took the chill off your head  
in the air-conditioned critical care room  
and to hold in your hands  
a rosary blessed by the Pope from Fatima that I had just given you as a comforter

If you hadn't broken your tibia as the Lancashire League's leading scorer  
just before you were about to sign for Manchester United

would you have survived Munich?

Instead you became an England armchair manager  
shouting and kicking instructions at the TV screen

If you hadn't helped design the Vulcan bomber and Cold War nuclear bunkers  
and worked with asbestos and other dodgy dusts

would you have survived the lung disease that claims you now?

When you hold a dying person's hands

they appear translucent .... glowing

so dad finally departed this life, this winter

completing his journey into the Light

comfy and cosy at the last .... asleep now with his grey and white stripey bobble hat

## **Diana**

You lived with the spring of youth  
and glided through the days of summer

But autumn colours of sunset gold  
will never now be yours to hold

The flowers will blanket and comfort you  
from winters ice and snow  
and the future shivering years

As jasmine blooms  
we will think of you  
as death brought an angels view  
and we suffer your sorrow too

Beneath willowed trees  
and royal oak  
surrounded by an island moat  
you slumber deep  
beneath the fallen leaves

## **Eurostar**

St. Pancras terminus concave and steel  
silvered and sparkling upward  
to a glass canopied crystal

Eurostar's stand streamlined in rows  
yellow tipped  
a match waiting to ignite pulls away slowly  
almost silent in its shushing

## **Everyone Knows Penny Lane**

I happened upon a stretch of quiet beach  
the mantis green palms flayed lightly in an uncertain breeze  
the coarse abrasive sand now cooling in the early evening  
under a purple sky broodingly framing a round tangelo sun  
slowly setting over the striated etched horizon and the South China Sea

I sat upon a clutch of rocks worn to a smooth hollow  
by centuries of the gorging tide coming and going  
behind me a small array of attap houses on stilts stood still  
from which a Malay family took to the water  
laughing and splashing in the foaming surf  
swiping from the air and feasting on the live leaping  
sweet translucent prawns

They seemed careless carefree and simply happy  
in worn cotton shorts and torn tee shirts flapping like flags

As the wind turned eastward  
they stepped out of the waist high waves to acknowledge me  
with a smile and greeting words

*“Wer fom”*

I normally just say "UK" .... it's easier somehow

but this evening, thoughts turned to what home is

and where home was

*"Liverpool"* I say causing arms to wildly splay and display

and in turn a broken English reply ... *"aaah Penneee Wane, Stwarberwee Feel"*

## Exmouth

Phear Gardens

fear not

as I forethought to walk

along Trefusis Terrace

to view the red rock cliffs

amid the mist and dissipating morning dew

and spy the rising sun

A turn around the town and Strand

by the Imperial and the Grand

a South Devon scone and tea

is sought and bought and enjoyed

and after clotted cream and honeyed jam

the Beacon beckons

to the vermilion tulip guard

above the Manor Gardens

A western wind blows from the Teign

causing skies to bluen

and turn to pink and purple hues

and lofty clouds to billow and bloom

and slowly fall and settle

beyond the Exe Creek banks and hills

## **Fields of Fire**

Fields of fire are fields of freedom  
into the night and on to forever

At the waterhole sits a desert traveller  
beyond belief are the miles in his hands

The caverns stir by the reach of the moon  
the flame shelters from the shivering dunes

Windswept and fanciful are the rhythmic dancers  
the starlight shines and the veldt stares

## **Firefly**

The palm fronds twitch  
lightly in a sunset breeze

The South China Sea caresses  
gently it's twilit shore

The firefly shines and dances  
slowly, glimmering, guiding

The spiral comet tail  
vanishes to the moon

## Firenze

To the banks of the Arno I flee to take the flow  
of the crystal river as Ariele echoes the distant faint sound of opera  
where the Ponte Vecchio shimmers in a sultry sky

## **Forbidden City**

Imperial Palace how open are your gates

how high are your walls through courtyards and corridors of heavenly peace

Forbidden City reveal your secrets

to the whispering breeze of concubines intrigues

and Emperor's dreams

## **For Gyula Horn ..... The Man Who Tore the Curtain Down**

A Magyar stands high above Kings and Queens  
from the plains came horsemen chasing dust trailed dreams

Boulevards wide lead to Heroes Square  
monuments tall of legends that dared

Soviet occupation with bullet holed walls  
shadows in doorways the communist calls

Trough the red star and sickle flows the great Danube  
scything the city apart in two

Protesting revolution and party unrest  
reclaiming the streets of Budapest

At the border stood Gyula Horn  
with cutters he tore the curtain down  
and by dusk a new republic born

## Four Lakeside Italian Towns

Varenna is a watercolour mirage where steep cypresses lead  
to a tranquil arbour of worn marble cooling to heal an afternoon lethargy

Bellagio where between shaded shrubs and statues bare  
the sweetness of the fragrant balm and orange blossom exudes the air

Garda awaking from a misty September dream  
as each sunrise brings the fishermen's early catch home to the Padre's blessing

Bardolino below olive groves and vines making the fine red wine  
lapped by shimmering waters and a calming peace of a shady afternoon siesta

## Free

Peace and silence wanders

through the forest trees

not a sound nor or a rustle or a scream

just then

for that moment

we were free

## **From a Short Stay in the Isle of Wight**

Layers of sand

bright colours in bands

quartz crumbling away

litters Alum Bay

between harbour and bar

turns the twists of the Yar

castles and fort

guns facing north

The ferries arrive at the pier at Ryde

a hand drawn clock tells the time of the tides

fossils discovered in wavy lines

buried in chasms in the walls of the chines

Tennyson went down to Freshwater Bay

where guillemots nest far up and away

winding rows of Ventnor's lanes

smuggler's paths and steep hill ways

## **From a Window in Hoxton**

Sunrise over the city  
casts its light over my shoulder

Twists of smoke curl up to the skies  
as wispy charcoal strokes and commuters scuttle

Sundown over the city  
casts long shadows over anonymous faces  
until they vanish  
leaving a mesmerising glittering panorama of the night

## **Ghosts of the Atlantic**

Able Seaman Adams left Liverpool

that September of 1940

bleak grey skies lay ahead

wild and foamy as the swells heaved

and the dazzle ships to stern

constantly rose and crashed back down into the icy waves

Skipper Donal leaves Killybegs today

ten days a trawling the ocean to sonar the shoals

his hull housing the creel that holds the wasted Krill

used to bait the haddock and hake

But today an autumn detour is to be made to Rockall

throwing a wreath to the west

to float away under anodyne skies

putting to rest, the weeping cold souls of the Benares

## **Gold Coast**

Along the Pacific Highway past dream and theme parks  
man made glass malls and fishermen's wharfs

Miles of white sand, sun blazing bright  
wind and the waves a surfer's delight

## **Grandad**

All those years ago all those moors explored  
me and grandad walking forever out of doors

Lancashire's wondrous landscapes hidden country dreams  
grandma's in the backseat to pay for petrol and ice cream

Climbing hills and chasing clouds roaming wild and free  
collecting all the acorns and planting them for trees

Picnics in empty lay-bys shandy in a quiet pub  
I always had a shilling which grandad made two bob

Today and never forgotten the decades they have passed  
that 1965 summer that would be my grandads last

## **Great Wall of China**

Great wall rising from the northern plains  
across provinces wild and rugged you wander  
ramparts high and steps steep  
cut deep from ancient times a fortress way  
what tales you must weave through this fabled land

## Heat Wave

Like summer fruits the summer brings  
long hot days and wedding rings

In the country or the coast  
pressure rises, bodies roast

Traffic jams for miles and miles  
tempers flare, children smile

Caravan convoys head to the beach  
thousands of lobsters pink in the heat

While all the hoards slowly head away  
I find contentment in my garden shade

## **Hedgehog**

The hedgehog snuffles and stumbles around  
blind as night he listens for sounds

The hedgehogs hungry all those bugs and grubs  
a gardener's friend eating slimy slugs

The hedgehogs peaceful calm and sleepy  
away from the winter dreaming deeply

## **Herbs (for being most useful)**

Mint for tea and the belly and fennel too

thyme for the throat, hyssop for a cold

basil for the salad, parsley on a dish

lemon balms are calming and rosemary for the fish

## Hospital Stay

Taken to hospital only five years old  
a terrifying ordeal down Clatterbridge Road

Separated from home with little explanation  
*"what are these things tonsils? what's an operation?"*

Trolled off to the theatre under corrugated corridors  
a sleepy injection swirling ceiling and walls

Past midnight I wake a full moon shines in the sky  
dazed confused and bloodied I quietly moan and cry

A night nurse appears and comfort is given  
what have I done to be in this prison

White coats gather around the bed looking and peering  
I want to sleep, go home, carry on my dreaming

After visits the days unfold boringly and slowly  
playing with teddy and old Mr Campbell telling me stories

Late night commotion, doctors and screens but nothing said  
by dawn on the ward Mr Campbell's gone leaving an empty bare bed

Those five days remain to this day a great scar  
and my reward for all this was an Aston Martin James Bond toy car

## House Dust Mite

The life of the house dust mite is quite biopic  
a considerable feat since they are microscopic

We eat and breathe and sleep each night  
with at least 2,000,000 house dust mites

Up close and magnified  
I guess we should be terrified

They thrive on flakes of skin we shed  
and love the warm and cosy bed

They are in the air and in the mattress  
causing allergies rashes and asthma

Themselves are harmless though they look such a sight  
our enemy are the particles known as dust mite shite

## **Humber Bridge**

Seen for miles around

your span and crown

twin towers and cables

red car light tails

the suspension

apprehension

of crossing the Humber Bridge

## **I Dreamed of Going to Sea**

I used to play on the east and west float quays  
and the four bascule bridges across the  
Wallasey and Birkenhead docks

Slipping through the sliding warehouse doors  
to rummage among the gunny sack cargo  
of Joseph Rank and Spiller's grain just unloaded from the east

The allure and smell of the thick oily rope  
suspended from the dockside bollards was intoxicating  
beautiful, almost an addiction

The Japanese cook on the "Yokohama Maru"  
cleaver in hand waving from his galley balcony half open door  
against the setting sun cries:

*"Haarow, chop, chop, come aboard"*

Negotiating the rickety plank, safe from the deep dark waters below  
by the drunken sailor nets I stood on the red leaded deck of a  
Nippon Yusen Kaisha freighter waiting in vain to be shanghaied  
and set sail to the seven seas

The "Hu Lin" from Canton was always out of bounds  
but the Blue Funnel giants "Perseus" and "Titan" were always welcoming  
with bilge pumps gently gurgling out water  
lapping back against the keel and swishing the plimsoll line

The salty air mingled with molasses at Tate and Lyle  
as the dock gates swung open  
and the "Brocklebank" tug towing the towering behemoths  
drifted slowly but surely out into the Mersey

The docks are almost empty now  
save for a small tramper or two and a laid up ferry boat  
the ghosts of the deckhands and idle cranes  
cry out to me today

Tonight I shall dream of going to sea

## **In Zermatt**

Nobody drives in Zermatt

a traffic free zone

peril free

only perilous tourists

scouring in summer

for swatches

or

visor-clad in winter

for descending pursuits

## January

A dense fog at dawn

folds slowly across the town

Monochrome figures like bare branches

bend in the breeze

stooped and worn yet young

**June 5<sup>th</sup> 1968**

I went camping that half term  
as far as the back garden  
setting up my tent  
secured by stakes  
cushioned solitude

Just settled in then a shout  
*"food's ready"*  
from the scullery stove a pile of chips  
home cooked served in a plain white paper bag

About to enjoy this slightly overcooked feast  
the chips as always were a bit too crispy and sharp as spears  
when the seclusion ..... shattered by a muffled voice  
straining through the canvas walls

My mother came out into the garden  
something's going on here I thought  
I clambered out tripping and twanging the guide wires  
to be given instructions

*"Run next door" (but one)*

*"and tell aunty Pat" (she's not really my aunty)*

*"that Bobby Kennedy's been shot, but not dead ... yet"*

So I sprint next door (but one)

and hammer down the knocker

probably waking "uncle Bill" from his Vauxhall Motors nightshift sleep in

and despite an urgent panic I remember my lines and blurt out

*"Bobby Kennedy's been shot, but not dead ... yet"*

A pink then pale face stared back

I realised that this bulletin had a destiny

so unrehearsed I stuttered *"put yer radio on"*

Performance and anxiety over

message delivered I returned to the tent

but when I got back

my chips had gone cold

so I called for some more

but they turned out white, hard and raw

The tent was too hot so I gave it up

to sleep in my bed fair comfort instead

at dawn I learned that Bobby was still hanging on

yet those who knew looked too forlorn

That morning I put the tent away for good  
and folded the flapping shroud swaddling the poles and pegs  
and put it to rest in a drawer in the shed  
drifting round the garden I found my white chip paper bag set free, blown,  
surrendered and plastered to the fence  
transparent now by too much vinegar

## **Kent's Residents**

As Princess Pocahantos was put to rest  
at St. Georges, Gravesend in the chancel  
it was by royal declaration  
that all forms of dancing and leaping were to be actively encouraged  
but that bowling which was as bad as bear baiting was to be forbidden

As Samuel Wyatt watched for ships in distress at Dungeness  
shingle and stones were swept in by the gales  
and only when the fog finally settled on the Romney marshes  
could the ghosts of smugglers and their phantom horses be heard

As Dickens penned Copperfield in Broadstairs confines  
from a from a solitary bleak house of walls hidden behind walls  
the twin sister towers of Reculver remained  
to guide mariners to land from the seas that plunder

As Churchill in his Chartwell garden sat in a boiler suit painting bridges and woods  
his day job some said was saving the nation from wear and tear and war  
but it all ended badly in defeat at the ballot box election  
until a surprise reprise after a demi – decade rose again through a blue Maduro haze

## **La Rocca di Passignano**

Dawn breaks

the castle awakes

the grey walls stand erect in the sunrise

the inhabitants have long since died

Dusk settles

the stone grows cold

battlements stand like a petrified army

watching and waiting for the approach of the silent enemy

## **Lament of a Yorkshire Maiden**

She sat upon a stone  
so rugged and worn  
mossy by the mould  
and the cold  
and the west wind blown

Deciding whether to  
spend her life  
to weep and mourn  
to wander or wonder  
about what life may hold  
in any future shown

I saw her sitting there  
old and fair  
upon the Yorkshire stone  
as she had sat and stared  
across the moors  
all those years  
about what might have been  
if he had from war returned

## **Land der Berge Land am Strome**

*(Land of mountains Land by the river)*

Austria with its silver dish lakes waiting for the summer fruits  
where cable car bahns dangle like bright red cherries  
over newly mown lime green pastures as meadows turn to mountains

The Ziller Valley's fields its marigolds as Rattenburg swelters heat from the furnace  
and crystal erupts from the glassblowers trumpet

The Prater Wheel turns like a slow clock hand with clandestine meetings of lovers or  
with the third man and rivers wind then roar through pine and logs and forest floors

Glacier dazzling pure bright white reflected blue against the sky and through  
shifting ice slow and cold, marmots live in the fissures and folds

And as a soft moon settles over Shuttdorf  
the sounds of the distant clatter of a horse and cart, the clink of schnapps glasses  
and a rushing mountain stream

## Lawrence

A cripple is made racing a home made kart  
down a tenement hill  
practising for the Preston Guild

1914 the Government calls  
for fit young men  
fighting spirits with strength

A cripple looks in with an offer to help  
maybe making bayonets and shells  
or joining the Lancashire home front incendiary watch brigade

But recruited immediately ordered to the station  
King's shilling in pocket with tin can rations

No time to get a message home  
with rifle and helmet to Flanders bound  
never to return from foreign ground

And on a Preston pantry table lay  
Lawrence's cold untouched tea time pie

## **Leasowe Life Parts 1 and 2**

### **I. Dangerfield Behind the Brickworks**

Dangerfield if your dare

real cartridges brass and rare

Hide and seek such great fun

I even found the barrel of an old sten gun

Overgrown and wild by day

trespassers forbidden to walk and play

This was our jungle, childhood war

keep one eye open for the arm of the law

With sticks for swords the games were real

all that danger is today is a playing field

### **II. Market Garden Opposite The Twenty Row Inn**

Wicker baskets with lettuce and cabbage

marrows in furrows and freshly hung rabbits

allotments, compost and follow the pong

sacks of tatties sold for a song

## Leaving

Waiting alone on a station platform at this time of night  
to catch the last train from here

Travelling at this crazy hour through countryside I cannot see  
bypassing industrial towns, jewelled, I thought about our ..... past

Trying to sleep in this empty carriage thinking of you  
all I have is a reflection in the window reminding me of what once was

## **Leccy and Gas**

Leccy and gas plus VAT

fuels the cost of heat for the elderly

Hypothermia putting lives in jeopardy

bitter winter enemy of the elderly

Leccy and gas a necessary energy

it should be cheap or free for the elderly

## Letter Writer

Write a letter and save a life  
across the world like a satellite  
write a letter and save a life  
to save some body from a butchers knife

Write a letter to South America  
to save the man behind the steel bars  
the government keep the prison keys  
so write a letter to set him free

So many people held in chains  
a pen is the scalpel to ease their pains  
the candle burns, the barb wire stings  
words unwritten darkness brings

## **Lottery**

Yer pays yer pound  
yer takes a chance  
yer entertained  
by song and dance

Balls spin around  
and one by one  
yer tick em off  
its only fun

Win or lose  
well someone did  
the best I done  
was just ten quid

Profits to good causes  
or to charity  
or in directors pockets  
that we can't see

## **Lucca and Saint Gemma**

Renown for Puccini's birth  
and virgin oils  
and city walls  
enclosing your intricate and graceful pattern  
of weaving streets, multitude piazzas  
staging beautiful Basilica's  
and pink hue stone churches and gardens aromatic

The amber glow terracotta roof tiles from the city wall gardens from sunrise to dusk  
silhouette the Alpi Apuane hills  
three seasons you exude the heady fragrance of jasmine  
that grows in abundance  
on a hot summers day the weary take harbour  
in narrow lanes and shade for their passeggiata  
siphoning the cooler breeze off the artery cobbles

A wedding cake white marble St. Michaels  
or a comforting quiet and peaceful lofty copper domed green sanctuary  
as Santa Gemma took refuge to hide  
from prying eyes  
her Wounds of the Passion

## **Matterhorn**

Rising beyond the mountain streams flowing at speed

high above the pinion track trains encapsulated like a slow release drug shooting out  
into the sun

carved by nature, a snow capped pyramid blue diamond walls trapped in September  
light ..... a monarch enthroned Matterhorn

## **Meadowside Cup Final 1968**

In kits and jeans

we'd pick two teams

by dip dip dip

and my blue ship

Although quite small I'd play in goal

hoping that we wouldn't foul

then a trip inside the box

and big Pete rolled down his socks

Whack! a casey fast and low

I flew and saved this great penno

## **Memory**

Yesterday I held a dying persons hand  
and the rains came

Today I stood under tropical skies  
and the breeze came

Tomorrow I am  
returning home

## **Milan**

Galleria ..... bastion of fashion, perfume, Fiat and secret passions

La Scala bathed in rouge and gold, Verdi's tales sung to be told

tempura mural by Da Vinci behind courtyards and cloisters sleeps the supper's last  
sitting

## **Modern World**

Money for the rich, sure!

it's not a problem to print some more

this is a modern world

We use a satellite dish to catch our fish

we have toxic waste to kill the human race

living in a modern world

Away from home we use our mobile phone

attacked by texts and apps what's next?

we are all happy in a modern world

We make the rivers flow forth

we make the rivers flow back

what's the use of this in a nuclear attack

in this our modern world

All this disarming that people find alarming

and the last sound we heard was a three minute warning

wasn't ours a modern world

## **Mr. Moon**

Mr Moon

grinds wheat and corn

from early morn

barley mown

sails go round

Great cog wheels crush

the grains and husk

while Mrs Moon of ancient hour

bags by hand

the rough hewn flour

## **Mr. Pettigrew's Cure**

In an old hotel

by the old seaside

Mr. Pettigrew stayed

or some say reside

With windows open

and bracing sea breezes

it did well for Pettigrew's

wheezes and sneezes

## **My Mersey**

Merchant ship cranes unloading their grain

Confederate ships built at Cammell Lairds opposite sits the Liver Birds

Ferries glide across the Mersey supporters wear their red or blue jerseys

high above the Albert dock cathedral bells peal over their flocks

The world's greatest seafaring city land of the Beatles and birth of the sixties

today's excitement is its calm reflection designer walks and regeneration

New Brighton to Seacombe a fair old stride a pint at Egremont by the tide

Fort Perch Rock out to Liverpool Bay, to the west, West Kirby and Hoylake

## **Nan's Cabinet**

The light cherry-wood display cabinet  
always stood in the same place  
in the corner of Nan's front parlour  
the pale glossy polished wood and the fragile glass shelves  
holding the crème of her souvenirs

Best china brought out on Sundays  
or days when Uncle Harry came to visit ... sometimes unexpectedly  
to be greeted by "*eee you could have knocked me down with a feather*"  
gifting his tin of red salmon  
to compliment a salad of celery, lettuce and a tomato

It was always something of an honour to be given the long hollow key and  
asked to "*fetch summat special or best*"  
my favourites were the blue and white stripey and stoney west country tea set  
from a 1962 foray to Penzance

The top shelf was always reserved for porcelain things  
the lion and tiger bought by me for her birthday  
with pocket money saved or more often given on the day

Post mortem the collection was given away  
the lion and the tiger now live in a wooden box like coffin  
found in the attic just prior to a recent move

I also got those blue and white bits for everyday use  
until they finally broke and came to rest like a Cornish  
ship wreck at the bottom of the garden years ago

## **New Age**

Percentages and air pollution

interest rates are their solution

Rolling stock and fighter planes

their rhetoric is rather lame

Glossy shops and credit cards

pay next month that's not so hard

Hungry children roam alone

to a cardboard box that they call home

A boat from the east carries sugar and spice

a mask and a sign are the dealers dice

Courage and speed to fuel injection

and all that's left is a specimen section

A hole in the wall a hole in the sky

the rivers are flooding and we cannot hide

The villas and deserts are scorching today

watch for the iceman to show you the way

## **Night Caller**

They sleep during daylight because they walk out the night  
attracted and addicted and high on the city lights

They like the hot nights to feel the sheet glass burning  
the skies are empty of clouds the stars are on fire and they like the crescendo

It is almost dawn the night lights are fading, home beckons  
who knows about their secrets ..... until the next night

## **North to Noosa**

Northwards via the Bruce, Ettamogah and Yalinda  
bush country taverns ladies on the veranda

Gingertown beckons pineapple plains  
thunderhead rocks sugarcane trails

Tumbleweeds scatter to Glasshouse Ranges  
in the distant sea, white horses are dolphins

**November 22<sup>nd</sup> 1963**

My name is Johnny Smith but cos of my size my nickname is Smidge, I am 7½ years old and this is my story of my day out

It was a warm November lunchtime

the day before, the Dallas rain had pummelled our tarmac drive

but today it was different

the large neon sign on our Texas school depository glowed 67° F

I had been made to dress smartly just like the time that we went to my cousins wedding picnic: blue and black check sweater, grey shorts and my best tan sandals at least the grassy knoll had dried out in the noon sun

It was a big party but I had the best view of all of the crowds as all the hoards were squashed in shop doorways or cramming the sidewalks

The cars came into view edging into the plaza on Elm Street

high up I thought I glimpsed a sharp sparkle in the red brick store window.

As the parade glided towards us I saw Jackie in her pink suit "*Chanel*" ... my mum said, like a bride waving to the masses

I guess we all came to see her really

The sounds of cheering, ringing and whizzing  
then a shuddering thunder from the trailing motorcade  
I thought I saw and heard an orange flash and crack  
maybe it was just the sun in my eyes but it sure smelled of fireworks

Then a shower of wet  
crimson confetti poured out  
of the violet sky  
and showered me in silence

## **Ode to Fish and Chips**

For choice and with tea  
the quayside at Whitby  
facing out to the sea  
eating Britain's great delicacy

For quality and taste  
try the Chinese takeaway  
scoffed in front of the TV  
with rich red sauce from HP  
then washed down with pleasure  
by a brown ale in good measure

The best one ever  
was a northern endeavour  
"A Higgies Special" in Chester  
fish, chips, mushy peas, bread and butter ..... nothing better

## Ozone

There is no zone for what its worth  
where ozone's safe on this our earth

Prime Ministers and Presidents meet  
to limit all their CFC's

But until these nations all decide  
is tomorrow too dangerous to step outside?

For all the talk and lessons learned  
through scorching skies our planet burns

We must act now not hesitate  
if not for us then our children's sake

We must all learn to change our lives  
recycle now or wave goodbye

## **Painting**

The painter sees within through peeling frames resting on a crumbling sill what time has hid, revealed.

## **Panda**

Oh panda were would you rather be  
in the wild or in the zoo  
eating your rice from a bowl

The choice is ours not yours you see  
only we control your destiny

So panda teach our children true  
to save the woods and not to lose  
your precious smile  
for when you are gone  
we'll follow too

## **Paris in the Spring**

Paris in the spring is alive again

petals profuse the Tuileries

lovers and artists steal glances and kisses

at night in ruby and gold glow a million lights

## **Penny Deposit Bottles**

Collecting old bottles for the penny deposit  
carrying mums basket and pushing my trolley  
knocking on doors "*any empties to spare*"  
I'll recycle them all to fill my pockets so bare

Laden with glass my trolley was full  
Tizer, Corona and Vimto to the shop I would pull  
the shopkeepers face would drop when he saw me  
more vessels returned that's a bag brimmed with pennies

## **Petticoat Lane Market 1969**

Blankets and sheets cheap as can be  
buy one of these and the rest come for free

Kitchen devices for slicing and carving  
a dinner set for six a guinea and a farthing

Hang on to your purses or wallets will fly  
my bargain that Sunday a lime green and yellow wide kipper tie

## **Pisa**

In Pisa a pendulum swings  
lost to the stars in an astronomer's dream

To wanderers you reveal a world's great wonder  
your leaning tower tilts to places beyond

Light is Pisa  
coloured yellow of sand  
then as forever  
Galileo's land

## **Polar Bear**

Four months beneath the winter snows  
slumbers deep in dreams of icy flows  
the night sky's aurora waves and glows

Blizzards whistle across terrain  
in this the polar bear's domain

## Poppylands

Above what lies beneath the far country fields

a plume of ash rises to noble empyrean heights

as the final pounding and screaming fades into the contrite violet twilight sky

Fresh frozen ground thaws each early spring and the ploughs furrowing

divulges a trenches secrets locked away for a century or more

preserved in deathly silence a shattered shuttered shelter

Without family or mourners

the forlorn fallen finally return from Flanders

by train and cortege and the Union Flag

the loneliest to a headland North Norfolk Church and a cliff top grave

carried on a rickety cart down the crunchy gravel path, home at last

watched in silence by eleven local school children who have only ever known peace

The corporal corpse is lowered to rest again under sodden earth

the wild sanguine poppies bend in a bitter easterly wailing wind

in remembrance to the end of time

## **Preston Treat**

The other day I took a train to Preston

we used to visit there in the sixties to see Harry and Dolly

Uncle Harry worked for the Bus Corporation all of his life

from Conductor to Inspector in charge of Union rights

Harry loved his lemonade ordered by the crate

stored away in the pantry the Corona was great

The other day I walked and rediscovered those same streets

the end Victorian terrace was still there, an island surrounded by new uni buildings but

at least the door and the wonky stone step was now straight

Clutching a faded photograph of me standing on the same doorstep in short trousers

and sandals and holding the clippies ticket machine that I had been given all those

years ago ..... I was tempted to knock at the door

My knock was answered by a lovely lady Benita Patel and after a daft explanation I

was invited in. The family offered me a cup of Lancashire tea and a cheese barm and

then I blurted out "*have you any cream soda in the pantry*"

## **Rainbow**

Myriad of rain droplets on a window pane

beguile the light

tantalise and refract

## Reconciliation

In the quiet Olberg woods and hills above the  
weaving Rhine Valley

in it's meandering paths and lanes

I met a shabby old man at a bus stop

Eager to speak in fast flowing torrents

I hadn't a clue

so we talked single sided

Germanic versus Anglo until we slipped into broken English

I mentioned Lancashire the place of my birth

and then I surrendered to his words "*Blackpool*" and "*Prisoner of War*"

he was moved to declare that he had been treated kindly in internment

The Germans *had* blitzed the chip shop .... my Gran had assured me

then I thought of our bombs on Bonn and Dresden and falling across the river here at  
Cologne but I was too young to be contrite for our father's victories

And as the empty bus approached

he held out his hand

in an act of reconciliation and peace

## Remembering that Christmas

The snowman brought the snow that winter to illuminate the ground  
at night I gazed towards the moon and wondered about Father Christmas

I was searching for signs of proof those telltale tracks upon the roof  
I crept into the bay window and caught sight of a shooting star  
no sign but the sound of Santa's bells (rung by my dad hiding in the garden)  
to excite and drift me off to dream beneath the midnight blue and the lavender flock  
wallpaper

Waking up early on that Christmas morning  
presents in a candy stripe winceyette pillowcase, oh and an orange and some walnuts  
with the Cadburys selection box and a bag of gold foil choccy coins and a red box of  
maltesers which I would save up and use as ammo in a pop gun  
for shooting into open gobs which was a dare, scare and smashing fun

Then time to dress up as Wyatt Earp holstered in leather  
or the Cherokee enemy with bandana and feather  
the best on the telly was Mr Pastry ..... again  
but Batman and Robin was my fave  
then if I was best behaved  
I could stay up late chewing some Rolo's  
with Illya Kuryakin and Napoleon Solo

## Rome

Eternal dawn in the Piazza Republic  
wakes the doves like fluttering rockets  
in a chattering sky

## **Sarajevo**

Families and friends torn apart till the end  
now there is only sorrow in Sarajevo

Nations debate but it is all to late  
for enclaves and slaves the mist never rises

Where has life gone to a far away haven  
where brothers weep and sisters cry

Rockets and shells, meditation of bells  
tolling for lives once lived

Now there is only sadness in Sarajevo

## **Scarlet Light**

Into Schiphol and then by tram  
to the heart of Amsterdam

Canals weave as a maze  
under bridges that lowly laze

Spheres of edam and gouda cheese  
or a puff of some legal herbal leaf

Tall thin houses with hidden seams  
revealing Ann Franks tortured dreams

Blue and white delft in the potter's hall  
Van Gogh paintings adorn the walls

Tulips disguise forbidden sights  
undressing windows through the night  
to lead beyond the scarlet light

## **Scent**

Scent of the earth

scent of the seas

scent of the sky

inhale

enjoy

## Scotland

Land of legends and Celts

mystical mountains

mythical isles

silent lochs and shivers

in the depths of winter

fortress cradled winds

on misty morn moors

echo's of old battle cries

your remoteness beguiles

## **Seagull**

The seagull glides with outstretched wings  
to an empty space painted by the brushes of time  
we can only stand transfixed and gaze  
oh .... to be that seagull, to move, to fly

## Searching for Suzi Wong

At Causeway Bay the noon day gun  
there stands the solitary Englishman  
one o' clock sharp champagne salute  
traditions past resolute

Sampans sail through the boat community  
floating lives with no continuity  
Aberdeen and fragrant harbours  
oyster sauce and other odours

Shopping plazas skyward loom  
a dazzling display in old Kowloon  
night falls in old Hong Kong  
exploring Wan Chai and Suzi Wong

## September Time

September time has come again  
with watercolour skies of sapphire blue  
indented by powdery wispy clouds  
as white felt sown into a crinkled cotton dress

At Saddle Bow the fields newly turned  
have brought the soil inside out  
revealing a dark chocolate rippled landscape of furrows  
as the seabirds flown from The Wash  
follow perilously close  
to the tractor and plough  
gathering and gorging on earthen worms  
and last spring's un-sprouted seeds

Behind the station platform and paint peeled picket fences at Watlington  
the sunflowers begin to stoop sadly  
as the first winds of autumn  
caress the flatlands of the eastern fens

## **Shangri La**

Listen, the far distant melodies travel across the still serene waters as the waves lap upon the sun setting shore and a light breeze brushes through the Palm Beach terrace

## Shopping

The *super* market, what have you got, you've got it all, everything we ask for

Won't you come inside

the aisles are long and wide

food and fashion waits

through the automatic gates

All you ever thought you needed

but even that has been succeeded

forget the complex shopping mall

welcome to the world of digital

fingering our glowing screens

to order up your wildest dreams

## **Silver Birch**

The silver birch grows tall and thin  
it's peeling bark paper thin

Waving branches and catkin tails  
velvet leaves like a thousand sails

## Soap

I love the smell of cheap soap in all those B & B and hotel bathrooms  
from summer holidays on the seafront in Scarborough and Bridlington  
and those boarding houses with wooden stairs polished and tidy  
serving fish for dinner because it's Friday

Then at the end of the day being called from play on the greens, in dirty jeans  
to be bathed and scrubbed down in haste with that small white block, the aroma of  
clean

## **Soham**

Soham sits

east of Cambridge

away from the spires

amid meadows and droves

Soham sits

south of Ely

away from shadows of lanterns

amid pastures and groves

Soham sits

north of Newmarket

away from the races

amid quiet country roads

Soham sits

west of Bury

away from the sugary sweet beet

amid fens and lodes

## **Southend Pier**

Southend Pier

in flames

again

oh dear !

But you are the longest in the world

so we will build you back

and thousands more can tread your boards

or ride the tracks

to the end

of Southend Pier

again

## Spring

The grass forever green  
in a fine English spring  
willowed by a wind chime breeze  
wave the daffodils in a ring

Herbs suddenly hasten  
and beckon charismatically  
feathered, leaved or balmy  
fragrant aromatically

Buds and blooms early flowering fruits  
dampened by an April shower  
forever silent sculptured friends  
statues mossy in mosaic ochre yellow

## **St. Wolfgang**

A paddle steamer from St. Gilgen sojourns gently against the quay

Wooden homes and balconies and open windows waiting for the face of the cuckoo but  
all that appears is the farmers wife looking across to Strobl with the smell of  
apfelstrudel

Lakeside castle and palace asleep, empty walls within against yellow alabaster, the  
gardens are my retreat

Up ahead a puff of steam winding upward, SchafbergBahn, log fires burning, pistons  
pushing rack and pinion round ravines then blue skies open summit bound to reveal  
five magic lakes across the Salzkammergut.

## **Steam Train Journey of One Stop (and being allowed to stand on the footplate)**

Standing on the footplate real not a dream  
coals to the fire the puffing and the steam

Just through the cutting a steamy hot thrill

A 2-4-2 from Lime Street up to Edge Hill

## Storm

An electric storm rages  
far distant  
lightening the night  
of a Sumatran sky  
deep orange hues  
the colour of a tiger  
whilst stars blaze through silver eyes

Roaring thunder  
the unheeded tiger cries forlorn  
waiting for the silence  
and the calm of dawn.

## Summer in Suffolk

Fields of wheat turn to golden  
barley heads whispering folding

Pink washed cottages neatly thatched  
Tudor beams with oak door latch

Villages of tranquil charm  
haystack's gathered on the farms

Byways silent past ford and mill  
Kersey's lost in time stood still

Long Melford and its sister Clare  
in elderflower lanes white clusters stare

Cavendish for old antiques  
Lavenham church for a Suffolk tea

The evening sun yellows the hour  
abbey gardens display their flowers

The silhouette of age old trees  
evenings fragrant scent on a genteel breeze

## **Summer of Love**

In the summertime when the days were long  
we used to travel far and sing our songs

Carefree were those long hot days  
with the yellow sun and the mellow haze

Wild then in the summertime  
nights of love and days of wine

Today perhaps wherever you may be  
do you treasure still that memory

## **Sunflower**

A sunflower grown  
whilst lawns are mown

A black and white seed  
shoots at first like a weed

How something so small  
towers now tall

When the rays hit your face  
standing boldly with grace

But when the autumn rains near  
you fold and shed your tears

## **Sydney**

Opera House fans out in great white sails  
on Bennelong Point the queen of New South Wales

Monorail twists around Sydney's streets  
pedestrian's below strive on their feet

Botanical gardens carpet Macquarie's Chair  
the "Rocks" markets and merchants wares

Darling Harbour a taste of the future  
crisscross ferries ply back on the water

Skyline horizons thee antipodean view  
silhouette of the bridge dusks bronzed gold hue

## **Tales Betwixt the Axe and Exe**

To Seaton to sit on  
the electrifying tram  
that glides around the town  
in colourful liveried display and  
cranks to higher downs and Colyton

To the westerlies of Salterton  
marine and commando garrison  
training to derail the opposition  
now only ghosts of D-Day past  
and Neptune's waving hand  
a solemn farewell to loved ones and liberation

Nearby where on rich red loam  
donkeys roam  
and revel in their safe haven  
above the caves and coves  
while cattle droves  
and all day graze beside the Axe and Ox  
and cyclists laze in Devon's  
elderflower lanes in season

Ottery

whence Pricilla and Laurie came and went

and sailed in clearer skies by

Imperial Airways to the Orient

narrowly missing exploding comets

and came to rest

in Italy

in Pescallo upon their twilight fading years

## Tale of Two Tortoises

Harry and Tiny were good friends, taking all day  
to chew a tomato and doze and chew a bit more

One summer we almost lost Harry, he crept away  
but was brought back at the end of the day  
I guess it was the number seven painted on his shell  
so all was well

Small Tiny ever content to stay and never stray  
seemed to smile when the lettuce leaf rose  
to tickle his nose

Quite suddenly no notice given they were gone  
I pestered and cried "*Where's Harry and Tiny,  
handed to who?*" sent away to a zoo!

Weeks went by but I never forgot and then a day out  
to Belle Vue Park, Manchester  
riding on an elephants back  
gliding down the water shoot splash  
and then, on display  
in the house of amphibia were Harry and Tiny  
just as familiar

I tapped on the glass "*Harry, Tiny, look it's me*"  
as they nodded and sucked on more tomatoes  
two together in their glass room  
and my happiness returned  
late that afternoon

## Tanjong Rhu

At Tanjong Rhu I rest to the lap of the waves, calmly, peacefully

At Tanjong Rhu I watch at dusk the fluted fishermen casting nets from an endless shore  
to a sinking sun

At Tanjong Rhu I sleep to an ocean breeze, away, dreamingly

## **Tears and Smiles**

Water washes away tears amidst the memory of years  
reflecting on decisions sought, some taken, some thought

Nostalgic days, moments in time, pathways travelled, entwine, people and places in  
mind

The sun dries the tears leaving a fading stain of past years  
put aside the decades for awhile and let the tear turn to a smile

## **Temple of Heaven**

With marble and gold  
you write out the past  
whilst dragons and lions  
guard you forever

Lanterns like sentinels  
show one the path  
to the Temple of Heaven  
the colour of the sky

## **The Apple and the Greengage Tree**

The apple and the greengage tree  
grow side by side  
arched and bent together  
almost seemed entwined

The summer sun swells  
and ripens all the fruits  
cluster bunches green  
and red speckled suits

As autumn approaches  
thoughts of gathering the crop  
the gentlest of caresses  
and the harvest will drop

The leaves now turn to yellow  
to the wind and leap  
the apple and the greengage  
will retire now and sleep

## **The Ballad of Johnny Robinson and the Black Rock Mermaid**

To the wind and the tempest

screaming from the Orme

blew in on this fair gale

a wild heart of storm

*And I sing to you Johnny Robinson*

*And I sing to you from the sea*

*And I call you Johnny Robinson*

*I call you unto me*

Appearing on the foundering deck

she promised to guide him home

and so washed upon a Hoylake shore

released from savage surf and foam

*And I sing to you Johnny Robinson*

*And I sing to you from the sea*

*And I call you Johnny Robinson*

*I call you unto me*

Through mist and rain and clear skies  
and waters cold or warm  
eyes blue as the ocean deep  
will wait for him at dawn

*And I sing to you Johnny Robinson*

*And I sing to you from the sea*

*And I call you Johnny Robinson*

*I call you unto me*

To the sound of midnights submerged bells  
to mariners one and all  
the creature of the sea  
sits on Black Rock, Leasowe shore

*And I sing to you Johnny Robinson*

*And I sing to you from the sea*

*And I call you Johnny Robinson*

*I call you unto me*

Charmed by the mermaids song  
to accept her coral ring  
he slips out at night to New Brighton beach  
to be never again be seen

*And I sing to you Johnny Robinson*

*And I sing to you from the sea*

*And I call you Johnny Robinson*

*I call you unto me*

So when the moon is full and tide a turning  
and the wind be still and calm  
you can still here the mermaid singing  
from Black Rock all alone

*And I sing to you Johnny Robinson*

*And I sing to you from the sea*

*And I call you Johnny Robinson*

*I call you unto me*

## The Coach Trip to Blackpool

A day out by coach somewhere not to far  
New Brighton to Blackpool booked by Grandma

At some village in the Ribble we would stop for a while  
the half way halt for the toilet and a meat and tattie pie

Hundreds of coaches we must remember its number  
then off to the pleasure beach or promenade bingo

Ride on the rails the cream and green trams  
the top deck to Fleetwood or Lytham St. Anne's

Hot dogs or candy floss and pink sticks of rock  
the golden mile shimmered towards Ripley's "*Believe it or Not*"

Tattooed ladies and two headed pigs  
Madam Tussaud's and families in digs

The tower stands high above the circus below  
old fogies go dancing in formation and rows

7.00 pm crowds back at the bus station  
excitement by the window as we glide through the illuminations

The long day ended we head for home  
into the night with chips in a cone

## **The Computer (on a bad day)**

Bip bip bip bop bop bop

all booted up but the password's wrong

Finally in to write, file and save

send to the printer a further delay

Return and exit won't let me delete

system malfunction, scream at the screen

Remain calm don't stamp on the floor

It's the fountain pen and sheets of A4

## **The Dales Descending Light**

It is fitting as Lent is but three days hence  
that the purple cyclamen have come early this year  
rising between the damp lichen rich tombs at Ripon Cathedral  
surrounding the tree as the gardener burns his cuttings  
and the wood smoke ascends from behind the garden wall  
and drifts across the graves

A panorama of trees, stark, dark and alveolar  
like a thousand lungs waiting to breathe life into spring  
for it is late February now  
and the fast flowing Ure buffets the lone angler  
standing waist deep below the bridge at Masham

The worn landscape strewn with bronzen tufts on hillocks  
and last autumn's coppiced hazels  
are shadowed by clumps of trees that shelter the sheep  
from the sweltering summer sun or winters frozen moon  
while from time to time a howling wind tears through  
vacant windows and portals of the dry stone field barns  
screaming at the souls of the fells and dales

The moist green mossy branches  
precariously point with sharp bent brittle fingers  
at the weary wanderer or passer by  
to hasten their journey  
as the remoteness of life and light  
slowly slips away to silhouette the peaks  
and the glow ethereal dips for another day  
and the last train from Garsdale Station slinks away in twilight  
to Settle and the distant sparkling lights of Leeds

**The day that the schools closed for a day was the day that changed us all in some kind of way**

May the 1<sup>st</sup> 1997 the heat wave was intense and laconic, the hottest day in any May ever.

Things were going to get even more red and hotter still.

After an early lunch we went to quietly vote, we had the afternoon off.

Two by two a slow trickle now, before the evening rush, the elderly, mums pushing prams and a policeman in short sleeves looked on casually, taking refuge from the sun outside.

Just before the polls closed at 10 pm a knock on the door, this is canvassing late, a party with rosettes.

*"I'm sorry to bother you but a cat is dead, the old man on the corner has put it in box. A motorist, a late voter, probably, intoxicated, probably, sped off into the night".*

I said *"Try next door three cats live there"*

Live on TV politicians beamed in.

I stayed awake till one, the first twenty results carrying the flavour of all our labours.

Then early to rise, a sweeping landslide.

A new government formed.

This is what we have all waited for

on the day that the schools closed for a day,

the day that changed us all in some kind of way.

But as one party was mourning its loss  
a funeral took place in next doors garden.  
The only guests, two cats, in silence.

## **The End of Spring**

I watch for you  
against a darkening sky  
now passed

The taint of wet grass  
hangs heavily in the air  
a cloud tumbles and out pours  
a blue sky

Clear and still and warm  
and spring is put to slumber

## **The Folding Chair**

The folding chair for sitting, nay  
but for carting around and standing on  
and pushing up the loft lid cover  
only then did I discover  
its cold up there  
to be perching on  
the folding chair

## **The Last Days of August**

These last days of August and the golden barley  
nods towards sundown high in the East Ridings  
where tractors haloed by the hazy coppery dust  
cut and mow the wheat to sharp stubble stumps

Sunlight slips through alabaster clouds  
effulgent finger beams sweep across the soft undulating landscape  
causing the stationary coach party waiting to cross the bridge at Stamford  
to shield their eyes from glare

The gathered wheat is towered and perched into perfect cubes  
or rolled into cylinder drums sitting in random rows waiting for winter  
beneath the odd solitary wind turbine turning slowly in a lethargic breeze  
shadowing the edges of the still young cornfields  
between Driffield and Burton Agnes

The long summer day softens and slowly starts to sink  
and gentle purple skies cool slightly now  
as the early evening light drifts in from the sea  
and the smell of eventide descends on the village green

## **The Lesson**

By the crossroads up yonder lowe

I spied the school kids going home

With bags and satchels coloured gaily

and packets of crisps and fags that they crave daily

Laughing and joking counting pocket money earned

with their folders and textbooks with lessons that they've learned

## **The Only Bit there is of the Cheshire Coast**

Child of Hale stood nine foot three  
a gentle giant by the sea

Disused lighthouse amid rock strewn sand  
warned distant ships from distant lands

Runcorn bridge hovers over the ship canal  
pylons and wires and chemical plants

Ellesmere Port and Stanlow Banks  
great floating vessels unload their tanks

Refineries miles wide  
towering fires light up the skies

## **The Powder Monkey**

In the silence of the violet morning  
and the shadow of the fractured clouds  
broken only by the seagull's squeals  
to fool the foes

The canvas flaps  
and seeping oil  
into coils  
of friction fraught and taught  
hemp and jute  
creaks to drown the sounds of those below  
as victory seems so far  
to fill the shells not shoals  
to tailor, stitch and mend the tunics worn

The boys in bells  
not teens but tens  
as the sounds and smells  
of black graphite carbon  
sparks and fire  
quell the tempest of the seas  
and enemies

Bang and crash

fuse and flash

recoil and rebound

the Powder Monkey swings

to canons from gallows beams

and England's shores still will be

forever so far away from home

## **The Punt Gunner**

A fissure in the clouds at dawn  
casts a sombre curtain over  
the damp sodden November trenches

A pastel mist drapes leaden over  
the wide expanse of the dank dewy fens

The verdant hands of the marsh willows  
washed by past fallen drizzle  
waver below the caress of the towering heavens  
to raise the early birdsong chorus  
as the punt gunner splays out his single oar  
in the stillness of the Welney waters

Calm now the breeze rushing through the reeds  
lest the waters of the Ouse lose their prey

Fingers now frozen through fingerless mittens  
prime the gun and trigger ready  
finally gliding to a stillness of the soul  
in morns pale afterglow

A flash of citrine and a single shot  
shatters the silence of the dawn  
and the deed is done  
and one more son will not return

## **The Rhine**

Rising in the Drachenfels misty forests and castles dwell

blue skies over grey Bonn where statues point to a soldiers gun

Steep terraces of verdant vines producing luscious sweet white wines

fast and flowing bends the Rhine

## The Ring Pull

The beaches of Weston-Super-Mare  
were bare that year  
I discovered the ring pull  
the froth hissed out  
a malted lava flow  
of fine pale gold  
the colour of sand  
as the tide moved away  
beads of chill set in  
leaving the beaches alone  
that year I discovered  
the ring pull

## **The Shed**

In our close every house has a shed but ONE  
and oh what shapes and sizes they do come

One for gardening  
one the size of a Swiss chalet  
a fridge freezer in another  
and Malcolm keeps in his, dreams  
locked away and safe  
but me I am the ONE  
no need of such a thing  
I let my garden live

## **The Turtle's Tale**

Fishermen's net catch  
the great leatherback  
today only the few  
out of once thousands get through

To Rantau Abang  
a long sea trek ends  
with a crawl up the beach  
with only flashlights to greet

Is it pain or fear  
that causes your cries and tears  
you must know rely on man  
to hatch your eggs in the sand

Generations lost almost extinct  
a life and species right on the brink  
as you slip away slowly and submerge under the waves  
is it you or us who should be afraid

**There is an apartment in the Barbican that shall remain anonymous**

There is an apartment in the Barbican

that shall remain anonymous

Each morning the casual commuter taking a shortcut

can witness if concentrating, the clientele

surreptitiously slipping out into the stairwell

quickly, sheepishly, guiltily

descending to the dawn chorus

of the early rush hour traffic

below the London Wall

then sloping off through the narrow lanes of Smithfield or the City's square mile

## Tin Money Box

A small young boy taken to the bank  
to open an account to save money in  
is given a tin with animals on  
to keep copper and silver  
of all legal tender

When aunties and uncles  
came around I was often given half a crown  
for looking sweet *"and oh how he's grown"*

I filled that tin with treasure and careful thought  
because once put in can prise out nought  
and when its full got taken to bank  
to the TSB tiller with a smile, tin opener in hand

A cascade of coins  
stand on tip toe to look  
handled with care  
a stamp in my book

Savings secured  
I'm handed a new tin  
and given a penny ..... to start all over again

## **Tors ... Clints ... Grykes and a Good Brew**

Crawling out of Glossop's stonehousey streets  
the Snake pass winds, climbs, then hollows  
to the Snake Inn waiting to ensnare the casual passer-by with a pie and a pint

Nestling below peaks lightly tipped  
with tors, clints and grykes  
formed by a million frozen winter rains and nights  
lies Lady Bower with its whirlpool overflow  
swallowing the funnelling fast water to the centre of the earth  
or simply siphoning to Sheffield around the corner

The River Derwent partly hidden by sunlit shade  
appears as black treacle with sharp, dark, star point sparkles  
the bronze conifer tree tops  
over the valley appear like Doddy's brush  
tickling the blue skies dusting away the clouds

The lambs with jelly legs shelter from the blustery breezes  
against the dry stone walls whilst the pregnant ewes  
lie slump like plump fat seals grounded on green grass sand banks

In Bakewell the ducks drift downstream  
then stutteringly turn and dart forward  
as targets in a twopenny shooting gallery  
fighting against the current in a stationary paddle  
before taking to valiant flight lowly and skilful like under the footbridge

The sticky rich, for some sickly sweet pudding  
sold in brown paper bags with glistening oily stains  
clutched by tourist bus hoards  
better to be taken to picnic in the crescent by the river

Matlock's graceful station is silently awaiting  
the hourly service of the Derwent Valley Line from Nottingham  
it's vintage platforms paying homage to the Edwardians  
who came for a day out from Derby or Belper  
to see perhaps the riverside gardens  
luminous in bloom with yellows, reds and purples and beds still to be planted  
watched in shade from the seated wooden cupola hut

Spring's late warm sun has brought the crowds  
to Buxton flocking to the pavilion lining up for ice creams  
like a petrol rationing queue

An old gentleman

seemingly the self imposed guardian of St. Annes Well

is regaling tales of the public perpetual flowing waters

commentating on its flow and temperature

as one and all fill their plastic five litre bottles

and informing those willing to listen just how good it makes a brew of tea

Then home via the A6

through Stockport and later in the evening

a Cheung Wah takeaway of king prawn chow mein and fried rice

oh and a good Ceylon brewed with Buxton spring water

and the sage was quite right

it does make the most perfect cuppa

## **To the End of the Thames**

Canons look out at Coalhouse Fort  
guarding the reaches protecting the port

Oil tankers and caravans berth side by side  
a refiner's flue breathes fire in the sky

Chalkwell to Westcliff a great pavilion  
pretty flower tiered gardens spring through to winter

The world's longest pier it's starting to rain  
so walk to the end and return by the train

Boating from Thorpe Bay breeze sails to the west  
messages in bottles at Shoeburyness

Lovers of solitude windswept and wild  
shrieks of the gulls at the rise of the tide

## **Tunbridge Wells**

Pantiles and antiques

wooden floors creak

pavements and columns

spa water in volumes

while away the day

in tea shops and cakes

with walnuts and dates

## **Tupperware and Gonks**

Plastic boxes round and square

clear, pink and blue tupperware

Parties for the mums smarties for the kids

all you'll ever need beneath those airtight lids

The only reason I ever tagged along

was the promise of a homemade gonk

Indestructible after all these years

is all my mothers tupperware

Years and years turn into yonks

what happened to those friendly gonks

## **Tuther Side of Valley**

Tuther side of valley from Burnley  
above the Ribble meadows  
giant clover big and thick as thumbs  
creeps and climbs towards Clitheroe

## **Pendle Hill**

prone  
like a drowsy dragon  
under midsummer lenticular clouds  
invade the earth  
with irisation beams  
and reams  
and rays  
in the sweltering heat  
waiting to be cooled  
by the dew of the dales after sundown

## **Two Sides of the Yarra River**

High on a rise Kangaroo Point  
across the river the city glittering lights

But under the bridge shacks hidden away  
for migrants and settlers on arrivals day

## Venice

The waves of the Adriatic rise  
and lap gently across San Marco  
washing away the mist and the masks

Bridges and sighs canals weave their life  
past towers and squares and crumbling facades

By night from the moonlit marbled magic  
and old chandeliers  
catch a glimpse of the  
ghosts in floating gondola's  
calling their silent cries for help

By day to most you are a memory  
to those who stay you are a part  
discovering in the maze  
of passage ways and places  
your deep beauty  
your very heart.

## **Vickers Viscount**

Waiting for a plane there was such a delay  
something with the engine they needed to replace

An announcement is made "*it may take sometime  
so we will fly in our spare plane*" and all should be fine

A distant approach we all rush to the balcony  
to see propellers and tin descending noisy but gently

Ready for boarding in great leather seats  
with two foot high portholes with curtains and pleats

Through rattle and vibration we take off to the sky  
in an un-pressurised cabin so we can't fly too high

Levelled out at 12,000 over valleys and mounts  
Flying Air UK's last and only Vickers Viscount

## Waiting For a Train at Brussels Midi Station

Brussels Midi

once while waiting

to connect

with the Cologne Express

I sat and watched

these great iron engines

pulling in

rolling out

then the biggest of all

a great grey green eastern machine

rumbled in slowly

it's old creaking wagons

faded in gloom

dusty chandeliers

empty

except

in a dimly lit carriage

an old lady

hidden

behind veil and lace

a countess perhaps

returning to Warsaw

## **Waiting for the Sun**

Its cold outside

the streets are white

I walk for miles

with the thought of warmth inside

The rain is falling

the avenues are wet

faces are cold

nobody cares

The wind is blowing

storm laden but silent

branches beckoning

but the gardens are private

How long have I travelled

through seasons of changing

how much longer

shall I be waiting for the sun

## **Wakes Week Seems Like a Lifetime Ago**

Morecambe's fresh air and fun from industrial towns to the sun

Whence paddle boats once steamed now only in dreams

The art deco Midland Hotel across the bay to Lakeland dells

Vikings were Heysham's legacy now day trippers sail on the Isle of Man ferries

Blackpool's treasure, pier and tower, pleasure amusements fill the hours

As the wild wind whips up the sand the pies and chips are in demand

Promenade ablaze with bulb webbed lights burn long and well into autumn nights

## **Wales**

Land of valleys

and dams

hills and moonscapes

wild rugged castles stand firm on the shores

flags flying high

flapping in the wind

whilst a dragon breathes its flame

and watches over destiny

## **Washed Ashore**

Riding the waves

for many years

adventures and seas

and sailors tears

only to be washed ashore

in some tropical land

as paradise declines

lies the barnacle covered

Guinness can

## **Waste**

Don't drop the waste in my back yard

says who

says the people

say I

but not the government

Contamination

under our soils

in our seas

but not on the steps of Whitehall

please

Fall out

drop out

reports what a wash out!

all that's left is

a population wipe out

## **Water**

In these, times of drought  
what about the water underground  
reservoirs to catch the rain  
all our rivers streams and lakes

Are we an island all at sea  
or just the victims of a utility  
Water Boards and water rates  
why don't we desalinate

Water to drink, wash and flush  
consumption high the profits rush  
health and hygiene sanitary  
rates or meters for the wary

Old mains are cracked causing leakage  
replacements needed to stem the seepage  
dripping droplets from the taps  
left unchecked will fill the bath

Toxic nitrates from our farms  
contamination causing harm  
they add the fluoride and the chlorine  
if it kills the bugs it must be poison

Still water from a bottle or artesian well  
to cleanse the body to bathe our cells  
pure and precious this is our right  
as water keeps us all alive

## **Waterfront at Liverpool**

Lights across the river  
shimmering silently  
on waves of dreams

The sounds of the city  
for an instant  
call me  
to their heart

## **Waving at Trains between Grindleford and Hathersage and The Peak District**

### **Cowboys**

The East Midlands diesel venting its smoke  
rattles for 46 minutes between Sheffield and Stockport  
or sometimes a little longer with that stationary wait  
between stations for that freight train running late  
Its wondrous journey exposed to those unplugged  
from android devices, mobile tablets, gadgets and the like  
rumbling through the Edale Valley.

In a suspension of fine misty drizzle and foggy hollows  
or when the sun shines on the mossy high peak hills  
and the shimmering electric shale grey crags  
the dry stone walls blanket the steep viridian fields  
like my granny's best patchwork quilt  
and on those bright clear days  
a child peering from the upstairs window  
of a sandstone cottage waves excitedly  
at my passing train between Grindleford and Hathersage

The embankment fern fronds

wilting on last nights dew

welcome one to Chinley and its single young copper beech

And then the beauty is brought suddenly down to earth by those skeletal pylons

standing in menacing rows like dual holstered cowboys

## **Welcome to Hanoi**

Lanterns on Lantau to guide them to sea  
can't the world realise they are all refugee's  
typhoons to ride when the going gets tough  
pirates to battle for when the going is good

Flying low over palm trees and sand  
not long to go now before they land  
the sun is shining the skies are blue  
welcome back to Vietnam

Back to their homeland let's see what they bought you  
a box full of grief and a suitcase of torture  
the city gleams of one million bikes  
suppression supreme there are no lucky strikes

Some faces are happy but most look depressed  
the fighting is over they all need a rest  
the soldiers have guns and the tanks are their toys  
welcome back to happy Hanoi

## **What's in the Bag Man's Bag**

To most he was just a tidy Bag Man  
carting his mysteries in his bright orange Sainsbury carrier  
(this was before the new biodegradable ones came out)  
hence he got a lot of mileage out of his and when worn  
then a new bag was placed over the old ones  
creating an ever increasing layer of history, a new micro generation  
he once allowed me to feel its weight  
talk of black holes it was like lifting a breeze block

So to many he was a kind of accepted outcast  
as he regularly attended Mass, Holy Days of Obligation and devotions  
in the parishes mother church, in his uniform donkey jacket and scuffed brown shoes

He was slick and thin and had the sharp appearance  
of an aging rockabilly star with a ginger greased quiff  
many thought he was unworthy of whom he was  
and the life he lived

In his younger days he deliberately left the riches of Cornwall  
to sleep in hedges by roundabouts or a skip in a Jersey car park from where he was  
once rescued

In latter years he rented a modest ground floor flat in East London  
where he opened the doors and shared with strangers  
feeding them food meant for him whilst surviving on coffee and biscuits  
giving sanctuary and shelter to even more worthy outcasts than himself

He was a master of the arts  
tramping around London's galleries by day  
with his bright bag before resting a while in St. James, Spanish Place

Eventually motor neurone disease took hold  
and he refused to see those who could help him.

*"They are not cutting open my skull"* he would say

*"and turn me into a cabbage"*

and then abruptly discharged himself from hospital  
in NHS pyjamas on a bus with a fare scrounged from a passer by

So housebound he became  
until upon a visit I had to call an ambulance  
as intensive care called him into a coma  
the life signs on the screen got excited  
when the Lords Prayer was recited by the hospital chaplain  
and someone said they saw angels in white around his bed  
getting ready to carry him home

Then the bag man expired, he was 59

Unexpectedly there was a big turn out at his requiem

It came to pass that in his younger days he was a respected mathematician and teacher who inspired many into grand professions and positions

I read the scriptures at his Funeral Mass

and a horse and posh cart carried him away to rest

it was a grey and muddy day underfoot so there was newspaper in my car to protect my floor mats

the Mail and the Express would have kept him warm in the past

When all was said and done and aired there was a revelation to us all

he was quite (well a bit) rich

his bag hid his wealth and was full of bonds and shares, a small fortune really more than just a whizz on the stock market

I only wish Sean had lived long enough to own one of those indestructible jute bags to carry his dreams in

## Where The Wild Garlic Grows

A solitary fell runner  
weedy and bearded  
against the elements  
on stick legs  
prances like a pied wag tail  
over the cattle grid  
and shattered shale  
through a gap in the gorse hedge  
then disappears by ascension  
into the suspension  
of low slung grey cloud  
hanging over the moist verges  
where the wild garlic grows

Ruskin's tomb  
rising looms  
aloft his companion's graves  
tickled by the trickle of rain  
with scenes of his life  
etched in Honistor's green slate  
that today finds it's form  
in gaily fonted house number plates  
but still, aside the resting stones  
the wild garlic grows

A single bluebird  
sits atop Campbell's headstone  
beneath Coniston's Old Man  
where water runs cold and gold  
in glistening iron reams  
in streams  
and dreams of speed  
where ghosts in the mist  
remember that day now long ago  
and just a bit in  
from the sheltered shore  
the wild garlic grows

In this wild wind swept land  
of late lake spring black lambs  
the craggy portent profiles  
of resting giants  
face the heavens  
and betwixt trodden paths  
and rich dark grass  
the wild garlic grows

William and Mary  
entwined  
among the roots and clusters  
of yellow daffodils  
lie together in peace  
beside their river  
free in a garden breeze  
and from in between  
some simple sepulchre slabs  
I picked some fallen seeds  
from where the wild garlic grows

**Winding Lanes, Shingle and Shale and Whiffs of Ale .....Oh and those Corpses in  
the Cliffs**

A winding lane to old Pin Mill

the Orwell sits in beauty still

*"The Butt and Oyster"* rests ashore

whilst old Thames barges look forlorn

Aldeburgh's beach of shingle and shale

turns a mariner's thoughts to mermaids and whales

fishermen bring the catch of the day

straight to the scales for sale and away

Walberswick pier and the bridge above

painted by Steer on the beach he loved

Dunwich where the ancients lived

bones of corpses roll out of the crumbling cliffs

Southwold postcards in colourful inks

whitewashed cottages and delicate pinks

a quiet breeze laden with salt

a whiff in the air of beer famous malt

## Winter

Wiping the condensation away  
from the eyes of the house  
the window reveals  
the frost and the snow  
in a frozen quartz forest garden  
undauntedly feline  
indented with a pattern of paws across the lawn

The gales from Scandinavia  
cut harshly over the land  
white petals twirl in a frenzy  
in a swirling hostile dance

The sun so readily surrenders  
early to the night  
the wind rustles through the laurels  
into the cobalt coloured sky

## Ypres

After the dying seconds of war had ebbed

Peace

But news travelled late to the sniper in wait

as the final round tolled from a rifle in haste

to take a young life and cause decades of waste

After searching all day beneath a sombre sky

we found his name

etched within

the Menin Gate

a life so short so sad in vain

## **And ..... Finally ..... Afterwords**

In the world today we must strive to practice peace and love

then when all has been said and done

we can say that we have tried our best

There are gems here - *Poetry Space*

These poems are beautiful and the collection has the intriguing quality of an autobiographical set of poems. In particular, I love the fact that the poems evoke a sense of place and yet the places written about are so disparate and conflicting, e.g. contrasting '*Summer in Suffolk*' with the poems about the war-torn East. There's a sense of yearning in the poems that refer to the past, e.g. '*Bury*'. I also love the simplicity of a short poem such as '*Absent from a Friend's Wedding*'. *Catherine Chapman – "Smashwords"*

The five star poetry is like a gentle breeze that caresses the face and tousles the hair slightly. Sometimes, the words create a storm of emotions so intense, that the reader will be forced to sit up and read again and again and again.

*A.G Chaudhuri - Shining Dawn*

I am once again struck by the child-like wonder in them ... refreshing ... endearing ... many of the poems are ravishingly beautiful in their simplicity and accuracy. *David Price - A Master Class*

This is a beautiful anthology. *Jessica Jade Burton - The Library of Living*

Thank you  
for  
reading  
*In Violet*

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