



| Enchantment
& Hope

| The poetry of Simon & June Whalley

ENCHANTMENT & HOPE

This booklet chronicles some 90 years of poems written by my mother, June, and myself reflecting many of the joys and vicissitudes of our own experiences and the world's upheavals in that time. June's first poems were written at the tender age of 14 and, apart from the first two and the last two, were all written during the Second World War which was declared when she was still only 15 and clearly very impressionable.

I did write some poetry at School but most of these are long-lost! The majority of my poems were written in the 1980s and '90s with a few earlier and some in recent years but, unlike my very organised mother, I failed to record the dates of writing, so they are random and not chronological!

June was inspired partly by her friendship with Thomas Moulton, a prolific writer and later elected President of the Poetry Society in the 1950s and early '60s. From his letters he clearly adored and admired her. We have a book she kept of a host of poems he hand-wrote and sent her, with lovely little original pencil sketches of countryside scenes, and all his letters to her.

I hope you enjoy this selection. All but one of June's poems were written between the ages of 14 and 21 and, whilst I cannot claim such youthful skill nor such a fearful backcloth I hope that it is clear that love and concern for the world around us were the twin inspirations for us both.

Simon Whalley



Part 1:
June Whalley (née Driver)

This poem was clearly inspired by her great love for the Scottish Highlands which persisted all her life until her sadly early death at the age of 52.

Longing.

Purple hills in the distance looming,
Grey clouds blown
Across grey sky;
The wind's sad moan,
For all this my heart is longing, longing.

Wind-tossed pines sighing,
Wet heather tracks,
A lone sheep's cry;
Mist... Peat stacks,
For all this my heart is longing, longing.

Silent lochs, dark-shining,
Great frowning crags,
Burns tumbling from on high;
Timid, rare stags,
For all this my heart is longing, ever longing.

1938



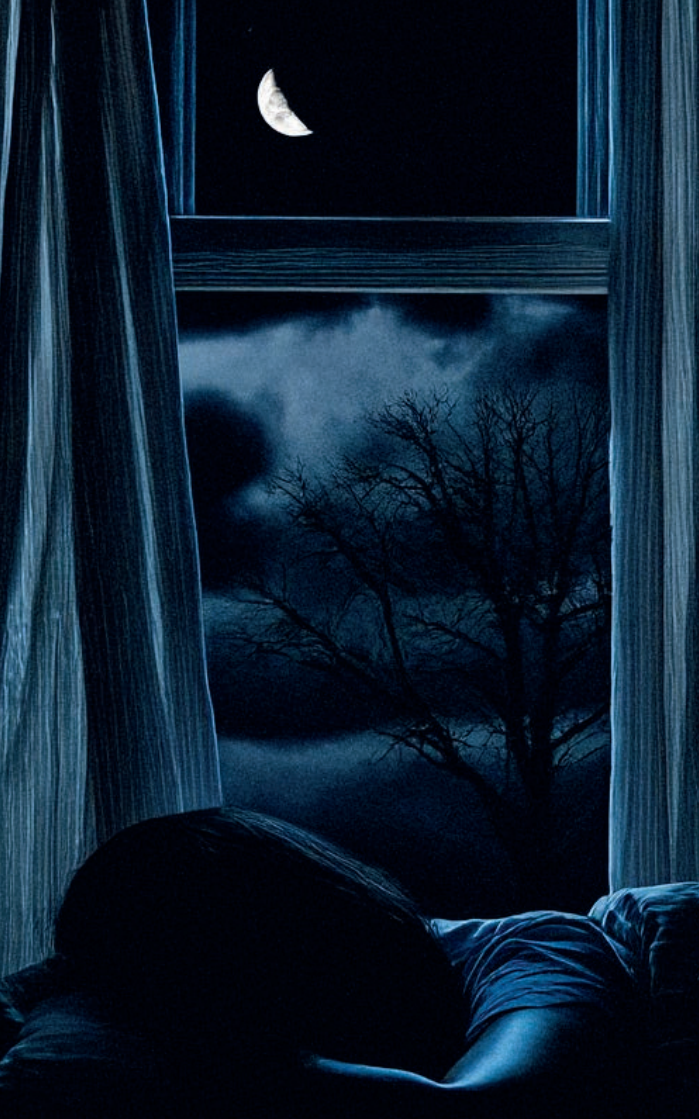
In this one can hear the desperate fears of a 14-year-old girl who had been wholly privately educated at home but was aware of the gathering storm on the world scene and in need of parental love and support

Sleep.

“Oh come here quickly!”
And as I called she came, and I was glad
For I was frightened of my lonely thoughts.
But she clasped me in her soft, slim arms,
And wrap’t me round with tender, shadowy dreams.
So did I sleep.
Then knew no more that shattering fear,
Nor then did weep,

Helplessly staring at the blackness,
And listening to the solid silence –
Eternal, surging silence of the night;
Most strangely ‘live;
And I most strangely dead.
I must lie, it seems, forever unmoving, tense –
For ever, ever!
And the comforting dawn would never break
Oh! Never, never!

1938



Many of the next group of poems are based on the theme of love and loss. Although June's family were very hospitable and many young soldiers, airmen and sailors were entertained at the Loxwood family home in Sussex (which also encompassed the Nursing Home business now based at Birtley House). It is likely that the earlier poems are based on imaginary rather than real beaux.

June was however very precocious and indeed engaged by the age of 18 before breaking off the engagement and marrying my father Dick who had come over with the Royal Canadian Air Force and first visited Loxwood while helping set up the nearby Dunsfold Airfield.

Enchantment.

Along beside the unconcernéd brook,
There I wandered slowly in the noon-day,
My hurting thoughts so to my heart I took
That, blinded I cared not, nor saw the way
My feet did take; one crushing, bitter thought
Pushed all else far from my mind. That I,
Who loved this strange, great life should now be
brought
To live in empty endlessness, and why
Should one be picked from all the rest to bear
What seemed to me to be, the whole world's care?
For then, too hurt with life was I, to know
That thoughts like these could in a moment go!

And yet they could, for thus it was with me.
Only a touch had worked this miracle,
And forgetfulness came, and I was free –
A touch – or was it those eyes satirical?
I did not know those strange and fearful things
(What bliss is young belief!) that now I know.
For I know now that poor illusion brings,
For all its poorness, softening to the blow.
As I turned at a hand upon my arm,
With admiration, came momentary alarm.
He was young, but age was in those eyes:
Henceforth I was to see through Earth's disguise.

He pointed high, and round;
The greatest jewels of beauty showed to me;
The music in the woodlands dreamy sound,
The poetry in Earth's reality;
The rare-seen cuckoo winging,
Forever calling, calling to the sky;
The bluebells softly ringing,
And golden-headed daffodils that sigh
As the faithless breeze kisses them from sleep
Passes on, and leaves them there to nod and weep
True, all these he showed – most precious sight!
And many others – but t'was false delight!

Hand through hand wandering,
I saw and wondered with such deep delight,
My grieving spirit had no time for pondering
On distress, for as the dawn to night
So beauty is to care.
We peeled the silver off the shining birches
And picked from fields aglare
With gold, and unlike the man who searches
For the wreath of men, and looks to them
To give, we in nature only sought
And she did give to us her costliest gem –
The gem of beauteous words, and power of thought.

continued...

Then suddenly the half-light
Came beside the dimpling stream. The soft breeze
Was whirling the clear waters in its flight;
The speckles blue behind the crowding trees
Changed all at once to gold –
Gold which verged at last to faintest mauve;
Clouds passed and rolled,
Pearl-white before the sun and for him wove
A crown of clouds about his head. He went,
But though on cheating me his mind was bent
He saw not that himself he cheated likewise –
As I For through myself I lost the prize.

In one swift moment all was changed with me,
He had vanished as the sun before him,
And like the sun he left triumphantly.
His eyes held mine – their gaze my soul to dim;
Then straight-way it fell, that shadowy cloak;
My heart its recent melody no longer sung;
Those hushed fears in one great torrent woke.
No shadows yet remained – no echoes clung.
The night had wakened from her starry sleep;
The smoke-hued clouds piled in a moon-lit heap
All this I looked upon – yet I saw nought,
But his words I heard – how much they taught!

“Fool! Don’t let Life fly through fingers unaware.
Your grief is only vanity – renamed.

You thought of all the greatest men, who care,
It seems, so little whether praised or blamed –
Yet how greatly they live – how greatly die!
You thought to be the least of none,
“It will not be!” he left me. I did cry
For fear. Once more he spoke, and speaking won:
(Though my soul had seen such wondrous treasure,
How every trice was paid for in full measure.)
“Think you on all this beauty – then on grief.
Think, think – Oh fool! – there’s no relief!”

April – July 1939



I Lost My Soul.

Was it years ago, or yesterday
That, weeping and alone I walked
In a garden hung with May?
Cold was the air with breaking dawn;
Rich the scent of dew-damp earth.
Past the whispering pine-trees there,
Past the dawn-lit roses kissed
With the lips of golden morning;
Through the sleeping, tall-grass'd valley,
Through the frail, dew-spangled webs;
By the lake's smooth shining water
Where the waking fish are glinting:
Standing there beside the shore
All the years went crowding past-
All the years, and all the loves
Of a soul that now was dying:

And I stood and, shameless wept.
So it was I watched and waited
For the sun's majestic rise;
Then it came and whispered "welcome"
To the sailing, white-tipped clouds –
Rose in splendour and in glory
And it shone upon the waters
As I stood there, watching ... waiting.
Then I heard their voices calling –
Calling me to leave forever.
And I went because they called
They were laughing with each other.
Dancing in the dawn so gaily
Through the beauty of the valley –
And a soul was lost forever.

Oct 1939 - Pub Dec 1940

The Dreamer.

Poor foolish lover of love, and dreamer of dreams,
 Chaser of shadows and singer of songs.
 His one short hour of precious sleep has passed;
 A fool is he that thinks that dreams can last
 Or songs, or shadows, or vain imaginings.
 Then nothing is left – no lingering echo remains.
 His shadow fades and foolish dreams are vanished,
 His song is sung, his lover's loves are banished.
 'Twas Age who took him from his slumbers fair –
 Age who bade sweet, young belief be gone:
 Then Youth's riches turned to dust, his crown to clay.
 Cruel Age! Let thy hand but a moment stay,
 A moment more Youth's dreams let him keep,
 Laugh, and chase the frail, frail shadows of sleep.

Nov 1939 Pub April 1940

Until You Came.

I cried a little for the wasted dreams,
 A little for the tear-filled past:
 Then came the morrow and I cried, no more –
 Today's Dusk is but tomorrow's Dawn.
 Now thou and I will wander evermore,
 And ever laugh and love,
 And dreams, I think, be wasted well –
 An they be dreamt alone

May 20th 1940

Futurity.

I think I always knew that even now
We still should love as greatly.
I think I always knew that in the dusk of Death
We should not part.
So splendidly we loved that now in sweet Eternity,
Glorious with Time, our love remains:
Nor is it changed.
It needed not Death's cleansing;
Only the passion of longing was of Earth alone.
But now what need of longing?
We who thought to hold
All Life between our hands,
For us there is no longing – hoping, now.
We have our Love – and the Eternity we craved!

Jan 1940 Pub Dec 1940

To – R.B.

I would have loved him;
In all Youth's brave sincerity.
I would have loved him,
And those true, young eyes that now are dim:
I would have kissed those dear, strong lips –
Lips that would laugh with me!
I would touch the proud brow, the dark hair;
And love every thought of him,
Love every dream of him,
Splendidly, gloriously loved the heart of him!

Aug 3rd 1940

The Broken Heart.

The wind blows just as fresh, as fresh,
And the clouds are sailing still;
The wee burn wimples just as gay...
For all that my heart is dead today.

The shades of the wood are just as deep,
The cry of the curlew as wild;
The mist is gentle as before...
For all that my heart can sing no more.

Though love and dreams will fade away
In the deepening shadows of Age,
Yet the earth's as sweet a place to thee...
For all that my heart has gone from me.

Sept 15th 1940



This next poem breaks from the theme of love and loss. Although it is recorded as having been written in 1940 it gives such an impression of emotional response to the Declaration of War that I feel it must at least have been partly written at the time.

Sunday, September 3rd 1939.

Silent we wait – yet unafraid,
The tortured moments treading slowly by.
No word is spoken, all is solid stillness;
Only eyes roving in restless agony
Seem still alive, as ceaselessly they glance
Here and there, then back once more to seek
Some tiny comfort in another's gaze.
Then the voice, unperturbed and grim:
“It is evil things we shall fight”, he said.

Half glad we are to know at last 'tis so.
A few more words and silent unmoving,
All hope now torn so cruelly from each heart.
We stand, still silent, very calm
Each with his thoughts, so different – so alike.
The music beats into our very brains,
And as the last great note is played, we break –

“Oh God!”, “Again!” or “I’m too young for this!”
A slim, slight figure sobs; the eyes are filled;
Then a little ‘shaméd dash toward the stair.
A child is crying – yet knows not why.
There seems a vastness all around me:
I stand alone – so very much alone,
Bewildered, dry-lipped, in a world of madness.
I turn, my knees are bent upon the floor.
As I kneel, eyes closed, before the fire.
A little prayer goes whispering through my lips:
“Oh, make me strong and give me courage, “
For “It’s evil things we shall fight”, he said.

1940

Pub April 1941



English Winter 1939.

Snow on the ground, snow in the sky;
The wind from the north goes screaming by.
I sit behind the frosted pane
And, drearily, across my brain
Drag ghastly scenes I know must be
Enacted, and over them this wind
That now does so chill me must pass
As it roars away across the sea.

For there men sweat, and swear, and die –
Cold grips the hand, and numbs the heart;
And, foolishly I think that I,
Too, must go, and stand cold out there,
Among the snow, and so impart
A little of their pain to me.
But how can mere discomfort
Compare with agony!

1940

Victorious Greece!

Great Homer sang once your stories,
Told of your trials and glories,
Lived with you in the morning
Of your splendour.

A thousand heroes cry their names!
The honour of kings' behind you flames!
Immortal beauty cannot die –
Of goddesses!

The dawn of noble Culture broke,
And love and eternal Art awoke,
Upon Olympus mighty head –
And gods were born.

The stars shall sing your praise,
Shout it through Time's dim haze.
Your splendour shall live on –
Victorious Greece!

Jan 1st 1941

June returns to the theme of love and loss with the following poems this time possibly more based on real rather than imaginary lovers.

If I Should Lose You.

If I should lose you, dearest one,
If you should stand courageous till you fall,
Your precious blood staining the land
For which you fought, answered whose call,
Then; dear, you did not lose or fail – you won!

For in that splendid hour – your greatest,
Then were you crowned and set upon a throne,
And songs were sung for you, and then
All the world remembered you, my own –
You, of all the glorious great, the greatest!

Feb 20th 1941



Absence.

How many clouds must wing the sky?
How many stars must ride across the night?
How many songs be sung, and dreams be dreamt,
Before you come to me once more to light
Again the lamp you lit – that you alone can tend?

Oh! Do not be too long, my own.
Come while the sky still blushes with the dawn;
Come now while still we gaze with dream-clung eyes
And shout the miracle of golden morn –
While our love is new and the world is young.

Else will our precious dreams be dead.
And our songs must we sing unheard.
Else will the world be too old for our laughter;
They'll hear the music of our hearts unstirred.
Oh! Come – Time's poison shall not touch our love!

April 11th 1941

Constancy.

Oh! We have smiled in the sun, you and I,
Danced in the golden light of the dawn,
And have sung with life's joy to the wide sky.
We dreamed the hours away with dreams
Of love and the splendour of youth.
We would tread so proudly, clear-eyed, and glad,
And pick red roses – sweet as a smile.

Our hearts have mingled in love's splendid pain
(If I must sorrow, then you were sad)
Together would weep – then laugh again.
I lay beside you in the warm clover
And gazed at the eternal blue,
Shouting greetings when a cloud winged over.
We laughed to the wind as we ran,
Or stood, head-raised, at a bird's song

....

Oh! Where is your song – the light in your eyes?
And the brave, true laugh that I knew?
The gay, sweet flowers that we picked – are they dead?
I have shunned your love, and broken your life –
And, "I am proud that I love you! You said.

April 23rd 1941



I have not been able to identify the inspiration for this next poem, possibly Dante Alighieri who had a passion for Beatrice Portinari and featured her in The Divine Comedy?

Beatrice.

Oh! To think, sweet Beatrice, that you never knew,
Of the love that immortal has made you
The greatest songs that have ever been sung,
Were of a poet's love, and how it grew.
Softly about your name has ever clung
The sweet enchantment of a mystery.

Surely there is none more fine, none more fair,
Pure, so precious – a dreamer's love – so rare,
In all Love's brave, resplendent history,
Than that proud adoration of your name;
Words of a heart, written on the world in flame,
So that all might know you, and you acclaim.
None lovelier that a poet's love – t'was yours,
Unknown, and still the centuries it endures!

Aug 3rd 1941

This next poem was clearly inspired by the evacuation of Dunkirk and it seems likely that it was started at least around that time despite the date June ascribed its completion. The poem following was again inspired by events that seem to predate its completion.

June 1940.

Yacht and yawl, sloop, and barge,
 Row boats, steam boats,
 Both small and large;
 Any craft at all that floats
 Ships with paddles
 And ships with sails:
 Not a mariner that fails
 To answer the great plea
 From that shore across the sea!

They brave the ocean's roll
 And more! Heroes unsung!
 Only prayer can console.
 On every English tongue.
 In every English soul
 Is "Bring back England's sons,
 Brave, staunch men of the sea,
 Oh! Bring back our dear ones,
 To the land of the free!"

....

continued...

Weary, wounded, and dying –
Bravely they came,
And with a smile – defying
His hated name!
No trumpets sounding
No voices cheering,
But a thousand knees were bending
In worship at their great defending.
England's voice rose like a mighty sigh,
In song – to glorify
Bold – unconquered they stand
Facing uncounted odds.
They know with the faith of their land,
That their country, their course, is Gods!

1941



June returns again to the sadness of love lost in war.

Yesterday.

“Belovéd, I am sad to see thee go;
Bewildered, frightened, and a little tired,
I shall watch thee vanish in the gloom –
Watch till the last faint glow
On thy pale, dying face
Fades, and is gone in thy shadow-tomb;
Watch with remembering eyes
As even the shadow dies
And earth and the darkling skies
Are one,
Oh! My belovéd!”

“Ere I go then, can’st thou say
With truth, ‘thou art my most remembered day?’”
“Yes! Ah yes!
But tread softly, very softly,
And swiftly. Go!
One more caress!
For on my lips a sigh
And one last, wild prayer that is almost a cry
Through my heart goes whispering by.
Answer my prayer!
Oh! My belovéd!”

“Thy prayer is lost in Eternity.
I am Time’s servant – even as thee.”
“And wilt thou come no more,
Oh! My beloved?”
“No more!
Forever I vanish with the dusk,
And leave – what do I leave?
A heart more tender than before?
A soul more splendid and sincere?
A few regrets, and memories very dear;

The sweet, unutterable sadness
That is ever beauty’s price,
And is, strangely, almost gladness?”
“Let me come with thee, beloved,
Into the night.
Dear hours!
Songs, and dreams, and light,
Music, and laughter, and flowers!
Let me come
Oh! My beloved!”

continued...

“Thou can’st not come.
Soon will be left memories fast dying,
That shall leave, as they fade
Sorrow infinite.
Then wilt thou have paid
The cost of memories.
The most precious of all these
Time’s pitiless fingers touch, and dim,
However dear, however sweet;

And thou wilt weep because thou hast forgot
The dearest and the sweetest. (Time thou cheat!)
Tis’ strange and wounding knowledge this
That thou couldst’t so forget
A flowers loved fragrance, and a lover’s kiss.
“Better that they should die”
Thou sayest; but they will not.
Forever, somewhere in thy heart they be.
Lonely, faded, and forgot.”
“Oh! My beloved!”

Aug 22nd 1941

To You.

In the battle's fury, in the hell
Of slaughter; in the grime and dust and blood;
And when all you can see is death and mud,
And all you can hear is the guns' sharp thud,
And all other noise has ceased to be
In your terrible effort to listen to me;
Above the fear and the sick dismay
You'll hear in your heart me whisper and say
"All my love is with you, my love, today."

My arm is your arm, my hand strikes with yours
The prayer on your lips I utter too;
My horror's as great, and my faith is as true,
With my heart and my soul I fight with you.
So, heart to heart we both face death
While life is more precious with every breath
My love is your armour, beside you I'll stay
And you'll hear in your heart me whisper and say –
"All my love is with you, my love, today!"

Sept 16th 1941

Awakening

All day, dear heart, you have been with me.
The dearest face in man's five continents,
Down – bent to mine, - fair as a child's might be;
I have seen the smile gather in your eyes,
Laughing, and faithfully, most kindly wise;
White-lit with the flame of a proud heart's love;
A love that endures, a love that is brave:
Stronger than the skies triumphant thunder,
As perpetual as the ocean's wave.
We have dreamed once more, our songs have we
sung.
Oh! Shades and echoes of the past have clung.
Glad hours! But memory-sick my heart lies now,
For waking, I cried, finding only a dream-
In separation's night, a candle gleam!

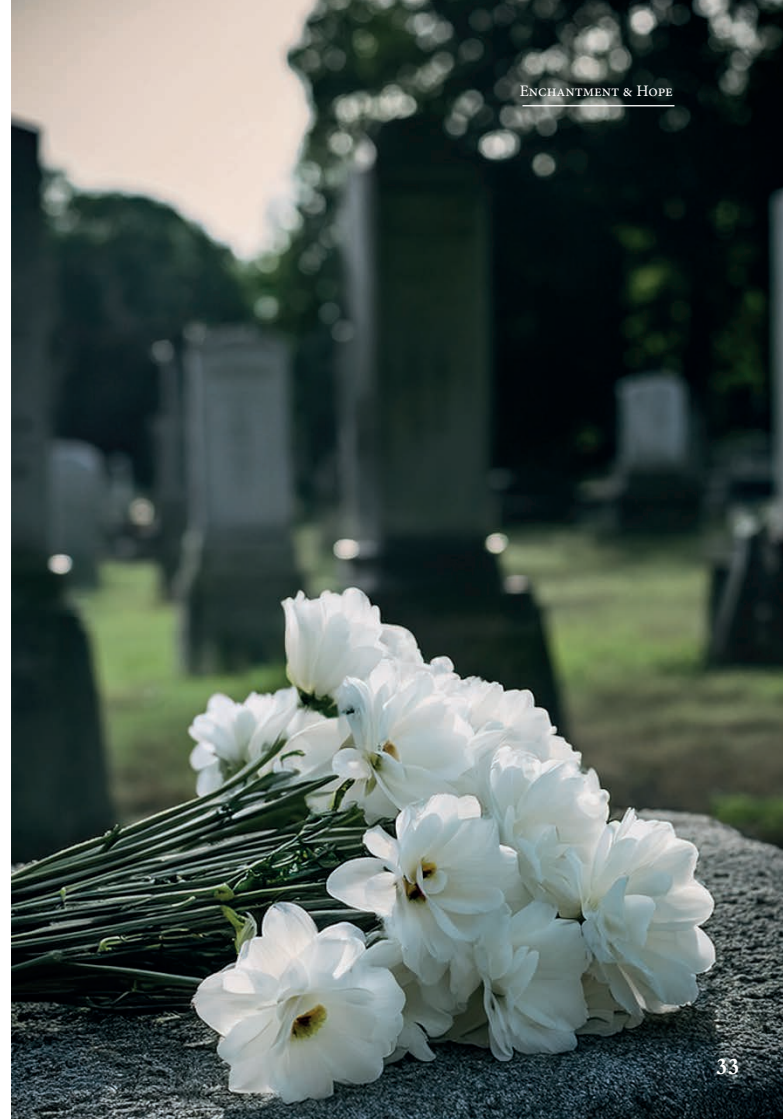
Nov 28th 1941

The Blesséd Ones

We should not pity them – the blesséd ones –
Because their span was shorter than our own.
The sun shines still; the lark does not forget
Her song; the soft rose buds, blooms, and is blown
To fragrant dust, not dead, but a memory.
For those they have risen to heights unknown.
How shall we pity them – the blessed ones?

Those brave hearts now can know no fading dream,
But splendour of song, night's benediction,
Warm plum clover, and the sunlight's gleam –
All these, their loves, and greater things, are theirs.
Yet do you weep, oh! Mortal left alone?
Are not their proud, undaunted spirits,
With the flowers, our laughter and our song,
In intimate, sweet union mingled?
See you not loved faces where the sunbeams throng?
Can you not hear those dear – remembered voices.
Whispering as the south winds pass along?
Then yours the pity – not theirs – the blessed ones!

March 25th 1942



Time Was.

I can remember a day that held peace –
Held lovely, loved, loveable things –
Flowers, and songs, love that was gay,
And when Youth lived and forgot yesterday.
When dawn held a promise
The secret dusk a dream.
Silent, and still was the June night,
Darkness walked in fearless moonlight.
Life was laughter – a dream to live!
Now only the tide of memory can give...

Peace – On the sleeping downs;
Peace – Through a gold-lit pane;
Peace – In twinkling – lighted towns;
Peace – Where there lies no slain;
Peace – For the heads of crowns;
Peace – For a tortured brain!
I can remember a day that held peace.
Oh! Day that was sweet and is dead,
You are only lost till the guns shall cease,
Till the bells of Britain ring out release!

1942

Let Us Be Truly Thankful.

Eleven months he had lain,
Alone in the darkness
Of perpetual night, and ceaseless pain
But, in a moment now,
A life would be regained.
To feel the golden sun
Upon those weary eyes, and fast-bound brow
Must surely, be the richest benison.
Like wine, that first warm gleam
On free young limbs, so long enchained.

And tasting joy supreme
He fell upon his knee,
And clasped his poor, numbed hands,
And thanked his Maker that he still could see
The green grass 'neath his feet,
The blue sky over head,
Still feel the wind's embrace,
Still see the sunlight on a field of wheat.
Against the burnt, the scarred and tortured face.
He pressed a pure-faced flower:
"It is the smile of God", he said,
"And this my dearest hour".

July 30th 1942

Consolation.

You will never see the pale year's vading,
Or the colours of Life's picture fading
Slowly, slowly.
Laughter's death-day,
Nor love, at last, for pity, made a way;
Dreams for sleeping,
Songs for weeping,
Nor the slow, tragic peace,
Shrouding Youth's transient ray,
That changes sweet wonders eagerness to grey.

Not yours the tired heart, desponding, yearning
Unto memory's doubtful solace turning
Courageously,
With lonely tread,
To find, at last illusion's balm has fled.
No dream can take
No song can break
Away the binding webs
Of Time's cold silent dread,
That till the New Dawn, never can be shed.
Your songs, and your dreams have you kept apart
And, undimmed, unsoiled within your heart

The love of life
Is flaming high;
Even death, and the grave does it defy.
Beyond death's shores
Belief is yours
For all Eternity.
Laughter shall never die
On poor, passionless lips that only cry.
You will never know how in Life's pale noon
The ecstasy of spirit slips so soon
Into content.

One of the few
Of that great, gallant host, invincible, who
Will never see
The shadows flee
Of love, and smiles, and song.
All this you never knew,
And yet, poor fools, they pity you!

April 9th 1941 Revised Oct 23rd 1942

Letter, Written At Sea.

The first of November.
My very dearest own,
As you read this you are alone
Perhaps, but, dear, remember
That I am where my thoughts still are.
My heart is at your side
To comfort, and to guide.
Always, as some glorious star
My crowding memories of you shine.
I see your loving, perfect grace,
The dream of your remembered face.
As when we parted, I feel in mine.
Your cool hand steal, lie clenching there.
I smoothed your soft-blown hair that day.
I kissed an errant tear away.
While, heart to heart we knelt in prayer.

It is for you I fight:
I have no wish to end
My life, (to you I can't pretend).
Now, when all Youth's birth right
Is mine, and you at last, yet I,
To serve you, or to save
Your life, so dear to me and brave
Proudly in such cause would die.
For you have shown me much to love –
Rain-drops that sparkle on your face;
Echoes in a lonely place;
The curling crests of cloud above;
And mossy smell of dampened earth;
The golden laughter that I knew;
The little secret smile of you,
That's sweeter than a child's fresh mirth.

You took me up to Heaven's Gate,
And now, for just a while good-bye
Dear Heart, I love you, do not cry,
But love me, pray for me – and wait.

Spring 1942



The connection to the following is unknown to me.

*To Roy Stanley Erickson.
(Killed in Action on the Night of Oct 6th-7th 1942)*

“Neither worry, nor grieve
That I am gone: I ask only – believe
That I shall be safe in the hands of God,
For eagerly I shall have shed
Earth’s bonds – an that serve you – without death’s dread.
Happy to know I did
My duty to my country, and my God.
I have turned a page –
No more. I have not died”, you said.
So, in these words heart of mine find courage!
Oh! Hard, relentless, high,

Oh! Mercilessly beautiful, cold sky,
Is there not some echo in your vastness
Of a sobbing, whispered prayer?
Some trace to mark the way of one so dear?
Did not the winds of night,
That, shouting, chase the vague, submissive clouds
Across the wide, white moon
Into the unchartered sea of air,
Hush for one moment their celestial tune?
Into the slumberous night.

Oh an infinitely glorious last flight –
Into a world that was all your own,
You trod, a world of mystery.
And glad to serve your country and the free.
So now, dear gallant one,
Lighter of step, laughing, fearless of heart,
Clear-eyed, without dismay
You have awoke to see
A new dawn breaking on your golden way.

Oct 15th-31st 1942



Casting Shadows or Flowers in the Street.

I watch you run
Down the village street
Laughing in the glad glory of the sun:
Oh, small, fearless feet!
Where shall they lead?
They were young once... that now stumble and
bleed,
Run, and die through the sands' devouring flame,
Calling God's name.

March 18th 1943

Your Courage.

Courage is more than hero's fame;
Courage is Hope when Hope has died.
Compassionately upon the slum-yard's filth,
Upon life's grime, the morning sun-beams flame,
And flirt amongst the meadow's wealth
Of golden bloom, where swallows glide;
Courage sees both and finds beauty in each;
Beholds the stars, nor lifts her hands to reach.

Courage will pray where fear blasphemes;
Courage is Youth, yet old as Time,
And Courage too, can know reality
Nor lose thereby her songs, nor yet her dreams.
A black-bird mourns his mate in song –
Courage sings in his grief sublime,
And love is born once where love was dead,
And by Courage bound is the heart that bled.

In Life is Courage – in a flower;
And in the sun-drunk, swaying corn,
And in the storm's wild symphony.
In meeting, all unflinching, each new hour;
In the hush of a damson dusk;
In water's stillness, and the dawn;
In seeing, with a smile, your loved one go
Into the flight, nor let your heart-break show.

Courage in Youth and Age, in tears
And laughter each must bring;
Seeing your comrades fall and fighting on;
In the exultant cuckoo's tuneless jeers;
To stand, when those around you sit
And sing God's blessing to your King;
In the tireless waves of the dancing sea;
In numb, tortured hearts that yearn to be free.

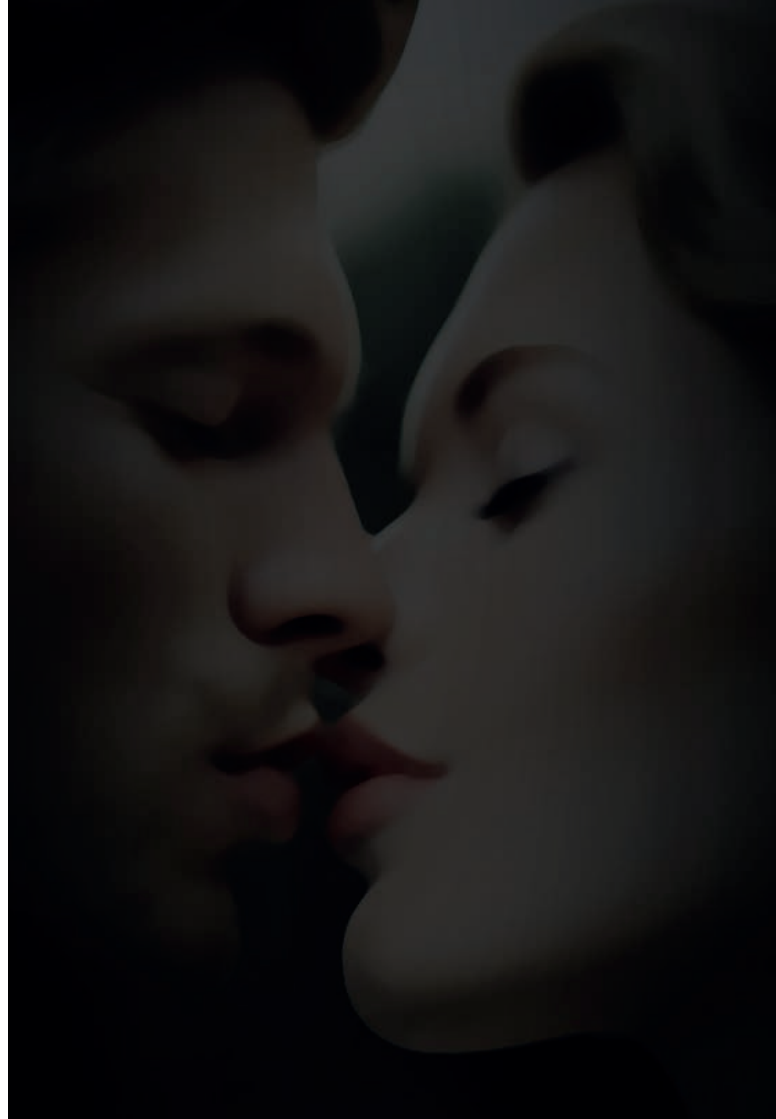
As Flame, and Wind, and Space, and Light,
Embalmed in some celestial shrine,
Where angels tread – your holiness, your strength,
Your Courage lives, white-gleaming in the night
For all Eternity... and I,
Who love your hands, your voice, the wine
Of you remembered Kiss – Oh! I, your own
Shall kneel, a worshipper, before your throne!

May 2nd 1943

Now Love Is Dead.

I have lost my love, but where shall I look?
I cannot search the skies
Nor tread the ploughed
White fields of trailing cloud.
But somewhere there
Our love is lost, desolate and crying,
Along empty, echoless halls of space,
Born as a fleck of dust
Across the sphere
Mooning, but who's to hear?
So frail it was.
Frail as an April dawn, a moon-beam's glance.
"Kiss me again" you said
"Tomorrow Love might die"
I laughed... Now Love is dead.

July 27th 1943



*As June's first child I have to assume this was written after my birth at
Birtley House where the family moved in August 1945*

First Born.

Beyond the realm of this flesh-fettered clay
Love's hallowed purity conceived
This Life – as the dawn conceives the day;
And bore him, not in pain or fear
But as a flower, unfolding in Thy Light
He came. High as the stars my triumph soared,
Not in my own but Thy achievement, Lord.
Thy servant, Lord, have I brought forth
In all humility,
Stretch out Thy Hand and draw him close
To stand against Thy knee.

Oct 1945

From the date I believe that this was probably written following the death of June's much-loved cousin Donald Paterson who died in a Scottish loch trying to rescue a boy who had drowned while swimming and had been caught by the cold under-layer of water which in the North can trap unwary swimmers. One of my own poems, although written about a different circumstance, was also the result of the emotions that resulted from this sad accident.

Mourning

Grief's garment lies too close about my form;
I shrug a little – where's the harm
If it should loosen by a fold or two?
I shrug again and see it slip upon the ground;
About my feet it lies to trap my step.
That plainly will not do.
I kick it far and, free
My arms once more reach wide
And I can run to you.



Part 2;
Simon Whalley

Caroline first came into my life at the tender age of 17 in 1970 when she came with her parents prior to a 6 month stay with us at Birtley in the guise of a 'gap-year' style break. I think I fell for her the moment I first looked into her eyes but, as she was the daughter of my special god-mother Elizabeth (Biz) Baker, I had to be very circumspect in developing the relationship. However, we did become close and, when she left to return home, I felt very lost and this first poem was the result.

Without You.

Without you - there is no time;
no clock may tick; no shadow
moves across the sundial's face.
No noon; no dawn; no evening
cloaked with shades of velvet dark -
without you.

Without you - no seasons roll;
no blossom'd spring; no summer
days of lazy scented air;
no golden autumn; no frost
or winter snowflakes fall -
without you.

Without you - no birds may sing;
no soft breath of wind may stir
the leafless, skeletal trees;
no river flows; no salt tides
summoned by the waxing moon -
without you.

Without you - seems my being
frozen, cold. Scarce dares my heart
to beat, lest it be stolen
away into this aching void.
You are my world and I'm nought -
without you.



The following poems are all inspired by the highs and lows of my life – some pre-date our marriage and go back to my school days. Others are influenced by news items from around the world or little moments when I saw something that seemed part of a story that needed telling.

Dusk.

Still the soft wind; the sun sinks;
purple mount the mighty clouds on high,
edged with gold.
Dark the forest, shadows' Fold.
Slowly ebbs the colour of the day
into night.
Beyond time, that point of light,
half-seen in depths of palest blue;
Venus' star.
Imagine; we are small, it is far.
A catch of breath; so much unknown.
Hold my hand.

For The Last Bird Of Summer.

Gentle bird, so softly plumaged
and sweetly singing,
depart not our cold grey fields.
Do not abandon me to lonely winter snows.
Take not the sun, leave me not bereft
and sadly pining.
Stay and I will treasure you;
hold and shelter you
from every icy blast that blows.
You may warm yourself against my love,
and my kisses shall caress you
like the tropic sun.

Yet I know that you must leave me
in melancholy.
Take then my poor heart with you.
Love and comfort it, hold it close.
Be tender and careful for 'tis my gift;
all I have to give.

May the dark days of this cheerless season
roll now into one.
So soon come Spring and with it your return.
Then we again become inseparable
and lonely months be as a moment.
Then will the sun shine
- on us together.



Caught In A Storm.

Upon the rocky shore
beats the rhythm of the surf.
Above the steeppling crags
comes the roaring of the wind.
The clouds do crack and rumble;
hail spatters all around.
The river, rising in its spate,
thunders down the darkling gorge
in its foaming coat of spray.
The storm may fill our minds
with its fury and its power,
but my love seek out my arms
and there enfolded be.
There, soft amid the tempest,
you may only hear my heart,
beat in love and care for thee.

The Road To Nowhere.

“Follow life’s dread road; never question where it leads;
desert all but your fortune’s flame; look not back; leave all to chance.”
The boy-man heard the words and so he went
where the winds and tides of providence did guide.
The crowding images of many lands trooped through his mind
without impression. No driving passion nor even willful choice
directed his footsteps.

Each fork and turn instantly became the master of his ambition.
Not once did he ever question whether there was a right way
or if he should seek advice or help along the route.
He knew not what he sought or if he sought at all.
Those whom he met were mostly passed without a glance.
Some, though but few, were consumed and left
like apple cores upon the road.

Of these all but one desiccated and turned to dust
in his memory. Just the one small seed germinated and grew;
her beauty and vulnerability touched the loneliness in his heart.
In time small shoots of love reached up through the hard-dusty
layers of repressed emotion and uncaring emptiness,
toward the last flickering embers of hope and reason
in the darkness of his mind.

One tiny leaf alone was all the shoot could throw.
The boy that remained inside the man knelt beside it
in wonder at all that he had missed, but even as he reached out
to touch the tender twig of love, the man's boot, in cynical despair,
smashed down and crushed it in the dust and so the man
passed on along his endless hopeless way, not touched again
by any caring thought.

This next poem was written following a safari to Chitwan in Zimbabwe. Our guide was amused by the similarity of the cautious movement of a very nervous kudu and my wife Caroline's anxious demeanour when on foot in the bush.

Zimbabwe Dawn.

Dawn comes gently to the bush, whispers for words;
Soft calls of waking birds, awed by the roaring in the night.
Chill dew settles on us, huddled round the fire,
Steaming mugs cupped in shivering hands. "Can you hear it still?"
Distantly comes the lion's coughing moan, almost imagined.
The stars are fading, how swiftly comes the light, calming fears.
"We must be off" our guide is standing, shading his eyes
Against the rising sun, rifle held loosely at his side.
"Are you coming?" Silently we file across the sandy river bed,
Trying to match his easy stride. Under the great trees





The litter of leaves and fallen pods crackles softly
As hornbills swoop ahead, their pied plumage
Suddenly bright as sunshine sparkles through the leaves.
Across a bend in the dried-up river a tiny movement
Stops us dead; crouching low we wait and wait.
From the thicket, slow and hesitant, steps out the kudu cow
Long neck and graceful slender legs, each stride considered.
Ears flicking, nose questing, for a threat upon the breeze
She crosses, step by careful step. How fear-filled was her night?
No tent or guide to shield her from the nightmare jaws.
No threat appears as still she paces slowly through the sand.
A last glance with gentle eyes at our strange intrusion
And then, with whisk of tail, a single leap takes her up the bank
And out of sight. “Just like your Caroline!” is whispered in my ear.

First Love.

First;
a look; a flicker in the mind.
Slowly;
Deeper understanding.
Mind and heart
just touch - no more.
Soon a bond; warm friendship.
Feelings growing, drawn from deep inside our hearts.
A little frightening;
aching; searching for something to cling to.
Only each other.
Breathe deep and take the plunge.

Midas' Touch.

You are now my dawn and dusk;
with me all night and every day.
Waking and sleeping - in my dreams.
In memory, in hope, in present thought.
In joy and sorrow, laughter, tears.
Triumph and failure, deceivers both,
are yours to command. Your love
must make the mountain bend
and mighty oaks lie at your feet.
Your smile dispels the blackest night;
your sorrow turns the sun to shade.
If you but touch me, hold me close
and let me feel your lips on mine,
then shall I know that Midas' skill
was but a sham. What worth is gold?
'Tis nought - no craft at all -
compared to thine.



Over many years I have done research into the English Civil War in which a distant relative played a significant role. Edward Whalley was given the role of Charles I's guardian when the King was held in Hampton Court after his surrender to the Parliamentary Army. Charles had a firm belief in his destiny and often used the phrase 'Dum Spiro Spero' ('while I have life I have hope'). In times of stress it has always been a motto I subscribe to as well.

Dum Spiro Spero.

Such hopes; such dreams - they shall not die!

Thread unbroken; once again to try.

To never fail? Was never on.

To never win? Such thought be gone!

Can you deny there's always hope?

We must not say that we can't cope

with pain and setbacks shared; we two,

with love and faith can still win through.

 'dum spiro spero' for me and you.

Our strength is in our will to gain

not prize nor plaudit; gold nor fame,

but heart to heart and each to each,

in lives we touch and children teach,

that there is hope amid despair;

and, though this world is never fair,

the darkening night brings closer dawn.

Then from the shards of lives so torn

and shattered; we can build again

the hopes and dreams that weren't in vain

 'dum spiro spero' our refrain.

If hopeless seems the life we share
how rate you 'love' and 'faith' and 'care'?
And friends there are in plenty still
who, if we call, come with a will
to ease sharp pain and lift the heart
with cheering words; so do not start
to grieve for what we do not need;
'what's meant is meant' must be our creed
 'dum spiro spero' in hour of need.

That which we own is more than all
the riches that the world can call
from out of every mine and store.
Our blessings truly count for more
than any gift that we could buy -
though don't assume that we won't try;
do all we can to change our state.
We'll not believe that it's our fate
to always languish in despair.
Undying hope our motto clear
 'dum spiro spero' still we hear.

Hope.

Did you give your all to some lost cause?
Or take the strain when all else failed?
Did every passing moment last
A lifetime in the frozen hour?
Was there sickness in your heart as all your hopes
Were splintered into shards of glass.
No reason left, the pain profound,

Then only as the light unbearable
Stove in your eyes and burst your mind
A tiny voice silenced the mental storm.
Just 'peace' was all it said. Where from?
'My peace I give to you'. Again you hear.
The world turned on and chaos smoothed
Then hope returned and gratitude
For such a perfect love. With heart repaired
The future now has all to gain
And causes lost become renewed
And failure turns to joy at last.

The Weasel.

It wasn't there, but now it is -
and now it's gone again; no
'tis back - that fierce black eye
in tiny rounded face.
One moment there, next moment gone
it peeks from under logs and stones
in curiosity.

I sit as still as man may sit,
hoping not to fright it more.
But it's not frit, just wants to know
what this intrusion is
into its wild wood. How should it know
I mean no harm? And yet it senses I'm
not threatening.

A flash of russet, sinuous grace,
flowing o'er the turf, into the hedge.
Then the weasel disappears
without the slightest sound.
No sign remains; it's gone so soon
the thought takes root - perhaps it's all
just imagining.

Mistaken Identity.

“Don’t I know you? I’m sure we’ve met.”

“I don’t think so. I’d not forget”

“Perhaps at school. Were you at ‘Daps?’”

“Where’s that? It rings no bells with me!”

“Dapdune High? No? ‘Uni’, perhaps?”

I was Norwich; you know, UEA.”

“You’ve lost me. I tell you I’m not whoever you think me. Now I must run!”

“No! Don’t you tell me!”

“Tell you what?”

“It’s Tim! It’s Tim! Oh isn’t it fun to meet up again after these years?”

“I said I’m not the man you knew!”

“You must! Those clothes... he always wears!”

“I don’t know Tim. It can’t be true.”

“You sure?”

“Of course! What is your case?”

“Sorry. It’s just... he was, well... great!

Special to me. He had your face.”

“Sorry. Must go, I’m running late.”

“No, don’t worry; all long ago.”

“Maybe I’ll see you round here again?”

I come this way often, you know.”

“That’s nice. I’ll hope to see you, then.”

“Sorry I mistook you for Tim!”

“I’m sorry too! Like to be him!”

“Bye, then.”

“Bye.”

This poem was inspired by the need for generous loving support in fragmented communities.

The Thorny Parth

Dear Lord in vain we try to reconcile
that we owe, in duty bound.
Who's to say which cause is right
when Love and Honour make their stand
demanding that we choose between
such dear friends as they have been.

Jealous briars and spiteful weeds
follow oft the richest crop
and 'revenge' cries out the man
whose master has preferred him most.
But they that seek such bitter gall
will not find Reward at all.

If each duty and each task
drives you further from all hope
of peaceful years and quiet rest;
if fear and strife remain your lot
then seek out what your heart has known -
pain will cease when Love has grown.

Love's our duty; not the reverse.
Duty without Love must fail
for in its very shade the seeds
of envy and contempt do grow.
Lord grant us purer hearts to see -
Love is ALL we owe to Thee.

A Modern Scrooge.

“Good morning, Sir.”

“What’s good about it?”

“I only thought...”

“Don’t think. You’re not
paid to think, just work.”

“Can I ask, Sir....?”

“What’s it now? More dosh?”

“No, Sir! Not that.”

“What’s it then? Speak up!”

“My little girl...”

“Your girl? She’s ill?”

“Yes, Sir. My wife too...”

“She’s ill as well?”

“No. She’s run away.

I... need some time.”

“Time? Yes I s’pose

you must. But all unpaid.”

“What? Surely now

I’ve earned a break?

Can’t you see your way...?”

“Huh? Do you think

I’m made of money?

If you want time

it must be paid for.”

“Please Sir, just some help!”

“I’ll not argue.

Take the time you need...”

“Oh thank you Sir!”

“You may collect your cards as you go!”



This poem, like my mother's last one, was inspired partly by the loss of a cousin trying to rescue a young lad who was drowning in a loch in the Cairngorm area of Scotland

The Wilderness Pool.

Through the trees gleamed water sweet,
cooling summons for tired feet.
Dank and dark was the forest's press,
"No time now to stop; unless
I find a haven very soon
I'll not manage to go on."
The poor, young girl had lost her way -
mile on mile she'd walked today -
her bare legs scratched, her shirt all torn
by briars, nettles, twigs and thorn.
On, on toward the rippling lake.
"How much pain can my legs take?"

In humid, airless heat all round
the girl stumbled, fell to the ground.
Struggling up she tried to run
Panicked by the lowering sun
"Soon comes night, where should I hide?"
Then "Not frightened!" to herself she lied.
High above a bird screamed loud,
its warning cry. The girl was cowed,
her blue eyes wide in dreadful fear.
She looked all round but nought was there.

At last she reached the golden shore
the sunlit lake a treasure store
each wavelet shining like a jewel.
At last a welcome rest from cruel
fighting through the bush and thicket.
“Now I’m safe; I’ll surely make it!”
Across the pool a boathouse showed;
“That will do - tonight’s abode!
No more struggling through the wood,
I’ll swim across.” She’s sure she could.
The water’s clear as glass and cool,
so refreshing, the forest pool,
after all her pain and fear;
she’s quite sure that rescue’s near.

Stripping off her shorts and shirt,
torn and streaked with sweat and dirt,
she looks around - no one is near -
her nakedness she does not fear.
She plunges in, the water’s kind,
its soft refreshment fills her mind.
Between her toes she feels the sands;
water laps her breasts like hands
caressing with a sensual feel,
the pleasure is so very real.
Banished fear and panic gone
she feels a real achievement won.
To struggle and to yet survive
it feels so good to be alive.

continued...

She turns and looks across the pond,
it seems a little dark beyond
the clear blue shallows where she swims.
“It’s not so far, I’ve stronger limbs
than most I know. I’m sure I can
make it across - much better than
fighting through the woods again.
Come on, my girl, get going then!”
She strikes out for the distant bank
with water creaming down her flank
as each strong stroke yet drives her on
into the middle where the sun
has not warmed up the icy deeps.

Here the water’s black and cold
and none should swim, however bold.
As the cold creeps in her bones
her strokes begin to fail. She moans
“Don’t give up now, you’re nearly there!”
But in her heart she knows despair.
She seems to feel the water-sprite
pulling her down; she cannot fight.
She has no strength to even shout
and soon her spirit’s given out.
The cold to her at least is kind
it takes away her conscious mind.
The sunny pool becomes her grave;
she sinks unknowing ‘neath the wave.



A small contribution to the failure to recognize the impact of environmental issues

A Father's Advice To His Daughter.

The future's bright! You know it's right
to take each day the greatest pay;
to spend and spend, it'll never end!
Your little boy, has every toy
and 'convenience' is the aim of science.
'Technology replace biology!'
I hear the cry (did you sigh?).
Throughout the earth there is no dearth
of what we need. Oh let's not heed
those crying 'Doom'! Can't stand gloom!
So let's have more! What's that? The Poor?

Whoever heard....! It's just absurd
to think that we've responsibility
for third world debt; for drought; for wet.
The atmosphere looks clear from here!
You mustn't tease 'bout rising seas
and melting ice - it's just not nice.
It's warmer here, it's true, my dear,
but isn't it a benefit
to have good weather; what if the heather
is dying out from endless drought?

Extract the peat - the garden's neat -
and who will care, when we're not here,
if all the trees are gone, and seas
polluted. It's convoluted
to blame us; shame us
into 'saving'. You must be raving
if you think that I am bothered by
what happens next; I'll not be vexed
by ozone scares. What Greenpeace declares
concerns me not; I think it's rot!

Is that the time? Drink up your wine
And fetch the car for your old Pa
Or we'll be late, which She will hate!
What's that you say? No fuel today?
In short supply? Please tell me why!
We've had our ration? Bloody nation!
No-one cares! Gone on for years!
Never learn! Spend more than they earn!
Wastrels all! Knew they'd fall...
Ouch! That hurt!

Inspired by the Surrey Hills and Wiltshire downs historical connections

The Hill-Fort.

In these hollow hills time's sleeping
Like hibernating dormice.
It seems so deathly cold and still
Yet it is just breathing, softly;
Almost as imperceptible,
As a distant sigh.
These rounded, voluptuous slopes,
Full as a nursing mothers' breasts,
Roll towards the setting sun,
Veiled in the translucent chiffon
Of rising mists of autumn -
Winter more nearly.

Frost rustles crisply in the air
Like old dry leaves in a barn.
Each step crunching under foot.
All the ground slowly turning white,
Ice rimm'd with hoary crystals,
Etched in the turf.
No sign of life; no sound; no light;
Disturbs the silent dark that creeps
Up the slope toward the mounds
Where ancient ghosts still stand their guard
O'er long-eroded ramparts
Where they fought and died.

Four boys bravely stand their ground
They're not cowed by ancient fears!
But the silence has a sound
That fills their heads with noises, far
Beyond the range of human ear -
Like spirits singing!
The dark'ning azure, still pink-flush'd,
Breathes away all light and warmth
And cold eternity vacuums
All rational and normal thought
Rooting four small awe-struck boys
To the downland turf.

Space and time become confused;
And in their wild imaginings
They seem to think that now is then
And here is there; and who are they
To dare intrude into this place,
In their impermanence?
“Let's hurry now, back down the hill!”
“Feel you these icy fingers then?”
Cold raw fear far chiller than
The frost that fills that hollow ground,
Willing them to leave that place,
Take to urgent flight.

continued...

Before they've broken free from thrall
The full moon rises o'er the mounds
Bathing all in cold bright light.
Shadows now spring to sharp relief
Taking fantastic shape and form;
Messengers of doom!
"Run! Run!" the cry as fear lends wings
To racing feet o'er tussock'd turf.
Stumbling, tumbling, rolling down,
Panic yells fill now the coombe.
Haven reached, each sheepish face
Peers back up the hill.
Small boys in earnest huddle meet
Each vowing that "I weren't the one
First to run - I weren't afeard!"
But all are sure they'll not again
Brave that lonely fortress'd mound
On All Hallowse'en.



The Old Wall.

Each course of brick rust-red;
 its half-moon coping
 curves softly like the bed
 of scent'd rose below,
 shelteréd from windy thrall.
 Closer, see, the face
 is crazed with many small
 cracks and scars, old wounds,
 like some ancient dene,
 or badlands tipp'd upon
 their side; running between
 mossy green forests,
 softening the harsh relief
 of brick and mortar.

Decorated there, with leaf,
 here, cobweb hangings
 veil eruption of cement,
 feinting soon to tumble,
 become another fragment
 turning now to dust
 in the old wall's shade.

continued...

Lichens, flour-dusted, grey,
with patient growth
 (ten years are but a day
in their slow time-scale)
 spread o'er each line and pitch.
Taking root in cracks
 small plants all find a niche
or in cranny hide.
 Lowly fern curls out
its spore-encrusted,
 dark green and feather'd shoot.
Above, a stonecrop
 flashes its yellow stars
back at glaring sun.

 Lasting for only hours
dainty pink blossom,
 lacework leaf so fragile
on its purple stem;
 Herb Robert - Crane's bill.
Wings like lady's dress
 the butterfly sits tight
on sun-warmed brick,
 its camouflage is right,
till it flicks its wings
 and flutters off to find
nectar rich flower
 around archway twined,
with honeysuckles
 and bright roses laid.

Comes night and with it cool
 shadows creep along,
 hiding from moonlight full.
 From debris heap'd
 close to the old wall's base
 come rustling sounds.
 The white owl turns her face,
 senses the tiny mouse,
 and swoops on silent vanes
 from her perch atop
 the nearby bean-stick canes.
 Her questing talons
 find their mark, no sound made,
 she takes the mouse;
 with flicking, gulping head
 it's swallowed whole.

She settles on the wall
 soft feathers fluffed,
 digesting her small meal.
 Dark wall's come alive
 with snail, slug and spider
 hunting, gleaning thru'
 mossy meadows, which hide
 food enough for all.
 Comes the dawn, with the sun
 sleepy stillness sits
 the dew-wet brick upon.
 The old wall; it's stood
 two hundred years, they say
 and, though all must fade,
 generations will this way
 pass before it falls
 to the clay from which it's made.

A 'Freedom-Fighter's' Farewell To His Lover On Imminent Execution.

No light; no dark; no sight; no spark
of hope or fear; nor smile nor tear.
My time is run; the end is come
there just remains the fearful pains
for moments only. Not sad nor lonely
be for me. I will be free
of all my cares - declining years
are not my lot.

How strange it seems, never in dreams
did I perceive that I would grieve
not for life but that such strife
would attend upon my end.
Try to fight for all that's right
without descending to pretending
that I have been more than I seem
- like all I fall.

You're not to use the old excuse;
no martyr I - though I did try
to right some wrongs, unbind some thongs,
I was not right to take the fight
to such extremes. When violence wins
all else is lost. Then count the cost
in ruined lives and orphans' cries.
Forgive - and live!
"Take then my spirit - to you I will it -
use it well; sound not my knell
as if I could, or even should,
have been more, above the law.
'A special case'? Look in my face
Aren't I a man? No other than
ordinary as any - worse than many
I'd luck, not pluck.

That said and yet, do not forget
I loved you more than all before.
If you must pray, I know your way,
then pray for peace, let fighting cease,
and not for me. What'll be will be
and I'll be there, beside you dear
whate'er befall, whene'er you call
I'm there don't fear.

So now farewell, I hear the bell
that summons souls, for me it tolls
and though my fate has come from hate
yet love is now what you must vow.
I'll take the hate through that dread gate
and its foul heart I'll tear apart.
As my body's burst then hate is cursed
into eternity.

Refugee To Nothing.

It was not like this in days long gone
When all we had was ours alone.
Now we must share each stolen moment
Each tiny fragment of time
With a horde of those like us who mean - Nothing.

How did it change then; that time of peace?
All once was rich and full of colour.
Now what remains seems so grey and flat
Without the vibrancy of life,
A sad and broken vessel, holding - Nothing.

I remember you so full of joy
That each movement seemed to crackle
With an electric expectation.
Your eyes would shine with love
Each time they met mine - now they show- Nothing.

One freedom lost; no real freedom gained.
Exchanged, those chains on mind and spirit,
For this wire cage and patrolling soldiers.
Here is no space to breathe
Just squalid huts filled with people saying - Nothing.

I have tried, seeking hope beyond hope,
To see some future outside that wire
Which like each day and week and year
Stretches unbearably toward
A twilight forgotten world expecting - Nothing.

I can no longer bear to see you thus
destroyed; confined in mindless tedium.
Today we'll travel together, far beyond
the hopeless bounds that ring us in.
I know now that this life holds, for us - Nothing.

You understand, though nought you speak.
You know full well what I intend
and yet no fear shows in your eyes;
Just hope perhaps that there is life
for us beyond the grave and not just - Nothing.

Hold me close my dearest love
It is but a step to eternal peace
There are none to say goodbye
Nor pray for our poor souls' rest.
I whisper your name one last time
My first and only love; but still you say - Nothing.

Nothing hoped - Nothing gained - Nothing spared -
Nothing won

Nothing remained.

Dream A Little.

Dreams may start as little thoughts
While thoughts unchecked may kill our dreams.
Unfulfilled the dream becomes a chain that ties
The thoughts to sense of failure and a rising fear
That dreams are never meant to live
Beyond the thoughts that gave them birth.

But think again – not every dream you had
Is lost and gone. There were indeed some thoughts
That blossomed, and the dreams bore fruit.
Maybe the world changed not but still be proud
That what you did with scarce a pause for thought
Gave joy or hope to someone dear.

Keep those thoughts and let them breathe
Remember all the dreams you had
That now define your life and make you who you are
Replace the fear of failure with a sense of worth
And yes, not every dream became reality
But thinking made you and our dream you are.



FOR FEARGUS

“Tuesday’s child is full of grace”

Forbears from the glens of Antrim and from Yorkshire dales
Blood lines that lead to Ireland, Scotland, England – even Wales!
Tales of a Canadian prairie mission and days of the Raj beguile
More too from far off lands in Africa and from Hawaiian isle.
Your ancestry includes both Scottish glen and Surrey park
Your relatives from round the world have left their mark.
In you we see both Mum and Dad; Aunts; Uncles; Grandparents too?
But all in all there is no doubt... you look like... YOU!

To hold your little hands and kiss your dearest face
Brings gratitude for a wondrous gift: that sense of grace
In the shared joy and family ties that bind
Our genes together as if your birth was signed
In heaven as a link to bring into our family so strong
A hope for a joyous future that we can really know.
We pray that wisdom, joy and peace to you will flow;
That you will forever in the Father's love remain
And that birthday grace for all your life retain.

Light Of Life.

In a small dark corner of a rustic, basement byre,
Struggling for breath amidst the humid, foetid air,
A tiny babe is born into a world of muck and mire.
The meagre flames of rusty lamps sputter and fade
As Light Eternal slips back in, to the world He made,
Through a mother's love and a joiner's trade.
Ethereal silence smothers the lowing, bleating sound
Of cattle, goats and asses, gathered all around.
Then a cry so pure and poignant that it carries far beyond
The ancient, rough-hewn, mud-packed wall
And the tethered stock in splintered stall.
Out into the icy blackness; the cry becomes a call.





From street to street it soars, flashing up the rocky hill
Through ravine and chasm and silent, frozen rill,
Whirled along by gusts of wind and fire, until
The call crescendos to a wild and joyous shout
Picked up by every stone, echoed from house and hut
A promise of new life, unfettered, nevermore locked out.
The very stars shine brighter, add their music to the call
Which rouses herd boys from their cots in sheepfold hall.
With sleep-filled eyes and ears o'erwhelmed withall,
They stumble out, imagining some multitude is nigh;
Winds thrashing mountain grasses, howling through the sky;
Hills reverberate with thunder, angelic music from on high.
With wonder in their hearts, and fearful of the cause,
They huddle close together, waiting on a pause,
To try and seek some shelter from the night's uproars.

continued...

Then the shepherds spy and follow, the glowing beacon light,
As peace descends it fills the boys with the gift of special sight,
Clearly now, they know, this is a hallowed night.
As they cluster round the stable, where the light is brightest,
Revealed is the Child, at His loving mother's breast.
Struck dumb they stand, heads bowed, in awe transfixed,
Until the youngest offers up his coat of lambskin
As a fitting gift to wrap the sleeping baby in;
Snug warmth and, from sharp straw, protection.
Others too did see that light and heard that mighty call
Followed the star-signs and the storm-clouds pall
Directly to the little town and the hidden stall.
And still they come to bid us turn, from a world forlorn,
To the love that came that night; when He was born
Who gives us Light more brilliant than any earthly dawn.

If life's road be hard or troubles rife
We are with you all through your life
And if our efforts are not help enough
You have the promise of Perfect Love
From Him whose sign will always guide
And from whom no secrets hide.
He will not fail, give Him your trust;
Being kind and gentle, fair and just
Will bring Reward for Joseph.

Lost in wonder though your parents be
And transported, through your alchemy,
Forgetful of the wakeful nights,
Always forgiving the cries and frights,
Remembering just the golden hours
When each moment heavenward soars.
Our children's love all else outranks
With this in mind we give deep thanks,
With heart and soul, for Joseph

FOR RICHARD

In your eyes the smile arrives
 Even before your lips begin to move.
 In your throat a first soft sound
 Becomes a very treasure trove
 Of happy gurgles

Arms & legs flail excitedly
 Expectant of the cuddle I don't delay!
 In my arms I hold you tight
 Your eyes, so bright, your love convey
 Filling my soul

Whalley is a name that runs
 Back near a thousand years
 With a motto 'Mirabile in Profundis'
 'Wonder in the Deeps' it shares
 A sense of mystery

Richard means 'Strong Leader'
 And again the name repeats
 Through generations to Yorkshire Dales
 Where our forefathers filled the streets
 With sheep for market.

Wenbo celebrates your Chinese heritage
 With the 'Deep Knowledge' that implies
 But the Chinese Year gives you another
 As 'Little Monkey' twinkles in your eyes
 And gives a naughty smile!

This poem was inspired by the beauty and spirituality of the Surrey Hills where I grew up and to which I returned with also happy memories of walking in the Wiltshire downs where we lived for 25 years.

Spirit In The Hills.

Assailed by doubts – too many choices,
Too cloudy your vision to mould the way;
You set out to walk the hills and find some peace
From all the worries which you could not allay.
Then on the wind you heard a voice. Too far
To hear if words of pain or joy arose
But something magic in that voice
Turned you round to draw you close.
The wind played tricks, the voice seemed lost;
You could not place its source at all.

But it found you, now with a whisper
Close by. But who does call?
No words were clear, but sounds sublime
Seemed to come from every place, and none,
To fill your mind with joy and peace.
With fears quite calmed and doubts now gone
You set your course to soldier on.



HOPE - Hang On Positively Everyone!

Across the miles
I see the smiles -
Though continents apart
This lifts my heart
Gives hope of times to come

Special plans that are no more
Cause stress and tears for sure -
A weekly Zoom
Relieves the gloom
Gives hope of times to come

Each week, with even longer hair
Our family news we hear -
The distance seems to disappear
Whilst planning happier days to share
Gives hope of times to come

We can but hope
That we will cope
With all life's ups and downs
By keeping smiles, ignoring frowns
Gives hope of times to come

I pray when this year's past
Our good intentions really last -
Reflecting better lives to live
And kindness to our neighbours give
Sure hope of times to come.

LOVE IN ALL

Love created life and life holds Love
who never dies and lives in us.
Life goes on with us in Love
and all creation loving life.
Those who died in loving arms
bring Love into our hearts and minds
and dwell in us with Love who says:
“I am in you and you in Me.
I am here for eternity.
So follow Me and hold My hand”.
For those who have died are here for us
to guide our steps along the way
That brings us all as one today
bonded by Love and one for all.

MINDFULNESS WINS

In times of stress it often seems
That all we lack is just the means
To sort our problems, fill the holes
And maybe change our overbearing roles.
We try all we can to make a change
To calm all down, reduce the range
Of issues needing urgent fix.
Spread the load, reduce the mix.
Still we never seem to gain
The mental balance that keeps us sane.

However maybe we need to talk
With someone kind, on a walk
Through woodland green and calm.
Relax, lie down, it does no harm
To smell the leaves and hear the birds
Now truly we can find the words
To explain our mental state
Reducing stress and our heartrate.
Breathing slowly, we feel fresh air
Uplift our senses, calm is here.

Mindfulness is all around
In nature peace is found
New beliefs can now commence
And we must keep that sense
Of a life-enhancing Spirit
With us, and always feel it
Build back the childhood dreams
That help restore the teams
We lead and work with every day
At last there is a clearer way!



A CHRISTMAS DREAM

Into the quiet darkness of December
Comes a host of flashing lights
And the music we remember
From our childhood's wakeful nights.
Excited by the Christmas season
We imagine all the treasures
That, for no apparent reason,
We expect to get in fullest measures
From a strange and bearded man
Who arrives in reindeer sleigh
To deliver all he can
Despite the shortness of the day.

He works on into the night
Filling bags with what he thinks
Will make us all happy and bright.
Before he goes he sips and winks
At the kindly offered sherry.
Then with many great 'hurrahs'
And shouts of 'Christmas Merry!'
The reindeer sleigh leaps off into the stars.



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