

# A STENCIL OF LIFE

By Ian Billingsley



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A STENCIL OF LIFE

© Ian Billingsley

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# A STENCIL OF LIFE

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This book is dedicated to my three children.

David, Christopher, Nicola  
and their growing families.

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# A STENCIL OF LIFE

*But not necessarily in that order.*



## CHILD OF THE 50'S

Child of the 50's, come along with me  
play 'I spy' with your minds-eye, tell me what you see.  
Look out of your window now, the springtime is here  
turn back to those 'dog-eared' pages to a time you once lived here.

I see jars full of frogspawn, swinging by the gate  
destined for a garden where the old sink lays in wait.  
A gang of trailing 'little-uns' following behind  
excited fascination running wild within their minds.

There's Bogeys on the back lane, with shiny buckled wheels  
cows peering through the railings, as we speed along the fields.  
Swap drivers at the pylon, rush back along the lane  
I never saw that bumpy bit, toes in the spokes again.

Child of the 50's, come along with me  
play 'I spy' with your minds-eye, tell me what you see.  
Look out of your window now, the summertime is here  
turn back those 'dog-eared' pages to a time you once lived here.

I see 'Cowies' chasing 'Injuns', across the dusty plains  
Robin Hood and Little John crafting, bows to play their game.  
Scabby, scarry elbows, retribution from the trees  
marble-bags slapping on their dirty, skin-grazed knees.

The whacking of the skipping rope, girls chanting along  
hopscotch, three balls on the wall, clapping games and songs.  
A sailor went to sea, you see, and they sang of their betrothed  
dressing up as bridesmaids, summer weddings, baggy clothes.

Child of the 50's, come along with me  
play 'I spy' with your minds-eye, tell me what you see.  
Look out of your window now, the autumn-time is here  
turn back those 'dog-eared' pages to a time you once lived here.

I see conkers dangling on a string, wrapped tightly on my wrist  
bruised knuckles from my best pal, 'cause his glasses didn't fit.  
But he's the best at climbing trees, shaking conkers to the ground  
crispy leaves like cornflakes fly, he was faster coming down.

Dress your mate and wheel him around. A penny for the Guy?  
Bonfires, fireworks, rip-wraps, coughing 'till you cry.  
Plates of treacle, toffee apples, hot-spuds black as coal  
milk bottles for your rockets, screaming pinwheels on a pole.

Child of the 50's, come along with me  
play 'I spy' with your minds-eye, tell me what you see.  
Scrape the icy window now, that wintertime is here  
turn back those 'dog-eared' pages to a time you once lived here.

I see dad's army greatcoat, that pinned me to my bed  
porridge steaming in a bowl, and crusty toasting bread.  
A red-hot poker in the fire, to warm the household through  
'Shut that door it's bloody cold! Born in a barn, were you?'

Across the brook and snowy fields, snowball fights abound  
wet feet in wellies full of snow, that made a 'trumping' sound.  
Freezing hands that felt so hot, in pockets full of holes  
mum's voice floats above the ponds, the time has come for home.

## 'TWAS A NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS

Let me know when they turn onto the road,  
was the order directed my way.  
Sue took a deep breath, unfazed none-the-less,  
she was 'bugger-up-the-back' nan would say.  
I was on look-out to make sure they pulled out,  
and Sue was in charge by the way.  
By the time they had gone, she flicked the lights on,  
her plan of action, now under way.

They've taken the key, the wardrobe is locked,  
we'll push it away from the wall.  
Then we'll see if it's got a back on or not,  
but don't push too hard it will fall.  
My back was breaking, and my body was shaking,  
at the thought of our underhand search being blown.  
There'd be no presents for us, I'd be on the first bus,  
on my way to the naughty-boys home.

Caz get a knife, it's got lots of screws,  
we'll have to take it to pieces.  
It shouldn't take long, as they've only just gone,  
we should manage them all between us.  
Determined to prove Father Christmas a ruse,  
A screwdriver was called into action.  
The bone-handled knife, caused nothing but strife,  
as it wasn't to Sue's satisfaction.

We all took our turn, we all had to learn,  
three working was easier than one.  
Sue un-screwed the last screw, that held the ply back to,  
reveal the secret she'd known all along.  
Well, Sisters and blisters killed my Father Christmas,  
that night in December when the presents were found.  
So no celebration, no just consolation,  
for the fairy-tale Christmas stamped firmly to ground.



## 50'S CHRISTMAS

Paper chains, crepe paper lanterns  
hang in the school hall.  
Making Christmas cards for mums and dads  
to hang proudly on their wall.  
Childhood dreams, Christmas Carols  
Holy Baby in the stall.  
Window-watched anticipation  
of winter's first snowfall.

Stocking draped, starched pillowcases.  
lay upon the bed.  
Father Christmas knows I've been bad  
'cause mum and dad had said.  
Sorry tears, guilty moments  
pull the 'down' over my head.  
I need to hide my naughty face  
or he'll go elsewhere instead.

TV ad's drive mums and dads  
frantic with despair.  
Pressure builds, the 'must-have' guild  
draws cash from everywhere.  
It's 2020, life has changed  
there's a strangeness in the air.  
The world deceives, what to believe?  
Life's hopes just can't compare.

And the carols? They're still playing,  
Yes I hear what they are saying,  
Yet the ghost of 50's Christmas,  
Still haunts me today.  
The pressure so unyielding,  
Melancholia always feeding,  
On the essence of a childhood,  
So far-far- away.



## THE '50'S

Shoes too tight, invite segs.  
Back to fire, corned beef legs.  
Wear that face, change it quick.  
Wind turns round, surely stick.  
Pick your nose, one pigs foot.  
Chimney sweep, for good luck.  
East wind blows, brings the snow.  
Jack Frost's bites off, all your toes.  
Swallow pips, tree inside.  
Carry on, swallow pride.  
Eat more carrots, better sight.  
Watch TV, get square eyes.  
Suck your thumb, crooked teeth.  
Tooth Fairy, make believe.  
Eat more fat, hairs on chest.  
Catch your death, wear your vest.  
Rude to stare, Rude to laugh.  
Lead me down, the garden path.  
Jump in bed, go to sleep.  
Don't want to hear, another peep.  
All dressed up, Sunday best.  
Cry too much, pee the less.  
Monkey's uncle, who's that man?  
I don't know, ask your mam.  
Spuds in ears, tidemarked neck.  
Go on forever, flippin' 'eck!



## THE LONGEST NIGHT

I walk in terror all alone,  
now I've lost you in my dreams.  
In a dark reality, far from home,  
where lives emptiness, in extremes.  
And the bogeyman, he torments me,  
as I search between the screams.  
Clammy hands rest on my shoulder,  
I can even feel him breathe.

He steers me far away from you,  
like we we're never meant to be.  
He walked me down a darkened trail,  
that I didn't need to see.  
He stole our time together,  
now love does not belong.  
I fear you're lost forever,  
I fear that I'm not wrong.

Sunshine calms my fearful state,  
now night has turned to day.  
My mind had wandered to a place,  
where I'd never want to stay.  
I hear your laughter down the stairs,  
and thank God that all is well.  
Dear mum and dad I've missed you both,  
I've just escaped from Hell.





## BOMMIE NIGHT AT THE BROOK

It's so exiting just can't wait to be lighting,  
the 'bommie' that stands by the brook.  
Everyone goes there 'cause everyone knows there'll,  
be plenty of bangers, ripraps and tuck.

It's taken us ages, we built it in stages,  
if it wasn't screwed down it was piled in the truck.  
Old tea-chests dead branches and we all took our chances,  
hiding inside constantly pushing our luck.

We still need some fireworks, time now for Guy Fawkes,  
to make an appearance and earn us some bread.  
It was out with dad's trousers and one of mum's blouses,  
old rags and a nylon to stuff for his head.

Then off on our wander with money to squander,  
we invade the sweet shop and its fireworks array.  
We fill up our pockets, penny bangers and rockets,  
'tupney' Cannons, and 'gobstoppers' to suck whilst we play.

The big day's arrived; November number five,  
we rush home in the dark after school.  
To stand and admire, this mountainous pyre,  
as we wait for the dads; that's the rule.

The brook now alive as the families arrive,  
and the wildlife moves far out of sight.  
Making room for the strangers and their irreverent dangers,  
as the flames steal the dark with their light.

Off jumped a riprap heading this way,  
into the crowd, it was determined to play.  
It popped up the skirt of an excitable Jen,  
then came the bang! and another! and then.

She took to her heels with a hop-skip-and-jump,  
shouting and screaming, "I just want me mum!"  
The riprap stayed close, enjoying the ride,  
rhythmically exploding with every stride.

Out of the crowd shot her dad's hairy arm,  
and lifted poor Jen clear away from the harm.  
Everyone cheered as she clung to his side,  
nervously laughing but bursting with pride.

The fire now dozing and cheeks glowing red,  
'orangey' embers floating way overhead.  
Young families still gathered for as long as they could,  
at this compelling attraction betwixt fire and blood.



## SCOUTING FOR BOYS

My eyes were stinging, as Brian was singing,  
a rude song he'd learned, in the Scouts.  
I couldn't stop giggling in fact mostly piddling,  
I spent more time in the bushes, than out.

Bri's rucksack looked like, it belonged on the Klondike,  
he was carrying everything under the sun.  
Pumps rhythmically dancing, on long laces hanging,  
were merrily banging a beat on his bum.

"Not far to go now, ' can't wait to sit down now,  
me rucksack is doin' me back in."  
There were pots and pans jingling, like Sunday bells ringing,  
but they sounded like one had a crack in.

We pitched the tent quickly, by a lake full of midges,  
that eat more of us, than we're having for tea.  
Campfire now burning, hot sausages turning,  
spitting with anger, aimed directly at me.

"I'm makin' an oven, so we can have puddin'"  
said Bri' with this tin on his knee.  
"It was in me dad's shed it's a bit rusty red,  
but it will clean up, just wait and see."

With a salivating mumble, he produced rhubarb crumble,  
from the depths of his rucksack, and that's no place to be.  
"Me mum has just made this, so I thought that we'd bake it,  
and have it for breakfast with custard! He-he."

So early next morning, half deafened by snoring,  
I searched for more kindling to awaken the fire.  
Bri' needed the embers, from what he remembers,  
so I sacrificed comfort, for the pain of the briar.

Our culinary Baden had already taken,  
the crumble, and 'custards', of which, we had four.  
It just wouldn't fit in, the old rusting cake tin,  
Then he tripped on his sandals, and it dropped to the floor.

The crumble in pieces, sporting sprinkled sheep faeces,  
fits easily now and, there's room for some more.  
Tinned custard 'propped' corners, that'll get just as warm as,  
the crumble now baking above, that's for sure.

Patiently waiting is 'flamin' frustrating,  
when your stomach dictates the right time for some 'scran'.  
The minutes last longer, the aches become stronger,  
as you spend half a lifetime just watching the pan.

Launch-time was looming, thrusters now booming,  
the countdown for lift-off had arrived, as was doomed.  
Brian looked flustered, blast-painted in custard,  
pointing skywards at the crumble on course for the moon.



## MYNAH-BIRD-MOLLY

Chicken-Bone-Kelly & Belly-Pork Betty,  
went strolling one evening, for something to do.  
When Jelly-babe-Jenny & Bacon-Rind Benny,  
came wandering round the corner and popped into view.

'ello you two. They replied, 'ow do!  
'asn't it gone blinkin' nippy?  
It's flaming well draughty, I'll get a chill up my 'crafty',  
what say we all stroll t' chippy?

Well, Mynah-Bird-Molly & Blackeye-Spuds-Bobby,  
the local purveyors of chip fat.  
Had filled their hot range, with fish, nothing strange,  
but the scallops were as big as pub beer mats.

Chips a 'tanner' a bag, wrapped in yesterday's 'rag',  
flew through the doors rather nicely.  
And with fish at a 'bob', and mushy peas on the hob,  
that would keep your mates well clear 'til Friday.

Mynah-Bird-Molly, (her friends called her Polly,)  
taught all her birds, the rude words that she knew.  
They were caged in the 'back-shop', well within ear- shot,  
of the customers waiting to be served in the queue.

Most were quite happy, to sit in the cafe,  
entertained nightly, whilst the sea air turned blue.  
From Urmston to Kinmel, from sparrow to whimbrel,  
their infamy blossomed bringing customers new.

So our trio plus one, found the queue and tagged on,  
and soon the smell of chips had them drooling.  
As they neared the door, keeping an eye on the score,  
was Pepé the petulant poodle.

He'd took on the job, to administer the mob,  
his house-rules were there for obeying.  
One step out of line, that would suit him just fine,  
as your leg volunteered for a spraying.

They arrived at the counter amidst jovial banter,  
and the Mynah Birds repeating everything that was said.  
A voice from the back-shop, said, Right Let's 'ave you lot.  
time t' bugger off and get 'ome t' yer bed.

All fed and dusted with tums fit for bustin',  
a chat in the car-park with a pop star or two.  
They called often in those days, in old bangers bent most ways,  
as the money they earned only favoured the few.

'Poll' was a 'pearler', (five foot two in her curlers),  
a bundle of fun with a heart of pure gold.  
She'd feed all of these lads, and weary back-stage dads,  
whilst they kept old Rhyl bouncing, with their new rock n' roll.

So Chicken-Bone-Kelly & Belly-Pork-Betty,  
wended their way towards a bottle or three?  
Jelly-Babe-Jenny & Bacon-Rind-Benny, said,  
we'll get these in, as you bought the tea.

Rhyl was a great place, where we wore out our fun face,  
on a bike with four wheels and a seat made for three.  
Tread-fishing for 'flatties', or eels for old Frankie,  
who'd pickle them quickly, (yuk!) fresh from the sea.



## A PLACE TO FILL

I remember well 1963,  
I was a student of some mediocrity,  
but I was so content at being me,  
until the 'big school' called my name.  
It changed my life within a year,  
being punished for reasons not quite clear,  
of teachers and students, I walked in fear,  
as my path in life now changed.

I skipped some lessons for a shorter day,  
things seemed more bearable I have to say,  
I guessed that in the end they'd make me pay,  
and so the cane and slipper reigned.  
Then I had to fight as there was no choice,  
I was the one alone with the nondescript voice,  
it was only heard when the hunters rejoiced,  
and the bullies and their lackies laid claim.

I'd take them on be they big or small,  
I'd not always win, but I fought them all,  
when it was done at least I stood tall,  
but of course, I'd paid the price.  
My respect for teachers now didn't exist,  
and the school, well I totally gave that a miss,  
no doubt they chose themselves another kid,  
to preach their perversity of life.

Sixty years on and I wonder still,  
why I was chosen, and I always will,  
there's always someone's place to fill,  
a tormented soul defined.  
I really thought those days had gone,  
that time and life had moved them on,  
yet they fester still whilst nothing's done,  
another nightmare. Another child.



## WHEN I GROW UP

When I grow up, I want to be,  
somebody that I like.  
A warm and gentle person that,  
I know will treat me right.  
Someone who'll love to share my dreams,  
and fill the space within my heart.  
Always be there, close to me,  
yet still treasure, times apart.

When I grow up, I want to be,  
somebody I respect.  
With manners so impeccable,  
so courteous and correct.  
Someone who can instil in me,  
the polite way to behave,  
By showing more compassion,  
for what others do or say.

When I grow up, I want to be,  
somebody with a smile.  
To take away the drudge of day,  
and make me feel worthwhile.  
Someone who will lift me up,  
the moment he's around.  
To teach me to believe in life,  
to place a smile above the frown.





## FIVE AFTER TWELVE

Was it really all those years ago,  
only seems like yesterday,  
Sweet 16 on the radio,  
and Sgt. Pepper brought his band to play.  
Wild eyed budgies took my heart to the moon,  
making love on the hills by the bay,  
secret moments that came at five after noon,  
William Golding on a midsummer's day.

Barbarella's calling on a Friday night,  
waiting for a 22 bus,  
Christmas pressies early really caused a fright,  
for two old ladies sat beside of us.  
Heading off to Wales in a rented car,  
Have Duxbury will travel, but you won't get far,  
no string in his pyjamas but that's how things were,  
oh but hey did you love me do.

Put to sea off Barmouth,  
“catch some dinner”. Sam said,  
sank within ten yards of the shore,  
dragged the boat back to the beach,  
off to the chippie instead,  
I guess we won't go fishing no more.  
Forty-four spells party-time it's Saturday night,  
climbing over bills in the hall,  
Spiddervan felt poorly, but the home-brew felt right,  
two pints and we could crawl up the wall.



## PRIVATE PAGES

*Sitting alone, many thoughts in your head, trying to  
write them all down. Pen touches paper, things best left  
unsaid, private pages not meant to be shown.*

Uprooted from the place you loved,  
you were forced to leave your home.  
Living life behind those 'walls of fear'  
dear friends you left alone.  
Together with your family,  
no room left in which to fly.  
A young girl sensing tragedy,  
dear God why did she die?

We grew up with her womanhood,  
her stresses and her fears.  
We read the thoughts of a little girl,  
who grew before her years.  
Her private life revealed to all,  
an intrusion read with shame.  
A special gift from a loving dad,  
his memories racked with pain.

All mankind must read and learn,  
generations, not just one.  
So they'll never forget the savagery,  
so they'll know what we have done.  
One little girl robbed of a life,  
she truly deserved to keep.  
A family destroyed by one man's greed,  
many millions left to weep.

Oh Anne you showed us courage dear,  
we know right to the end.  
You were never alone in that place,  
you were never without a friend.  
So many people loved you,  
your smile helped some stay alive.  
Only God knows why he took you,  
why he put you by his side.



## ANOTHER LIFE BE DONE

One day you won't wake up y' know  
Another life be done  
And history will go on y' know  
Of billions, you're just one  
Another blade of grass is mown  
And turned into the ground  
No shouts of 'Hey, I miss you'  
Deathly silence all around.



## FIRST LOVE

Why did I dream about you last night,  
what opened my thoughts to those days?  
I dreamt we were still, so deeply in love,  
how the mind works in mysterious ways.

I sat on the edge of my bed and I cried,  
when I realised it was only a dream.  
I felt so frustrated and angry inside,  
to play tricks with my mind is obscene.

Many times when I'm lonely,  
I've reached out for your heart,  
your warmth, and your memory so clear.  
The comfort I've gained, even though we're apart,  
such a way back in time, yet so near.

There's some things I can't love for less than a lifetime,  
I just can't forget how we both used to care.  
First love locked so deep, just waiting for the right time,  
to comfort and hold me, when there's no one else there.

## PORTLAND BITES

Orange lights, misty nights,  
fog-horn drones as Portland bites,  
ethereal clouds, mask the Heights,  
and Chesil's lost to view.

Turn around, homeward bound,  
familiar roads bereft of sound,  
clumsy steps on icy ground,  
that lead me back to you.

Stinging eyes, instinct guides,  
steers me on as senses lie,  
an apparition passes by,  
we share a shiver or two.

Eery fields, haunting squeals,  
maybe gulls? I take to heels,  
but Banshees have me, so it feels,  
trapped in this silver hue.

Nature wakes, no mistakes,  
have to reach a safer place,  
fear is drowning out my space,  
I know what I must do.

Dreams erased, thoughts curtailed,  
mind returns and sense prevails,  
from places I'll never see again,  
what has my life come to?



## DARK STREETS OF THE NIGHT

Please tell me a story about happy families,  
I'll play you a tune on my music machine,  
oh sailor boy please, buy a string of my novelties,  
tell me about all the places you've seen.

Is it true that there's snow on the mountains of Scotland,  
and wallaby's play in Australia's sun?  
Do children have parents, protect them with guiding hands,  
and the food on their plate's far too much just for one?

In Tokyo fireworks light up the sky at night,  
marionettes dance in the dark that I know,  
babies die in the streets here, oh God, what a shocking sight,  
a new star in our sky, is that all there's to show?

I have to work, it's called begging for titbits,  
my sisters, they walk the dark streets of the night.  
I'd like to meet this man they call Father Christmas,  
to ask for our share of love, we have the right.



## MAD MICK J

Twopenny bloods you've read 'em all,  
about the wild, wild west,  
if you should believe they're good,  
this tale's amongst the best.  
It's not been shown in no picture house,  
nor written in a book,  
it's about the reign of mad Mick J.  
in the days when the Southwest shook,

He lived on a ranch in Weymouth,  
e was one mean son of an itch,  
raised up on beans you know what that means,  
oh boy! he made the noses twitch.  
His ma and pa couldn't stand it,  
No more of this! they cried.  
With a blanket and two tent poles,  
they made sure he slept outside.

He terrorised the townsfolk,  
no-one dared go near the beach.  
Good men did try, so many died,  
but the sands were out of reach.  
No one man could stop him,  
as he galloped by the sea,  
this fearless dude could be seen at noon,  
riding high on his brave donkey.



A meeting of town elders,  
was called to end his reign.....  
of terror that ruled, but never quite fooled,  
'Big Sheila' was her name.  
They called her to the meeting,  
then she laid one day in wait,  
with one quick look, at her recipe book,  
Mick Jackson sealed his fate.

She dragged him off to her ranch,  
just to feed and quench his thirst.  
She made a gurt big pie, three veg's high,  
but she opened the windows first.  
Mick quickly saw his chance here,  
whilst a quivering inside,  
a quick smack on her lips went a gurt big kiss,  
Big Sheila's now his bride.



## A MOTHER'S LULLABY

It's the crying in the night  
in this strange world you've come into  
that makes me wonder what you see  
and what it is that makes you cry.  
Lay your head back on your pillow  
listen to me now close your eyes  
'cause there's nothing quite as beautiful  
as a mother's lullaby.



## THE PASSING

Well, I wonder who you'll be looking for,  
now that you know you are leaving.  
Which tug of love will be strongest,  
across the void of the disbelieving.  
There's all those who you've loved, and you've held so dear,  
long since gone with the pain and the passing years,  
your body's tired and your heart has ached too long.  
It's so easy to be gone,  
you've got the will you must fight on,  
each moment here with us costs less in tears.



## DIRTY OLD MANCHESTER

They lived in the smoke and the grime of the past,  
the sweat and the blood on the old cobbler's last,  
the miners they sang on their way to the face,  
yet still they all cherished and loved this old place.

they toiled in the mills with their lungs full of dust,  
the factories killed them, their wages unjust,  
they dug a canal right to the front door,  
their city now seemed like a town on the shore.

Dirty old Manchester where are you now,  
you've stood up and wiped all the sweat from your brow?  
Your children have grown, lifted you off your seat,  
dusted you down, brought new life to your streets,  
they've cleaned up your image, and your past they won't hide,  
dirty old Manchester, hold your head up with pride.

The hustle and bustle of ships of the line,  
took fathers and sons from the smoke and the grime,  
they travelled afar many wonders they saw,  
but alas time went by, and the port is no more.

No pits now, no mills and the ships they've all gone,  
a new age has dawned, there's a will to fight on,  
technology blossoms, the city has grown,  
Manchester we're proud, to call you our home.



## WHAT Y' GONNA DO

Another day has dawned, there is no need to hurry,  
another calf's been born, his momma's got no worries,  
two hundred pounds or more, lifts himself from the floor,  
crinkly pink leathery hide stands lovingly by, his momma's side.

Chorus

Listen to me Satan's sons,  
what you gonna do when the elephant's gone?  
Where will you look next in your greed,  
slaughtering aimlessly, supplying the needs?  
Blaming the carnage on small mouths to feed,  
living lives of lords while the elephant bleeds.  
What will we do when you have done?  
How can we tell our children where the elephant's gone?

Another place in time, a raging thirst comes calling,  
but nature sends a sign, as instinct sees him stalling.  
He senses there is something wrong, the panic in the birds new  
song,  
he lifts his trunk high in the air, one split second left to stare.

Chorus

Listen to me Satan's sons,  
what you gonna do when the elephant's gone?  
Where will you look next in your greed,  
slaughtering aimlessly, supplying the needs?  
Blaming the carnage on small mouths to feed,  
living lives of lords while the elephant bleeds.  
What will we do when you have done?  
How can we tell our children where the elephant's gone?

Another shot is fired, the herd has got to scatter,  
the panic is now on, it ain't no laughing matter,  
six tons of flesh and blood, ends its life here in the mud,  
eleven feet of Kenyan pride, lost to all, the beast has died.

Chorus

Listen to me Satan's sons,  
what you gonna do when the elephant's gone?  
Where will you look next in your greed,  
slaughtering aimlessly, supplying the needs?  
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two hundred pounds or more, lifts himself from the floor,  
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## EMMA

It was a cold and frosty morning,  
when Emma trod the streets.  
The icy air that cuts her yawn,  
stamps by with frozen feet.  
Memories of a home life,  
and a smile for times gone bye.  
Warm memories for her lost love,  
and a question still asks; Why?

Left alone to wander,  
through the streets to lose her pain,  
this lonely child still wonders,  
if she'll ever love again?  
Her last bathe in the sun of morning,  
fights the cold of the moon at eve,  
she finds the answer to her question,  
as she always did believe.



## MY FRIENDS

Leave me alone, I'm alright where I am,  
sat in my tree and I don't give a damn,  
I don't need your fire, I don't need your books,  
take it from me, where I am it just looks,  
that learning's done you no good anyhow,  
and if it wasn't for that, where would you be now,  
my friends?

You make your books from trees,  
yet learn nothing at all,  
you're polluting the seas,  
you're destroying us all.  
We don't need your hate,  
we don't need your greed,  
all we ask is peace and fresh air to breath,  
my friends....

You're destroying the jungles,  
destroying our homes,  
there'll be nowhere to live,  
when the last tree goes.  
It's bound to be too late, when you realise,  
you'll take away it all, until the last chimp dies.  
my friends.....

Your yearning for all, has took it all away,  
when you've learned what you've done,  
what will you have to say,  
My friends?





## THINK ABOUT THE HEARTACHE

Is it possible to love somebody, more than words can say?  
Do you think that you could love someone forever and a day?  
Or is it just a notion that you get within your mind,  
when you think of all the loves you've lost,  
all memories of sad times?

Think about the heartache,  
think about the fears,  
think about the loneliness,  
you've felt throughout the years.  
You must have felt it yourself,  
you must have tasted tears,  
put your trust in me see how it can be,  
once the heartache disappears.

This time your love is so deep, dare you let your feelings go?  
There's no need to be frightened, you can let your loving show.  
It might not last a lifetime so don't hide it all inside,  
put it to the test and give your best, brush those memories aside.



## FOREVER I STAND

Ten minutes? Not a lot to ask,  
just to reflect on times now past,  
some good, some bad, some happy, sad,  
another life we used to have.

Those endless days of tenderness,  
of holding hands and sweet caress,  
of passions deep and romance wild,  
of laughs, of love, of little child.

Then hurting, scheming, pain untold,  
such weary times, as lies unfold,  
trust betrayed, the hurt lies deep,  
your promise gave, not bound to keep.

Sense has gone, a mind confused,  
good friends now lost, I stand bemused,  
look now, the damage, it's been done,  
forever I stand, the lonely one.



## TOO CLOSE

I often used to hear you say,  
You live too close to yesterday,  
You need to be where life is living now.  
So leave the past way back in place,  
Wear that smile upon your face,  
Open those tabs, turn around, take a bow.

I try to live this moment,  
But I dream of times gone by.  
How I yearn to make new memories,  
But my yearning will not try.  
It leaves me rooted long ago,  
In a time that's always best,  
Alive to breathe,  
My mind perceives,  
Just what the hell is happiness?



## NATURE'S TABLE

It's nice t' go off in 't caravan,  
an' live in a field fer a week,  
t' wake up wi' all t' birds singin',  
listenin' t' mouses squeak.  
As t' big birds chase 'em fer breakfast,  
'cause they don't like shredded wheat,  
they fly very fast, like t' clappers,  
an t' mouse legs-it, wi' steamin' 'ot feet.

Afternoon 'ad arrived, and were goin',  
an' excitement was building in t' air,  
like a message were relayin' t' wildlife,  
they were comin' from everywhere.  
The tables of nature are turning,  
now it's their time t' be entertained,  
an' poke fun at t' dominant species',  
who sometimes have \_\_\_\_ for brains.

A classic pair rolls into campsite,  
1970's, or thereabout,  
an' drives wrong way around roadway,  
which brought all t' good' folks out.  
They were shoutin' 'an' laughin' 'an' Screamin',  
some wavin' their 'ankies about,  
there were kids joinin' in, with elation,  
like ice-cream was costin' 'em nowt.

It must 'a bin confusing fer t' driver,  
'e drove, right up bank, amidst shouts,  
at an angle that looked pretty scary,  
with t' creditability, of t' drawbar in doubt.  
So, inevitable just 'ad t' 'appen,  
an' caravan came 'urtling back down,  
it stopped with a thump at t' bottom,  
with a melee of internal sounds.

So, t' drawbar were pointin' t' 'eavens,  
an' back winder, were 'arf 'angin' out,  
there were an 'ush, fer about twenty seconds,  
then a din like me grandad wi' gout.  
It were bangin' an' rockin' an' thumpin',  
what thee 'eck were it all about?  
Then t' caravan door burst open,  
an' six rather large people squeezed out.

They seemed quite surprised t' see us,  
"What's the matter?" One asked with a grin.  
"We're all heading down to Weymouth,  
this way we can get more of us in".  
After 'itchin' back up wi' t' driver,  
an' t' other four sat in t' back,  
they pitched up by the trees, in t' corner,  
an' we're gone before dawn found it's crack.

It's nice t' go off in 't caravan,  
an' live in a field fer a week,  
t' study t' art, of our fellow man,  
who packs 'is brains, right 'igh, up his seat.  
E's determined t' always deliver,  
especially when t' mood is quite low,  
so if yer feelin' a bit under t' weather,  
get up, get a caravan, go.



## THE GREBES OF CROXTON FLASH

Not before I've listened to,  
constant echoes of the past,  
can I walk in footsteps gone before,  
in a timelessness, so vast.  
I sense abandoned promises here,  
heart's desires that didn't last,  
and they walk right there beside me,  
and the grebes of Croxton Flash.

Calming waters whisper,  
as the breeze sails idly by,  
of hushed and forlorn messages,  
from a time that cannot die.  
And as hands reach out to touch you,  
seeking solace from their pain,  
such emptiness devours you,  
yet their cries are all in vain.

Take heed all you boaters,  
as you cruise those waters clear,  
when that same cry reaches out to you,  
don't stand aghast in fear.  
It's just a grieving heart that's waiting,  
for a soul within your past,  
as it does when the boats come calling,  
on the grebes of Croxton Flash.



## DUE SOUTH

So A bought me a boat t' go cruisin',  
'cause A loved t' water s' much.  
it were 18 foot long with no room in,  
'ccept a cabin, as small, as a hutch.  
A canoe with a bit of a roof on?  
Well no, not as tiny as that,  
an' yeh, A wanted a big one,  
'ow else could A swing me a cat?

In fairness, t' cabin weren't gloomy,  
two could sit, round t' table, an' sup,  
but when yer needed t' 'little boys roomy',  
yer 'ad t' lie down t' stand up.  
It were a luvly cruise out t' Dunham,  
just me boat, the water, 'n' me.  
A thought there were a problem, wi' gearbox,  
but a'd still got rope, tied t' tree.

This place just oozes out 'istry,  
the lands, the gentry, the canal.  
An' it's all thanks to Mr. James Brindly,  
the Duke of Bridgewater's pal.  
Then makin' me way back t' moorin',  
it were ever such a peaceful day,  
with people just wavin 'n' smilin',  
an' wishin' me well along t' way.

A were baskin' in their nautical envy,  
as A smiled, and nodded, in reply,  
when a 'ping!' got me all of a frenzy,  
as t' nut, and t' bracket, wizzed by.  
Well, t' boat took a sharp turn t' starboard,  
it were so sudden, A almost fell in,  
A managed, t' get me legs inboard,  
then bugger! It did same thing, agen!

So A'm facing all points of t'compass,  
that A'd read of, in t' 'Mariners Guide,  
goin' round 'n' round, like down t' plug-'ole,  
with me head, due south, over t' side.  
A couldn't get up, A were dizzy,  
so A just sat there, playin' t' fool,  
feignin' A were bein' so busy,  
'til th' engine ran outa fuel.





## SPADGER'S CATCH

A cratch full of spiders seems all that's beside us,  
as the wreck of poor Spadger hangs limp to the wall.  
Abandoned forever but her spirit remembers,  
all who've sailed in her; the crew one and all.

Bedraggled and helpless she's still quite the temptress,  
as she lays alongside having taken the fall.  
Her weather-gnarled cabin weeps odours to gag in,  
as the chill and 'Old Charlie' decided to call.

Together they'd travelled as pressures unravelled,  
'Old Charlie' became the man, he'd once been.  
Gone were the worries, life had no hurry,  
Spadger and Charlie cruised the life of his dreams.

They shared for each other a bond like no other,  
traversing the counties as the years floated by.  
His life filled with meaning then one fateful evening,  
death called him too early, one night in July.

She appeared on the mooring one bleak misty morning,  
drifting in silence she slipped into view.  
Her appearance quite daunting, her presence most haunting,  
her welcome so special to only the few.

Early this morning, a lady came calling,  
one who looked longingly, passing this way,  
Her soul is still yearning, her desire still burning,  
but the pain disconcerting, for her times yesterday.

The years of pretending, her pain never ending,  
fingers point sending her mind the wrong way.  
Creating illusions, defending confusion,  
she turned on her heels and walked out of play.

Spadger's awaiting, a lost soul contemplating,  
an end to a nightmare, of a life so unsure.  
Mystically baiting this lady in waiting,  
as she senses attraction, like never before.

She steps aboard Spadger, and the magic surrounds her,  
she takes to the tiller and gets under-way.  
Narrowboat gleaming, her 'self' takes on meaning,  
and their need for each other, starts the healing today.



## BEYOND THE CURLING WOODSMOKE

Sitting round the Campfire,  
In the quiet of the night,  
Glowing, licking, dancing flames,  
New timbers take alight.  
Then souls depart on journeys,  
To those fires of yesterday,  
Sparking memories of the friendships,  
Time has lost along the way.

"Hi Skip!" shouts the young man,  
As he looks to me and stares,  
A face that's so familiar,  
Free of worry, free of cares.  
"Thanks for all you taught me Skip,  
I really loved the game."  
Saluting then, he turns away,  
Disappearing in the flames.

Never ending faces smile,  
To span the tide of years,  
Yes good times, sure enough, they were,  
Long forgotten now, the tears.  
"OY Skip! You still with us?"  
Drifts a voice across the age,  
"You'd nodded off and left us.  
Good to have you back again."

The souls that dance in shadows,  
Amongst the trees where once they stood,  
Alive again like yesterday,  
Within the heat of burning wood.  
Beyond the curling wood smoke,  
I can blame its stinging smell,  
And attest my mocking Scouters,  
"Be assured, all is well."



## LISTEN TO THE VOICE

When those restless moments wake you,  
in the loneliness of night,  
Listen to the voice inside that whispers,  
“Hey, it's alright.”  
A voice which lies within your mind,  
to ease away your pain,  
The voice; a lover yet unknown,  
who'll teach you love again.

Waiting in mind's shadows,  
there is hope, there is light,  
Patience straining to life's limits,  
there to rid your fear of night,  
A voice so reassuring,  
you can listen, hear the call,  
Take heed the new beginning,  
which awaits you; one and all.



## SEPTEMBER MIST

Twisting, rolling, swirling,  
tiptoeing round the bend,  
September Mist, she stirs on by,  
her journeys never end.  
Cheshire tales abounding,  
as she whispers, one and all,  
to captivate the dreamer,  
as he steers within the pall.

A face within the rushes,  
taps his shoulder, passes near,  
a ghostly breath caresses all,  
cold kisses, distant fear.  
A haunting from a stranger,  
turns his head to whence he came,  
where prevails no sense of danger,  
only lust to play her game.

Fixated by temptation,  
earthly boundaries cast aside,  
she offers consolation,  
for past lovers, those denied.  
His weak-ness into her mist descends,  
such frailty borne within,  
September Mist, she stirs on by,  
new journeys to begin.



## ONE MAN, TWO MAN AND HIS DOG

It were 'af past 10 on a tuesday  
A were eatin me porridge real fast  
A were waitin' fer Norm ter come knockin'  
We're goin' out, on't boat, fer a blast.

'E turned up, with his Volvo, all steamin'  
An' walked up the path, draggin' 'is leg  
E said, me top 'ose is doing some leakin'  
Av got ter watch, me cylinder 'ead.

So A said, Norm why are yer limpin'?  
'E answered whilst scratchin' an' said,  
Well, fan belt snapped, Av no nylons  
So 'ad to use, me socks, instead.

So we left for 't moorin's thereafter,  
Car whistlin' an' steamin' in vain,  
We 'ad faces as black as Fred Dibna,  
Oo, Am sure, were in't front, drivin' train.

A breath of fresh air is t' moorin's,  
A step back in time t' days,  
When you'd wake with a smile in t' mornin',  
And you call for yer mates t' come play.

As we sailed off heading fer t' Flashes,  
With t' sun, yard-arm, an' all that,  
Norm cracked open, a couple of 'tinnies, an' said,  
'ere, get yer lips around that.

As we passed through t' narrows at Dunham,  
Approaching 'Ye Olde No.3',  
Water was coming in faster,  
Than t' tide, at Clacton-on-Sea.

We seem to 'ave developed a theme 'ere,  
Steam being t' word of t' day,  
But, Norm's, got an old magic spanner,  
And Nellie were soon under way.

Lynn steered us through t' first tunnel,  
It were light, it were long, it were wide,  
There's even a lay-by, in t' middle,  
You could drive, an 'ole Volvo, inside.

'azy moments take over t' tiller,  
An' t' calm sieves away all t' strain,  
60 minutes of total reflection,  
Presents, with a tunnel, again.

Well, there's no light at t' end of this tunnel,  
The end where the 'ole should've been,  
'Cause this one's all crooked an' twisty,  
As yer wiggle and wriggle between.

Oh yeh it can be quite disconcerting,  
T' thems as not done it before,  
The art of this navigation is,  
Close yer eyes, and bounce off t' wall.

We moored alongside, at t' flashes,  
And just sat there, admiring t' view,  
When a boat chugged in, coughing out ashes,  
't were Ian Del, n' Sammy dog too.

Well Sammy shot out of t' cabin,  
As Ian, stepped ashore, on t' the grass,  
She'd not got 'er nautical 'ead on,  
One jump, fresh air, big splash!

So 'e lifted 'er out of t' water,  
Where she instantly wrung 'er self out,  
She'll not do that again 'til tomorra.  
Maybe sooner, said Norm, no doubt.

Dogs 'ave an issue with moorin's,  
Or remembrin', more's the like,  
Tha 'ard bit, the bit with t' floorin',  
Is not always, same side, as last night.  
pose, A'd best catch me boat then,  
Ian shouted, as he chased, up t' path,  
'is centre rope, slither an' slidin',  
Like a slow worm, but shiftin' quite fast.

Well t' evenin' crept ever so gently,  
After Lynn filled us all, with some tea,  
It were a curry that Norm 'ad made earlier,  
Very nice, very hot, oops! Pardon me.



We all sat there watchin Norm fishin',  
Then cracked open t' whisky at eight,  
Then Norm said, 'Me Spam's gone missin',  
That Casper's, run off, with me bait.

Sure enough, there 'e was, ont' towpath,  
Norm shouted, but 'e wouldn't come in,  
Casper looked up, did we laugh,  
'E'd got 'is 'ead, stuck tight, in't tin.  
Now, Sammy Dog's not without cunnin',  
On seein' poor Casper Dog's plight,  
She nipped nimbly inta t' cabin,  
An' woofed Casper's tea, outa sight.

So we laughed, and we drank, and was gassin',  
Four friends, all at one, with t' day,  
Unaware of 'ow quick, time was passin',  
Whilst we still 'ad, so much, yet t' say.

Be aware of this moment you're living,  
When true friends, step up, to the mark,  
Try not to take more than you're giving,  
As you'll look back with a tear in your heart.

Now time has moved on life is lacking,  
Some dear friends, and pets, now all gone,  
But I swear, I still hear them all laughing,  
As the Flashes, and memories, flow on.



## FROM KNICKERBOX TO NARROWBOAT

Well! I met this wicked lady  
One snowy Christmas time  
She was dancing on her crutches  
To a favourite song of mine.

Well! She'd had an operation  
Her toes now, numbered nine  
As it wasn't too far, I strolled to the bar  
And I bought her a glass of wine.

Well! She looked at me, n' I looked at her  
Not quite sure where her marbles were  
So I downed my pint and pushed my luck  
Strolled across the floor and grabbed a hold of  
her crutch.  
Oh yeh.... Oh yeh....

Well! We boogied left, we woogied right  
In fact we boogie-woogied all through the night  
Oh my, oh my what a funny old sight  
And still she never drank the wine.

Well! To cut things short, she moved onboard  
With half of Marks & Spencer's and an ironing board  
And with water tight, she washed her whites  
Blues, reds, anything in sight  
Oh yeh.... Oh yeh...

Well! She wishied left, she washied right  
In fact she wishie-washied all through the night  
Oh my, oh my what a funny old sight  
And still she never drank the wine.

Chorus

The Banksmen and the Boaters all  
Would smile as we cruised by  
A washing line from bow to stern  
A rainbow on the fly  
A flight of flapping coloured  
murmuration's in the sky  
From knicker-box, to narrowboat  
All hanging out to dry.

Well! The washing line, it snapped one day  
We trawled the Trent & Mersey as we made our way  
The fish didn't bite, so that was alright  
But all the local anglers had the catch of their lives.  
Oh yeh.... Oh yeh...

Well! She wishied left, she washied right  
In fact she wishie-washied all through the night  
Oh my, oh my what a funny old sight  
And still she never drank the wine.

Well! We were making good time, as we cruised to the wides  
When It sounded like the plumbing was coming alive  
There was a grunt over here, a groan over there  
Then half a ton of water splashing everywhere.  
Oh no...oh no

Well! It splishied here, it splashied there  
In fact it splishy-splashied almost everywhere  
Oh my, oh my what utter despair  
I had to sit and drink the wine.

Chorus

The Banksmen and the Boaters all  
Would smile as we cruised by  
A washing line, from bow to stern  
A rainbow on the fly  
A flight of flapping coloured  
murmuration's in the sky  
From knicker-box, to narrowboat  
All hanging out to dry.

Well! The water-pump broke, we phoned up the bloke  
"Bring your bag of spanners, the canal's in me boat"  
Well! we were wellies deep, we couldn't sleep  
Baling out the water until half past three.  
Oh yeh...oh yeh.

Well! Margaret survived; the new pump arrived  
I could see excitement building in one flash of her eyes  
Spanners looked at me, he said, "That's it all done,  
You can wishie-washie everything the water's back on. "  
Oh yeh...oh yeh

Well! She wishied left, she washied right  
In fact she wishie-washied all through the night  
Oh my, oh my what a funny old sight  
Now I need another bottle of wine.

Final Chorus



## THE STARS OVER WARWICK

The stars shine bright over Warwick  
In the cooling, misty air  
As we wander on to the 'Folly'  
And the warmth of a welcome there  
An icy moon draped in fine lace  
Keeps watch from high above  
The guardian of our universe  
A symbol of our love.

We stroll and gaze about us  
In damp fields the cattle lie  
Young lambs snuggle closely  
'neath their first November sky  
The world slows down for winter  
Behind doors the people stay  
Time lost in a dream of Springtime  
As they wish their life away.

As towpath steers the hedgerow  
'Glistening borders of the night'  
Lead onwards through our lifetime  
Side by side forever bright  
Lighting paths as we still stumble  
On those rocks of yesterday  
But like the lambs, we know tomorrow  
Will bring merriment and play.



## GREEN EYES POINT A FINGER

Green eyes points a finger at me, Looking for a flaw.  
Don't like the way they hurt, accuse me,  
We've been there several times before.  
It's not that I give you reason,  
Hey girl that you know.  
I feel like I'm open season,  
As you search out those shadows from so long, long, long ago,  
Honey I don't know.

Green eyes boils the anger in me, hurting like before.  
Don't kill this love I have inside me,  
Don't know why you're just so insecure.  
I think maybe you're too greedy,  
Hey girl you must know.  
I feel like I'm open season,  
As you search out those shadows from so long, long, long ago,  
Honey I don't know.

### Chorus.1

Hey...hey,hey, what you doing to me girl,  
Can't you see that you're just rocking our world,  
I could understand if you don't want me no more,  
But for heaven's sake sit down,  
Shake off this jealous frown,  
Don't let our loving down,  
Cause there's a price we'll pay for sure.  
I don't want it no more...uh ha, I won't take it no more.

Green eyes takes the moment from me, love runs like before.  
No help to share the fears inside me,  
Pride stands aside whilst you hurt me some more.  
Shouldn't have to keep retreating.  
Hey girl I said no.  
I feel like I'm open season,  
As you search out those shadows from so long, long, long ago,  
Honey I don't know.



## DESTINY MORPHS

I try so hard not to make, the same old careless mistakes,  
yet I seem destined to do it all the time.  
My heart steers me one way, never sure that it's the right way,  
so the thoughts Just twist and turn in within my mind.

What seems like common sense, has me sat upon the fence,  
as I battle on to interpret it all.  
My brain seems not to function, and I struggle at this junction,  
indecision slowly dictating my fall.

So it's the tossing of a coin, metaphorically employed,  
and it's not the ideal way life should be handled.  
I then lose track of my soul, giving the devil full control,  
as my destiny morphs into a gamble.





## IF ONLY I COULD TAKE YOUR HAND

If only I could take your hand,  
make you listen, understand,  
this life is not what I had planned,  
where I lived within my world.

I felt so strong and in control,  
each moment of my life, I owned,  
the dreams I had I never told,  
where I lived within my world.

Depression is a lonely place it's  
haunted by so many faces,  
living aimlessly in fearsome spaces,  
where life should never be.  
So many issues walk the streets here,  
no reason left to laugh or cry here,  
confidence has passed me by here,  
and you're too blind to see.

I made a plan, I changed my mind,  
forever new those shifting tides,  
and I never knew what I would find,  
where I lived within my world.

I awoke one morning, something strange,  
mind not broken; re-arranged,  
life moved onto another plain,  
and all was lost within my world.



## JUST A BIT

So we bend a bit, then groan a bit,  
invent new words and moan a bit,  
accept the fact we've aged a bit,  
and been here for a while.

We cough a bit, then fart a bit,  
but together? Ha! That's the smartest bit,  
I know there's no excuse for it,  
but doesn't it make you smile?



## BUSHELL & PECK

'Light- fingers-Larry', and his chum, 'Burglar-Barry',  
we're off to the shops for a 'swift' local rob.  
They are off on their hol's, to the Costa-del-sol,  
and were needing to raise themselves, a few 'bob'.

Well, the shops in those days, were so set in their ways,  
and the post office was no exception.  
With pension day looming, and business' just booming,  
they'd target their time to perfection.

With their haul now complete, they were quick on their feet,  
as they raced to the local train station.  
In a stolen Red Jag' and their bag full of swag,  
en-route to their safe destination.

But oh by the heck, Messrs Bushell & Peck,  
the local constabulary's 'big knobs'.  
Had got them both 'sussed', as scuffers they must,  
they we're eager to wrap up, their job.

This crime-busting team is the best there has been,  
according to police-force statistics.  
Bush's gift of the gab, (the old gramophone jab),  
is well versed in 'rectumnal' linguistics.

So they followed the train, which was not bound for Spain,  
as Larry and Barry envisioned.  
It was the 4.43, passing through Connah's Quay,  
and stopping at Rhyl with precision.

Confused were the lads, but then thought, it's not bad,  
we'll get a B&B down, near the prom.  
But oh by the heck, Messrs Bushell and Peck,  
lay in wait with their 'Kiss Me Quick' hats on.

In the main station hall by the sticky rock stall,  
the super-sleuths had got their measure.  
They threw a 'quid' to the floor, just knowing the score,  
and knew that both, would bend for the treasure.

The clashing of heads had them both giving zeds,  
as they were loaded into the wagon.  
And oh by the heck, Messrs Bushell & Peck,  
solve another, 'cause crime is their passion.



## A SMILE UPON MY MIND

I wake up in the morning with a smile upon my mind,  
another day to hide away, from the man I left behind,  
and in this face, a stranger takes his place for all to see,  
whilst locked inside, the real man hides  
there's something haunting me.

Say what you like about how you care,  
or feel for those at whom you stare,  
this person could be anywhere,  
right next to you, maybe.

He's short or fat, or tall or thin,  
unless you look, you won't see him,  
his illness is so deep within,  
so deep you cannot see.

He carries such a weight around,  
living pain, without a sound,  
nightmares constantly abound,  
where he does not want to be.

This stranger you would never guess,  
whose tortured day thrives on this stress,  
shrouded in his loneliness,  
is a friend you often see.



## NOAH'S DILEMMA

Said Noah to Joan, I'm fed up at home,  
I think I'll go build me a boat.  
Huh! With your carpentry skills,  
we'll be hammered with bills,  
and a boat that won't bloody well float.

You've got a cheek, remember the sheep,  
that you sheared just to make me a jacket?  
it was so flaming big, it fit me and a pig,  
and a monkey in each of the pockets.

So where will you float it, I don't know if you've noticed,  
we live at the top of a bloody great hill?  
There's no water for miles, she teasingly smiles,  
just make it on wheels you could push it!

Don't mock me woman or you won't be coming,  
when I sail with the tide bound, for adventures a new.  
This will be a test of, (I'll cruise with my vest off),  
my nautical prowess and competent crew.

Ha! Don't make laugh dear, the tiniest of drafts near,  
you'll be wearing more coats than the mighty Forth Bridge.  
No crew admiration, just the animal nation,  
and my mother's pork pies for your tea in the fridge.

Well, I beg your pardon, those beasts in the garden,  
can't sail with me, I've new lands to explore.  
And I'd need lots of cages, now they would take ages,  
'else I'd end up on the menu, for sure.

How far could you travel, with only one paddle;  
the one I trip over navigating the shed?  
And of course, there's your bad back, arthritis and bus-pass.  
Why don't you just stay home, watch the tele' instead?



## NEXT GENERATION MAN

Knowledge moving far too fast,  
ignoring lessons of the past.  
Stamping over common sense,  
experience? Irrelevant!  
Cram your head so full of facts,  
no time in this world to relax.  
Have to keep on cramming in,  
Next-generation-man must win.

Organic robots you'll become,  
lacking meaning, lacking fun.  
Whilst knowledge breeds in ageing skin,  
no sense or wisdom found within.  
No love inside to share around,  
they'll just be words that Google found.  
The greatest gift you give, is life,  
whilst demanding childhood sacrifice.

Your babies born in science lab's,  
no place now for doting dads.  
Do not cut the vital chord,  
it's still attached to the motherboard.  
Downloading thirty years or more,  
knowledge only, nothing more.  
Now before you disconnect,  
delete these words; empathy, respect.



This greed for knowledge, undefined,  
will aid the downfall of mankind.  
You teach the children to ignore,  
what matters most, what's gone before.  
The planet chokes as you stand by,  
do you even know, the reason why?  
Your money tells its tale of woe,  
as that's what matters, this we know.

This knowledge that you crave so much,  
is forcing mankind out of touch.  
The planet's screaming, time is short,  
a time for action, not just thoughts.  
Beware the learning that you teach,  
life's moving backwards, out of reach.  
Reality must take the floor,  
this is the future; we've been before.



*The Christmas break of 2021/22, (12 days of), was the most devastating one that I have ever lived through. The trauma of losing my two closest companions, and within five days of each other, will without live with me forever.*

## JOURNEY'S END

Friday 23.30 : 31-12-21

It was something that she hated

And we hated it for her.

But this night on her final journey,

The world lit up for sure.

Celebrations for the New Year,

Is what the world could see.

But tonight, the sky wept many colours,

As she said night-night to me.

"Night-night Indy. See you in the morning. xx"



## NIGHT-NIGHT INDY

I'm crying because you've left me darling,  
I know you had to go.  
The pain was far too much for you,  
and the strain began to show.  
You tried your best to stay with me,  
as you knew I needed you.  
You've taught me such a lot in life,  
and now I don't know what to do.

As you lay there looking up at me,  
you were saying your goodbye.  
That was the last time I ever looked into,  
those compelling dark brown eyes.  
I took you in my arms right there,  
and carried you away.  
Your body was on fire right then,  
you didn't have long to stay.

We shared a special time out there,  
stood where you loved to be.  
With your head resting on my shoulder,  
which we did often, you and me.  
The moment said, it's time for mum,  
and I placed you in her arms,  
Where you gently left us, peacefully,  
blessed with love and broken hearts.



## JUST A SMILE AWAY

Wednesday 15.00 : 05-01-23

I had lived a life before you,  
Now I have to live a life without.  
But the life I shared so much with you,  
Was tremendous without doubt.

I thought that we would always be,  
Together you and I.  
A carved- in- stone, sworn destiny,  
Not a future deemed to lie.

You were always just a smile away,  
Within inches from my side.  
The distance now between us,  
Is a measurement in time.

You taught me how to love so hard,  
Like I never will again.  
So much love, such tiny hearts,  
Life will never be the same.

I know we'll never meet again,  
It saddens me, but it's true.  
Alas with time no faith remains,  
My heart so cries out for you.



## THE MAGIC OF MARLEY

He'd wait until he heard you Stumble,  
then up the stairs, off he'd tumble,  
with a cosy slipper for one of your feet,  
the price for this service, a nice juicy treat.

Of course, one slipper isn't much good,  
so down he'd fly as clever dogs would,  
to fetch up slipper number two,  
a treat for him, oh and Indy too.

Always watching, so aware,  
whatever you're doing, he'd be there,  
to show his interest in what you do,  
whilst all the time he's fooling you.

You move an inch or blink an eye,  
his furry body would sneak on by,  
Crawling off to Indy's room,  
mouth full of swag, "I'll get a treat soon."

Removing socks from babies feet,  
his coolest trick and so discrete,  
so full of mischief, it's his job,  
then off to his lair with the latest rob.

He was a master of the 'slight of jaw',  
but baby grows? they had him floored,  
he'd tug so gently but they'd stay on,  
the only time a victim won.

Margaret's glasses, now there's a game,  
he'd claim these over and over again,  
we'd suddenly notice that he'd gone,  
he'd be in Indy's room with the glasses on.

He wore them more than Margaret did,  
he Didn't need them he was just a kid,  
he Didn't read books, it was just a game,  
now you've both gone missing and he's not to blame.

Night-night Marley. See you in the morning. xx.



## A STENCIL OF LIFE

I'm walking alone without you two beside me,  
not able to hold you for the rest of my years.  
I'm stumbling already, can't see where I'm going  
my vision restricted by too many tears.

The warmth of your love gave my life a direction,  
the day you walked in, claiming me for your own.  
You awakened a consciousness, now in reflection,  
that would lay the foundation for a loving new home.

Such a lady, so demure, you'd been here before,  
so well-schooled in the art of you.  
You spread love far and wide, so much goodness inside,  
you brought a calm to my world that was new.

It took you two years to train us precisely,  
you had one love encounter but popped back for more.  
My life was fulfilled; 'Grandogdad', will do nicely,  
Mr. Marley arrived just as life's clock struck four.

Your maternal connection was, oh-so amazing.  
you took total control and we helped you when tasked.  
Usually 6-30, every morning,  
when your bed needed changing, you'd come up and ask.

Using our heads we selected your playmate,  
to love and to care for, for the rest of your days.  
Six beautiful puppies, but you knew which you rated,  
Mr. Marley was going nowhere, it was he who would stay.

He was first to greet us every morning,  
tail-wagging excitably as he sat by the door.  
The bond between you two, so noticeably special,  
a bond that grew stronger, each day more and more.

And so you remained every day of your lifetimes,  
inseparable buddies who kept us on our toes.  
We journeyed together and we'll travel forever,  
but apart, this is hell on a long, lonely road.

Now your paw-prints sit coldly on pieces of poster,  
locks of hair curled neatly in memorial vials.  
One smooth metal casket to keep you together,  
inanimate objects, but a stencil of life.

Night-night Indy. Night-night Marley. Xx





## FOREVER AT MARLEY'S POND

My heart is etched in time here,  
forever at Marley's Pond.

An oasis for the wildlife,  
of which he was so fond.

He'd sit and stare in wonder,  
as each species caught his eye,  
His passion? Slippery, slimy frogs,  
would jump in and swim on by.

His tail wagged with excitement,  
as the croaks within the grass,  
begged further investigation,  
a chance he'd never let pass.

Nose rustling, twitching, sniffing,  
wending its way amongst the weeds.  
Perpetrator soon dislodged and dripping,  
and one Marley dog, so pleased.

How he loved the evening rainfall,  
And the exodus en masse.

This army of frogs in courting togs,  
lay siege across the grass.

He'd sit upon the table-top,  
his podium it could be said.  
To view this 'colonial' marchpast,  
eyes popping from his head.

Forever at Marley's Pond I'll see,  
him peeping through the fringe.  
Fascination driving on his soul,  
in his quest for living things.  
To study and make playmates of,  
all things that catch his eye.  
As he waits again for rainfall,  
and the frogs to swim on by.



## BIRTHDAYS

Birthdays come around once a year  
just how daft is that?  
As soon as you get rid of one  
there's another on your back  
Why can't they be every-five years  
then time wouldn't go so fast  
Then we'd all be a lot, lot, younger too.  
Now wouldn't that be a blast?

Having said that; I'm in a sorry state for a fourteen-year-old.



## PRETTY SISTERS

With so much ugly doing the rounds,  
my sister's really going to town,  
it's time to get the bank balance down,  
and make herself look younger.

At seventy-four she must be daft,  
comparing looks with old photographs,  
of a young girl way back in the past,  
who looked like Bob the Builder.

She couldn't be called a pretty kid,  
with ears as big as dustbin lids,  
and a face that shocked the National Grid,  
one stare you'd turn to cinders.

She wore a perfume very well,  
but all the lads still ran like hell,  
a chemical, au naturel,  
overpowering always lingered.

Surprisingly she married for love,  
her old man worked for 'Him' above,  
I'd no idea what he was thinking of,  
but she grew into a stunner.

Now? She's aged a bit, but haven't we all,  
ugly? No never at all,  
Her soul exudes a love for all,  
and so says little brother.

Fat lips are a must these days,  
distort your face it's all the rage,  
ballooning bums frighteningly strange,  
you'll rue the day my pretty sisters.



## HEAR NO - SEE NO - SPEAK NO

Some ears like to listen,  
some just wiggle about.  
Some just don't bother listening at all,  
even when you BLOODY WELL SHOUT!

Some eyes take no notice,  
some watch your every pose.  
Some can't see what's in front of their face,  
even when it's UNDER THEIR NOSE.

Some mouths like to chatter,  
some hardly make a sound.  
Some say things that shouldn't be said,  
even when they're DEEMED SO PROFOUND.



## A PENNY FOR THEM

I really need to find the time to steel my thoughts away.  
My head keeps spinning round and round, as there is so much to say.  
Yet those 'penny' thoughts remain un-said,  
confusion locks them in my head,  
disillusion hangs upon a thread,  
and so they still remain.

Lay on a page within myself, those dusty words will wait.  
Until the day they'll re-arrange, responding to my state.  
A light turns on, something taps,  
awakened memories fill the gaps,  
do they make sense? You may well ask.  
That's open for debate.

Some words stand out, some lie around, some need to just move on.  
For most they lie on fertile ground, whilst others don't belong.  
Punctuation calls to abbreviate,  
co-joining rhythms congregate,  
words bound together do create,  
and another tale is done.



## MEMORY LANE

Took a stroll down Memory Lane today,  
In the quiet of a moment's hush.  
Suffice to say, it was a bloody long way,  
So, I ended up catching the bus.

"This journey is free." Which was thoughtful, and nice,  
said the 'Clippie' as she smiled down at me.  
"Give the 'grey cells' a stir, enjoy the ride sir,  
you've already paid the price."

And yes, she was right, many personal fights,  
with my conscience though clear, all along.  
Some lessons learnt, many fingers I've burnt,  
when my judgement, deemed right, turned so wrong.

Faces now ageing, at regular staging,  
alight from the bus and nod wisely.  
They cling to the knowledge, of our personal collage,  
And shared moments we painted precisely.

The bus travelled on, through the rain and the sun,  
Through my winters so dark and despairing.  
Through the spring times, the fun times, the 'so glad I did' times,  
And those days when I thought I was done.

I have what it takes, and I've faced those mistakes,  
As you can see, by the baggage, stacked high.  
On this bus they are kept, tucked under these steps,  
In the locker of days gone by.

I get off at the stop sign, it's right here, and its now time,  
The time to move onward, take control of my day.  
I've got to stop giving and get on with some living,  
Before the bus returns showing, my final replay.



## OLD LOVES AND LAUGHTER

Please understand, never ask me again,  
I don't always feel the need to smile.  
I will never want to let go of this pain,  
nor move on, it's just not my style.

I still weep every day when I'm feeling so low,  
it's a place that I'm needing to be.  
And yes it gets dark here, yes there's some warmth here,  
it's a special place; special to me.

There'll never be a time when I won't have to come here,  
sifting through all the 'what could have beens'.  
Wandering carefully through all the confusion,  
of my mistakes and neglect, so it seems.

This is my own designer location,  
a deepening abyss to store personal blame.  
It's a vast collection of well-torn emotions,  
that constantly re-surface again and again.

There are things lying here that I just can't let go of,  
I need them all to survive.  
Old loves, old laughter, loss old and new,  
a reminder that I'm still alive.



If I'd have said this or I'd have done that,  
would the outcome have been the same?  
Would this place I go to be half as full,  
would there be far less guilt and less pain?

I'm told life is for living,  
that time is forgiving,  
and What happened yesterday is all gone.  
Sorry but,  
I just cannot wear that,  
my being couldn't bear that,  
I'll keep finding my need to hang on.



## THE CHILD IN HER DREAMS

What do you think of the old man who's crying,  
lost in a life in a time long ago?  
Why do you think that he keeps on denying,  
his usefulness over, not yet ready to go?

Time doesn't travel so slow when you're older,  
another year flies in the blink of blue eyes,  
Each second precious, his aim not to squander,  
those moments of learning the young still deny.

What do you think of the young girl who's dancing,  
round and round spinning, her mind far away?  
Dreaming of pleasure and lovers romancing,  
needs answers to questions, words unable to say.

There's life in the old dog, or so he keeps hoping,  
yesterday's done, how he lives for today,  
Time moves ever onward, incessantly groping,  
new challenges calling, forever at play.

Young girl with her first love, her body is aching,  
for the man in her heart and the child in her dreams,  
She yearns for the moment, an age it is taking,  
when the woman awakens, all's not as it seems.

Old man greets the day when there's no-one to talk to,  
no-one around when the cold comes in play,  
A stillness within, yet a warmth to hold on to,  
those moments of learning, but a lifeline away.

Young girl now glowing, new life deep inside her,  
her instincts to love, and protect, to the fore,  
Together they'll grow, expects Mother Nature,  
hearts often broken, not keeping the score.

Tears cast aside, gone those pains of a lifetime,  
the loneliness ebbs and his soul drifts away,  
He finds himself drawn to the light of a young girl,  
then darkness surrounds him. A life ends today.

Blue eyes wakes up to the light of his first dawn,  
and looks to the face of the young girl he loves,  
A mother bonds deep to the soul of her first born,  
he's so much to tell her, if only he could.



## NOT A PEEP

There she lay awake once more,  
a prisoner to the nasal snore,  
like Mrs. Bushell's gone before,  
she walks the darkened halls.

She perseveres the lack of sleep,  
she'd close her eyes, not a peep,  
this shimmering mountain, our Pete,  
was about trial a cure.

As daylight filled the caravan,  
coffee called and hatched a plan,  
a cold four-pinter in her hand,  
an evil thought for sure.

She looked down at her sleeping gringo,  
about to waken from his limbo,  
snoring and farting, legs akimbo,  
she evens up the score.

The sky-light's open, just as well,  
as he leapt up, screaming 'Bloody hell!'  
The cold four-pinter rings his bells,  
then peace prevails once more.



## TRUTH IN THE EYES

When you don't have the words  
For the depth of your hurt  
Secretly weeping inside  
Whilst the tears still denied  
So you lash out in pain  
Recognition the aim  
Just a glimmer of hope  
Is all it takes just to cope  
But you look up and smile  
As your whole being lies  
Then help walks from the moment  
And the truth in your eyes.



## A MOMENT IN MY TIME

How long is a moment,  
When I'm thinking just of you?  
It goes on forever and ever,  
As long as I wish it to.  
Wherever I go, whatever I do,  
You are always on my mind.  
In that moment that I make last forever,  
I can hold you one more time.



## TICKLE ME WITH A FEATHER

There was 'Did' the Duck and his brother,  
who lived in the pond down the lane.  
His brother was so like no other,  
'Didn't' Duck'; that was his name.  
'Did Duck' was ever so shiny,  
'Didn't Duck' looked rather plain,  
He had lumps and bumps, all over his head,  
where he'd banged it again and again.

"Why don't you just watch where you're going?"  
Said 'Did Duck', one warm summer's day.  
"I can't see much when the sun's shining", he said,  
"and things seem to get in my way."  
"I think I'll buy you sun-glasses,  
They should help when the days are so bright,  
then you can move when you see something coming,  
but be sure to remove them at night."

'Didn't Duck' looked rather resplendent,  
sporting his 'bins' as he passed.  
Head held high, gliding speedily by,  
then, into the branches he smashed.  
You could hear the utter commotion,  
flapping wings and squarks of despair.  
The willow, weeping with laughter, shouted.  
"Oy! Gerrouter there."

The swaying branches of willow,  
slowly parted as 'Didn't' returned,  
with his plumage much like a burst pillow,  
and his pride undeniably burned.



## PAPER TRAILS

Paper trails to the past,  
lost in anger, hate surpassed.  
Burning books, knowledge Lost,  
remove all traces; at what cost.

Man's early learnings brushed aside,  
as demands result in genocide.  
Knowledge gained from those above,  
in the hands of the few to take advantage of.

Distribution of A.I.,  
will turn mans' life into a lie.  
No knowledge needed in that brain,  
when A.I. wins, we'll start again.

Masters from our future past,  
Maybe thought we learn too fast.  
Concentration so Intense,  
Too much brain, no common sense.





## IN THIS VALE

I see you everywhere I look,  
but you're not here to see.  
Imagination running wild,  
imagination real to me.  
I feel your presence,  
feel your spirit,  
senses leap around,  
yet I'm shivering in this vale of loneliness.  
You're nowhere to be found.



## THE LONGEST YEAR

This year has been the longest,  
yet time's travelled on so fast.  
I've borne out every memory,  
re-winding through our past.  
I lived again our final year,  
just walking by your side.  
But every step was another tear,  
tortured by my lies.

Miss you kids. Xx



## WET THE BEDS AND BUTTERCUPS

Wet-the-beds and buttercups,  
still growing in my mind.  
In a childhood field of long ago,  
ever present throughout time.  
This is where I wander to,  
just to be with you again.  
Wet-the-beds and buttercups,  
in the sunshine and the rain.

Wet-the-beds and buttercups,  
alive within the breeze.  
Excitement thrills as always,  
as you only wish to please.  
The life within your eyes enthrals me,  
and the gentle life you lead.  
Wet-the-beds and buttercups.  
The place I'll always need.

Wet-the-beds and buttercups,  
where you once again run free.  
Together as it should have been,  
but right here! Today! With me!  
We never know what sorrow waits,  
or what circumstance will change.  
Whilst wet-the-beds and buttercups,  
Here inside will never age.



## CHRISTMAS PAST

I don't know why it happens,  
or why Christmas brings me down.

Its emptiness surrounds me,  
like there's no-one else around.

Carols encourage a sadness,  
and a need to be alone.

Yet I long for those far off Christmases,  
of family, of home.

Christmas is an empty place,  
and so very far away.

It's a childhood magic lost in time,  
that does not exist today.

Holy Angels, Mother and Child,  
love and peace to all mankind.

If only I could find once more,  
the lost beliefs of my younger mind.



## ONE JOB TOO MANY

Now leaving Rhyl,  
they're hitting the road.  
Caravan trailing,  
to lighten the load.  
Heading for Blakemere,  
their place in the sun.  
Bush's thoughts thirsting,  
for a can and some fun.

Well, the caravan's pitched,  
Peck says it's OK.  
Out come the chairs,  
it's a beautiful day.  
Bush settles down,  
cracks a 'tinny' to swig.  
"Oh no you don't!" Shouts Peck,  
"Yer job list is big."

"Get off yer fat arse,  
there's no bronzin" fer you.  
The sun may be out,  
but, there's plenty t' do.  
You can start wi' them winders,  
else yer'll get a good clout.  
I want 'em all cleanin',  
so I can see out."

"There's nowt wrong wi' them winders,  
they sparkle like ice.  
Try trimmin' yer eyebrows,  
they're like long-johns fer mice.  
Now get yer self 'ere,  
come sit on this chair.  
An' I'll whisper 'sweet nothings',  
for as long as I dare.

"Ah away wi' yer,  
yer dirty ol' man.  
Stop lickin' me face,  
or it's the fryin' pan.  
Yer not too big,  
t' go over me knee.  
Go peel me some spuds,  
or yer'll be gettin' no tea."

"Stop barking me orders,  
I'm here on my hol's.  
My sexy legs browning,  
just for you my old doll.  
Forget all the chores,  
just come wiggle your tush.  
And I'll remind you of the reason,  
you became Mrs Bush."



## YESTERDAYS LOVERS

Yesterday's future, yesterday's schemes,  
where have all the promises gone,  
what about the dreams,  
that I used to have when I was young,  
I had so much to do,  
the world is turning quickly now,  
where is it heading to?

Yesterday's lovers, yesterday's themes,  
where have all the love songs gone to,  
lost upon the breeze,  
blowing violence around the world,  
yet no-one seems aware.  
Is this the time to be counted now?  
Come stand up if you dare.

Yesterday's values, yesterday's respect,  
where have all the manners gone,  
what can we expect,  
as life becomes so singular now,  
no us, or you, or we.  
'I don't care what your problems are  
life is just about me.'

You see it in their faces, they don't want to care no more.  
Put away your advice friends, it's too late for a cure.  
The innocence of childhood's lost, your babes are born too old,  
those sing a song of sixpence' days gone, the pie is oh so cold.



## THE WHOLE TOOTH

Pete's set up a gums fund,  
so his woman can have new teeth.  
He's invested in the bit coin,  
as the price is out of reach.

He's promised her a trip abroad,  
to have new ones screwed in.  
"I'm not 'avin' any of them foreign teeth,  
you don't know where they've bin."

"What 'appens if the last owner,  
Ate something that I don't like?  
I'd spend all day just throwing up,  
so you can go and take a hike".

"They're made from plastic, you daft old bat,  
they've not belonged to anyone else.  
You'd see them on the transplant list,  
or they'd be free on the NHS."

"Just keep investing in your bit coins,  
and if you make us a few quid,  
you can buy us a brand-new motorhome,  
and we'll go camping with 'our kid'."





## ALL YOU WANT

Don't believe that all you want,  
in life, will come to you.  
Not everything you want, you need,  
just stop and think it through.  
Each disappointment takes you down,  
a route before unknown,  
A path you wouldn't have travelled,  
had your 'wants' become your own.

New faces, new adventures in,  
a place you'd never have seen.  
A better understanding of,  
what life holds beyond your dreams.  
You tend to find that, 'special want',  
no more, is a concern.  
As something else, now takes its place,  
another skill to learn.

Tides do ebb and tides do flow,  
that's just how life will be.  
And once you know, that's how it is,  
your strengths will set you free.  
A rich contentment, deep inside,  
a heart so full and true.  
That's all the 'wants' you'll ever need.  
and all we need is you.



## THE BRIDGE

It's just another day today,  
another one of those.  
I don't really want to talk today,  
I just need to be alone.  
To walk another day with you,  
across the bridge within our minds.  
No interference, just us two,  
tomorrow? I'll be fine.



## THE MASK

Beat me down, turn it round,  
crush my feelings into ground.  
Steal my voice, tales abound,  
I'm now lost within my head.

Take control, sneaky role,  
Piece by piece your game unfolds.  
Damages? The score untold,  
life's fragile where I tread.

Self-esteem, out of reach,  
my heart bleeds with disbelief.  
Who are you persona thief?  
You are not who you said.



## TALK TO THE MAN

Talk to the man who has never lived,  
about just how sad you have been.  
Explain to him how you've wasted the time,  
in a life gripped by empty dreams.  
How do you put it, in so few words,  
the magic of that first breath?  
And how you robbed him of a place in the world,  
Where he could have lived his best.



## THE SIX-FIVE SPECIAL

Hands up all those, if you can manage the pose,  
who hanker for those far off days.  
Those teenage fears and ban-the-bomb years,  
the Winklepickers and drainpipe brigade.

Do we really deserve to put up with trapped nerves,  
aching limbs, trapped wind, brittle bones?  
We need an injection, to be rid of infection,  
curly fingers, funny noises, and groans.

We were fit, we were active, some radio-active,  
in those days when we knew our own minds.  
We drank coke with some whisky, smoked something risky,  
and ate whenever we had the time.

So rise up baby-boomers let's dispel all the rumours,  
we haven't given up, not at all.  
There's the perfect solution, long live the revolution,  
senile delinquents, stand up, stand tall.



## IN YOUR DREAMS

When you go to your sleep  
then awoken in the morning  
unless you were dreaming  
you won't know where you've been.  
Your night-life's stood still  
and the world has kept turning  
you can't account for your being  
and no, you never will.

Just how many things  
will have changed in your night-time  
hellos to new faces  
goodbyes to those gone.  
And whilst you were sleeping  
there was laughter and weeping  
you just have no idea  
how the world has moved on.

So you awaken next day  
to the lessons of learning  
everything is normal  
life continues that way.  
It could be two thousand years  
when your new day is dawning  
and your dreams really flash-backs  
of a life yesterday.



*It was 1967 and the world's youth was turning Hippy. Not wanting to miss out, I'd decided that the time had arrived for me cut my apprentice butchers apron strings and join the 'gentle people in San Francisco.*

## THE HIPPY TRAIL

So you want to be a hippy?  
Well that's ok, I'd say.  
I'll even give you time off work,  
but you can't have any pay.  
They're gathering in San Francisco,  
and they're creating lots of fuss.  
You'd better take your apron off,  
or you're going to miss the bus.

Well I'm not sure if I mean right now,  
as I'll have to grow my hair.  
'cause I've got none to put flowers in,  
which I'll need when I get there.  
And I haven't got a girlfriend yet,  
they won't let me join alone.  
But there'll be lots of girls when you get there,  
said Derek,  
and they'll make you feel at home.

Do you really think I'd get there,  
it's such a long way to go?  
It'll cost a fortune on the bus,  
is there a cheaper way d'yer know?  
I can lend you the bike you deliver on,  
as long as you're back quite soon.  
'cause we'll need to get the orders gone,  
by next Friday afternoon.

Fast forward now to '78,  
when I set down my bike, by The Golden Gate.  
Picking flowers to put in my hair,  
no sign of Scott McKenzie, but Derek was there.  
Those teenage years still clear in my mind,  
and our conversation of that innocent time.  
I'm glad he stopped me from leaving so soon,  
'I'd never have been back that Friday afternoon.





## PITCH BATTLE

It's time to get the awning up,  
but it's one almighty chore.  
With a stomach like a builders' bum,  
I don't stick out much from the floor.  
So I gather all the tools I'll need,  
and a tinnie to calm my nerves.  
Whilst all my fellow campers,  
grab seats and sarnies to observe.

Short tempered rule, naughty word spool,  
and a set of gritted teeth.  
A plan of action, some satisfaction,  
and a look of disbelief.  
Yes all seem here in my bag of tricks,  
there's everything I need.  
Except of course, the rules of divorce,  
and a pair of ears that bleed.

Having watched the sport on itv,  
I wrestle it from the bag.  
Within minutes the heat is cooking me,  
my energy starts to flag.  
It surrounds me like a giant squid,  
then pins me to the ground.  
I have to come out fighting,  
loose flaps flailing all around.

I place it by the awning rail,  
and strip down to my vest.  
Amidst the shouts of "Get 'em off!"  
so I flash them my best chest.  
My aching back and clicking hip,  
so thankful for the seat.  
Just in time for Number One,  
to hoist me back upon my feet.

“Whilst you've been sat there, I've tidied up,  
are you going to make a move?”  
So with the look of disbelief,  
I wind up the naughty-word spool.  
I climb the steps with the gritted teeth,  
as I mull through my plan of action.  
I'm two inches short, but with a stretching snort,  
I regain a little satisfaction.

The stuntman in me takes control,  
As I balance upon one leg.  
Like a cross between a ballerina,  
and the notorious Jake the Peg.  
I reach across, slide it in the rail,  
then tug it round the bend.  
'Number One' now feeds it through, so cool,  
and once again we are friends.

We claw our way to freedom from,  
within the canvas walls.  
Then make an exit either side,  
to the clapping from the stalls.  
The worst bit done we take some air,  
and take a bow for those yet unknown.  
Then I get this blinding flashback;  
a bag of poles on the drive, at home.



## PAIN IN THE CRY

New baby cries in the still of night,  
distant sounds haunting, spirits in flight.  
Transcending visions, of a crisp Autumn morn,  
a young soldier lay dying, amidst sheaves of corn.

New mum comforts to ease baby's pain,  
nurturing new life, steers love again.  
Young soldier's mum suffers, heartbreak begins,  
both hearts preserving the soul deep within.

New baby lost between old and the new,  
doors closing quickly, mind all askew.  
Vague recollections, loved-ones waving goodbye,  
heartstrings still pulling at the pain in the cry.



## CLEAN SWEEP

I spend so long on Memory Lane,  
I have my own address.  
It's comfortable just to sit here surrounded,  
by the times I've loved the best.  
My thoughts then wander to and fro,  
with the games my mind can play.  
As some seem so very distant in,  
the mists of yesterday.

In many homes there is a place,  
where we hide our things away.  
Things we don't wish to see again,  
things we know that are here to stay.  
There's lots of space in my dusty room,  
and so many shelves to fill.  
But those few dark things haunt my every day,  
And they forever will.



## HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU

Indecent exposure of senile erosion,  
lost dentures abound on the floor.  
My arms are aching, my back is just breaking,  
there's only thirty-six more.  
My 'Bumps' partner's sweating, no intention of letting,  
your seventieth birthday go by.  
With no hair for the pulling, we spent some time mulling,  
over 'birthday bumps' from times gone by.

We're passed the half-way mark, we thought such a skylark,  
would be funny after all of these years.  
No muscles rippling, just hearing aids whistling,  
and my eyes are flooding with tears.  
You look rather knackered, and I'm tipping backward,  
Stop! That's enough you shout.  
I've done my hip in, and three flipping discs in,  
and I'm sure you've both lost flaming count.



## DOG-EARED

*A five minute memory.*

I stretched awkwardly as I leaned over and picked up the rustling paper package from the back seat of the car. The cheap, black fabric seating of the Ford Cortina had dutifully soaked the back of my shirt with perspiration. Bright sunlight and hot bodies must have been furthest from the minds of the so-called designers. Many a time over the last few days, the heat inside had well and truly baked my brain as I drove around the dusty streets of Northenden. I sat straight in the seat again as I stopped. Lazily grabbing the door handle. I slowly poured myself onto the pavement.

Armed with the glossy prints of the two beautifully tanned and smiling children, I walked up the broken, tarmacked pathway and knocked on the door. I grinned to myself during a quick, tuneful burst of 'Rockin' Robin'. It wasn't the row that I was making that tickled me, it was my recollection of the early afternoon news. Some well-informed soul down South, had declared this week, (wait for it) 'National Whistling Week'. 'Ave y'ever 'eard of out s'daft me lad?

A noise inside the house had me spinning on my heels and I turned to face the door again. I watched through the lightly patterned, frosted glass, as the lady of the house skipped down the stairs towards me. She was wrapped in nothing, but a large white bath towel. The door opened slowly and cautiously.

"Oh great, it's you." she said smiling. The excitement in her voice was a good clue that the sale was already made. And, before she'd even seen the photo's too.

“Come in and take a seat.” she said smiling. “I’m just bathing the two monsters now. Go in the lounge and make yourself comfortable. I won’t be a minute.” With this, she took flight in the direction of the bathroom.

The empty, echoing voices in the bathroom, quickly trotted into the room above me, as I walked into the casually decorated, Romany styled lounge. I sat on the couch.

Across the far side of the room, a friendly face greeted my arrival. The long-eared Spaniel, mischievously peeped at me from around the edge of the doorway. He took one look and leapt across the room, tale wagging and tongue flapping wildly. He sat at my feet as I stroked him. My other hand busily brushed the clump of white and brown dog hairs off my creased, black trousers. He ‘turned turtle’ rolling and twisting on the carpet by my feet.

“Such a friendly soul.” I thought to myself as he growled with contentment. I patted his stomach.

I was beginning to think just how wonderful life was. It was still relatively early in the evening, it was bright and sunny and after all, I would be in the pub within half an hour; another sale in my pocket and no doubt, a pat on the back for a job well done. That was until the dog literally, ‘blew it’ for me.

There he was, rolling contentedly all over the carpet by my feet, when the sound of footsteps on the stairs, alerted him to the impending arrival of his owner. He stopped wriggling, his head went back, his ears pricked up and he looked me right in the eyes.

“Time I wasn’t here.” he must have thought to himself. And that’s when I could have sworn he grinned at me. It’s never very nice when anyone breaks wind in such a warm, enclosed space but little doggies certainly take the biscuit, if you’ll pardon the pun.

Then, as quickly and quietly as he had arrived, he left the room.

The excited and eager mother of the two little darlings, and the dog, burst into the room and sat beside me on the couch. As she pulled the photos out of their protective sleeves, the full and unadulterated smell, hit us. She looked at me stunned, her eyes glazed over, and within seconds, her complexion morphed to that of an African tree frog.

Was I embarrassed? I didn't know where to look. As much as I wanted to say, "Hey Mrs, it wasn't me honest. It was your dog." And, as there was no dog anywhere in sight, for some strange reason, I just mumbled something totally incoherent. I didn't want her thinking that I was just blaming the poor creature to cover up for my own little, 'assident'. I should've done.

I was so confused as the choking smell began to crawl up the walls of the living room, and I could feel myself beginning to heave. I looked at her and she at me over the top of a hand, grasping at her nose for dear life. We both said nothing.

She ushered me out of the room, into the hallway and out of the door to the street. She did mutter something as the door slammed in my face. I left feeling ashamed and embarrassed - and I was innocent.

I didn't look back, even through my mirror. I just headed for the pub. As I related my tale to a group of friends, the laughter was so intense, I just tore up the photographs and put them in the bin.

I walked the streets in fear of ever meeting the lady again. I was always ready for a quick getaway, if ever the situation should arise. Thankfully, it hasn't. Yet! But I have made myself a promise: If I ever meet her dog again, I'll kick its arse!





## RE-WIND

Upload the programme to your mind  
Select those moments back in time  
Delete the items causing pain  
Press rewind to live again.  
Loved ones lost when you return  
You've no idea who they were  
No memory of where you belonged  
Just more regrets where you chose wrong.



## ONE MAN WENT TO MOW

It's great to be on 'oliday,  
now that the sun is out.  
I can sit all day in me deckchair,  
An' just totally think about nowt.  
Except maybe, me old mate Steve,  
who's graftin' down at ' mill.  
Whilst I'm sittin' 'ere feelin' guilty,  
but, s'pose I always will.

Sod it! I'll 'ave me a 'tinny'  
an' then maybe I'll 'ave one more.  
This really is a buzzin' place,  
an' I've been many times before.  
I'll sit 'ere an' relax a bit,  
An' forget about all at home.  
By gum, me knees are burnin' a bit,  
an' I bet me grass 'as grown.



## SORRY

It's so difficult to say you're sorry,  
in a way that can be believed.  
Words are words and get misunderstood,  
some camouflaged to deceive.  
It's not so easy anymore,  
to express just how you feel.  
Life's evolving around false promises,  
where words become unreal.



## THE TWITCHER

I'm a series one 50's model,  
chassis doing OK.  
I'm tall enough for long trousers now,  
since my 65th birthday.

I only ever had little legs,  
not too much to cover up.  
Boxer shorts would do the trick,  
and my mum would turn them up.

I still live at home with dear old mum,  
who's knocking on a bit.  
She's almost reached a century,  
and our neighbour thinks she's fit.

He drives past our windows slowly,  
as he waves whilst looking in.  
He knows mum's twitching curtains,  
just to get a glimpse of him.

Sporting his war-time bone-dome,  
a relic from flying Spit's.  
He never gets too far from home,  
and his scooter comes back in bits.

Mum says she's going to get out more,  
"There's people and places to see."  
She's been walking out with him next door,  
now they've bought a 'Harley D'.



## THE QUIET TIME. (Those 50's Nights.)

Sitting by the fireside, faces all aglow,  
warming flames reflecting, dancing to and fro.  
The rhythm of the knitting-needles,  
busily clicking so.  
Just me and mum engrossed in,  
peaceful moments, long ago.

Snuggled in the armchair, feeling warm as toast,  
ambience so calming, thoughts left to lie at most.  
The seconds on the clock tick slowly,  
lazily passing by.  
A closeness re-ignited,  
that is just my mum and I.

Ticks and clicks merge neatly, harmony sublime,  
feelings of belonging, this our place, our time.  
The closeness of we two together,  
momentarily entwined.  
And it's just one single memory,  
in the pattern of my mind.



## DOGGIES DO

It was clearly a barmy evening,  
as we chatted towards the dusk.  
Less about this and more about that,  
life dawdled, there was no rush.  
With one eye scanning the patio,  
for the wandering little pup.  
Pre- occupied with the scents of life,  
her curiosity on the up.

We'd christened her 'Miss Houdini',  
as her cunning knew no bounds.  
No matter what pen we built for her,  
she'd break out to sniff around.  
So we gave her, her much loved freedom,  
to sniff 'till her heart's content.  
And she'd wander up and down at ease,  
keen eyes following, wherever she went.

Darkness now descending,  
Margaret strolled towards the door.  
"Look, she's left us a parcel out there,  
I'd better just clean the floor."  
She stepped out with her doggie-bag,  
to remove the unsightly mess.  
And one little frog got the fright of his life,  
He hopped spritely through the fence.

Shock waves recorded in Timbuktu,  
hence the power of the scream.  
Tectonic plates had a shift or two,  
the likes Richter had never seen.  
Puppy so frightened, in she flew,  
scrambling for an empty knee.  
With the night of the jumping poo,  
logged firmly, in her memory.



## GIRLS ON THE HOMEFRONT

Josephine was a Land Girl now  
and a tender seventeen.  
She said goodbye to her family  
and caught the train towards her dream.  
Excitement sparkled in her eyes  
as she sped through the distant miles.  
Her shining brogues, corduroy breeches  
fetching Bush Hat, warming smiles.

6 am., and the biting cold  
of the attic took its toll.  
In the milking shed the softened teats  
filled buckets with warmest gold.  
"Sit well back from that whipping tail."  
We didn't need telling twice.  
Eight-thirty welcomed the breakfast bell  
of our first day, in another life.

The warmth of the vocal steam engine  
always greeted like a friend.  
Who sang along with their choruses  
'til the long days met their end.  
This metallic steaming mantis  
led them merrily on their way.  
But the thresher took no prisoners  
he still stole away their day.

Wash by the light of the candle flame  
without a familiar moon.  
The attic breathed a weariness  
and the mornings came too soon.  
Tomorrow promised the Village Hall  
a dance-step towards the peace.  
Where boy meets girl and romance fumbles  
for a future yet out of reach.

