

The Magpie's Hoard

*an Anthology
of songs, poems, prose and illustrations
shared during the 2020
Covid 19 pandemic*

Volume I – March to June 2020



collected by Lorna Davies

The Magpie's Hoard

*an Anthology
of songs, poems, prose and illustrations
shared during the 2020
Covid 19 pandemic*

collected by Lorna Davies

In March 2020, the full effects of the covid19 virus began to be felt in the UK. Events were cancelled, the vulnerable began to self-isolate, people were social distancing. Then pubs, clubs, restaurants, theatres etc all closed as did many shops and businesses. Many folks started to work from home. The streets were all but empty. Everyone was asked to stay at home apart from key workers.

Life changed for everyone, we were all in lockdown

During the covid19 lockdown, many poets and writers were kind enough to share some of their work. It was shared far and wide and then collected together in this anthology. For as long as work is offered for sharing, this collection will continue to grow.

Why "The Magpie's Hoard"? Although the notion of magpies stealing bright shiny objects is a myth, they are very curious birds and will often pick up and fly off with the most unlikely objects, shiny or not. The only thing linking all the pieces in this anthology is that they were shared during the pandemic. They may make us laugh, make us cry, refresh memories of days gone by or make us think about what is happening in the world today and what we can do about it. They are, in fact, a delightful collection of curiosities.

The artwork on the cover is by Steve Wigley

Thank you for your generosity to everyone who has contributed.

Contents

Phil Bowyer	6
Morning Walk	7
Peter Branson	8
After the Dance	9
Attila the Nun	10
Bukes	11
Coping with Covid-19	12
Dark Angels	13
Folk Rising	14
'If life were a thing that money could buy -'	15
Jizz-jazz Joy for a Dog-eared Boy	16
John Barleycorn's Lament	17
Libraries way back	18
Middle Englishmen diggin' their blues	19
Pub Folk	20
Revival	21
The Ballad of Jo Cox	22
The Ghost Dance	23
The Potteries Peterloo	24
These times need changing still	25
This Land	26
Turn, Turn, Turn	27
Ver Sacrum The Song Collector	28
Yer rock 'n' roll	29
Lynne Chesworth	30
Feeding Time at the Zoo	31
Following in Jeannie's Footsteps	32
Sun Hat	33
Graham Corcoran	34
Coronavirus Pandemic 2020	35
Out of Lockdown	36
Lorna Davies	37
Cassie's Breakfast	38
Hair Raising	40
Rowena Dawson	41
Celebrating the Green	42

Liz Dyer	43
An Element of Living	44
Futureshock	45
Jeff Eardley	46
A Bat Round the Head	47
A Rant	49
A Specsavers Tale	50
Cricket	51
Dance Macabre	52
Distancing	53
Masks	54
Murmurations	55
Ode to Old George	56
Pilates	57
The Aldi Song	58
The Boomers	60
The Laughter Class	61
Too Old to Die Young	62
Vera	63
Malcolm Hawksworth	64
Jo Cox (words)	65
Jo Cox (music)	66
John Hobby	67
Eyes Wide Open	68
Helen Hopkins	69
Around the Sprink – as the locals say	70
Alan Lewis	71
A Limerick	72
Sonnet on Huntley Bridge	73
Pamela Moore	74
My Walk Along the Railway Path	75
Phil Poyser	76
Cricket Bat Calypso	77
Stick'Em Up: The Great Rhubarb Heist	79

Jean Reilly	81
A Walk by the River	82
A Walk up to Toothill Rock	83
Dave Roberts	84
A Squirrel's Stare	85
Little Piece of Grass	86
The Sun is Out	87
Malcolm Robinson	88
Healthy Eating	89
My Burning Heart (The Dyspepsia Blues)	89
Tears	91
The sorry, self inflicted, tale of the Big Game Hunter who decided to eat his kills.	92
What are we Heading for?	93
Helen Wainwright	94
Still the River	95
Julie and Steve Wigley	96
A Blackbird Sang	97
Aspirations	98
Bees Like Begonias	99
Champion	100
Good Morning Mister Magpie	101
Oasis	102
Sunday Morning Hack	103
The Derbyshire Hare	104
The Raid	105
The Rites of Spring	106
To See the Swallows	107
Two Brothers	108
Winter Visitors	109
Lilian Willis	110
Picnic	111
Bob Wilson	112
Daren Dakes	113
How to Recognise a Cow	115

Phil Bowyer

Phil is one of a great group of friends who came together through playing and singing along with the ukulele

The special thing about this group is that none of the authors had written poetry prior to lockdown.

If something good has come out of these last few months, it's a belief that we are all still capable of finding hidden talents within ourselves.

Phil Bowyer

Morning Walk

(Florence)

My morning walk is a trip through time.
Ronnie, my dog, struggles, his legs are short.
It starts through houses, a play area,
soon we are entering the real walk.
Underfoot a smooth tarmac path leading to blackthorn bushes,
covered in beautiful blossom.

We can hear the droning of the gas pump, drawing the energy from below.
The shining bark of the silver birch, leaves beginning to form.
Time is transforming this one hundred and fifty-year-old,
local historic area.

As we walk higher we remember how this area has provided energy, jobs,
a way of life,
and still it is providing.

Higher and higher, Ronnie is slowing now.

A wonderful view over the city.
Easy to imagine clouded smog and smoke, yet,
still open fields reminding us some things have not changed
in one hundred and fifty years.

In the distance a fox glides across the path.
Birds are singing their chorus.
Then, turn into the woodland,
blackberry bushes, now home to wildlife.
A robin chatters to its friends, confident,
not afraid.

Down the slope we go, cars parked.
Walkers enjoying the free open space, dogs are running.
Across a gravel path we walk, allotments still in use,
a reminder again that some things never change.
A miner's pastime.

Still the birds are singing, new growth all around.
Ronnie, now panting loudly, a drink of water for him.

Up the wet slope, down the gully and back through the play area,
my two-mile morning walk around The 'Florence' is over.
Back home for tea and oatcakes.
Ronnie's breakfast first, of course.

Peter Branson



Peter Branson is now a full time poet, songwriter & traditional-style singer. His poetry has been published in Britain, USA, Canada, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand & South Africa, including in Acumen, Agenda, Ambit, Envoi, The London Magazine, Reach, Sarasvati, The Warwick Review, Iota, Frogmore Papers, The Interpreter's House, Magma, Poetry Nottingham, South, Elbow Room, The Curlew, The Fenland Reed, The New Writer, Crannog, Measure, The Raintown Review, The Houston Poetry Review, Barnwood, Main street Rag, The Able Muse & Other Poetry.

His 'Red Hill, Selected Poems' was published in 2013 by Lapwing, Belfast. His latest collection, 'Hawk Rising', also from Lapwing, was published in 2016.

He has won prizes & been placed in a number of competitions over recent years, including a 'highly commended' in the 'Petra Kenny International', first prizes in the 'Grace Dieu' & the 'Envoi International' & a special commendation in the 2012 Wigtown. He was shortlisted for the 2018/19 Poetry Business Pamphlet and Collection competition.

Peter Branson

After the Dance

Abbots Bromley, small village in Staffordshire, on the evening of the Horn Dance,
(Mon following Wakes Sunday, which is 1st Sunday after 4th Sept).

With stirring tunes to ward
off autumn's chill, this Coach
and Horses' session ends
the day. I'm moved.
Main course, the nub of it?
I'm not quite sure.
Those Viking horns
are back, high on the walls,
where they'll remain on show,
inside the parish church
across the way, untouched,
until descendants of
the foresters who curbed
raw nature, poison, gun
and snare, turn out,
first Monday of the wakes
next year, to dowse
for luck, before
the running of the deer.
You'll hear the squeezebox first.
Weird shapes appear,
six men with antlers on
their shoulders, Hobbyhorse,
Maid Marian and Fool.
Like forebears have
for centuries, they'll dance
from early morning mist
till eventide, these wraiths,
far greater than their parts
and what they know.

Peter Branson

Attila the Nun

For Mo

Tag she gets lumbered with,
but only in bad dreams
and never to her face.
Trade name is Sister John
the Baptist. Bit on view,
from lower brow to chin,
looks early twentyish.

Her skin is palest pink,
translucent, viewed against
the stark, starch, habit-white,
black-shrouded penguin suit.
Dominican brand rite:
no soiled grey in between;
evil and good, dark – light.

Nails perfect sheening health,
eyes gleam like sculpted ice,
frigid, inflexible,
stern as a ruler's edge,
strict as a Mackintosh
upright, drives sin from kids,
scourges and terrifies.

Children who come to her
suffer, sweet Jesus knows,
except the day you spy
her with an angel (five years
old found crying on the yard)
proud on her knee:
“*So beautiful,*” she sighs.

(First published: The London Magazine)

Peter Branson

Bukes

Desperate to suit, second hand uniform,
you're tagged before you know, your badge home-sewn;
recall, worst nightmare, elocution blues.
"It's 'bucks' we read, not 'bukés'. You're mortified,
your flattened vowels like dog turd under shoes.
From smug suburbia, your master smiles:
"Say 'buss' not 'buzz', front garden snug behind
tame privet hedge, your cheeks electric fires.
Later that day, in scarf and duffel coat,
homework stone cold, you trace your future on
the window of your room, ice crystalline,
like rime on tombs, or freshly-laundered sheets
left out too long, before clean air came in,
x ray of hacking cough gone sadly wrong.

First published: 'Hawk Rising'

Peter Branson

Coping with Covid-19

This crown of thorns sees off old folk in droves,
takes those in dodgy health, sing 'Ring a ring
o' roses', blighting princes, paupers too.
As for the rest, denied the stimulus
of friend or foe, deprived of work that plugs
long days like grout, time loiters with intent.
Outside, no teenage louts chase echoes down
mean streets as mute as football games on hold.
No cars roar by; there are no traffic fumes,
our perfumed gardens lustful walls of sound.
There is no Mr Toad to ease our load,
sunbeams and cucumbers, Laputa science
run riot, our idle fears past sticking place,
where all routes lead to Cemetery Road.

Peter Branson

Dark Angels

*'You wouldn't want me any other way'
from 'Beeswing' by Richard Thompson*

*For Anne Briggs
and
my friend John Hart who knows her well from way back*

Bell clear, each note beguiled, the song
speaks for itself. Dark angelus,
its ghost released, you disappear,
the conduit, hands clamped behind,
eyes shut, beauty without pretence,
waiflike, fragile. Beyond the pale,
bedevilled by hard drink, defiant,
you rail *"If blokes can, why can't I?"*
Fame not your thing, like blossom on
the wind, you crave the commonplace,
iron muse, word wise, your sacrifice
too complex to be pigeon-holed
on record sleeve, a rolling stone
life happens to, takes by surprise.

Peter Branson

Folk Rising

Potteries Folk Club

For Wally and Lorna Davies

Ghost music; can you hear – sing rounds in back-street pubs, circle complete? Back when they thought the muse was dead, cool workers' kids, released from grammar school, go dowsing, kiss it back to life; warm function rooms, God on their side, to tales of miners, drovers, highwaymen; subversive undertow, with 'Ban the Bomb!' and "Uncle Ho,' defiance at flood tide. It couldn't last. The moguls changed their tune, signed likely lads, stars in their eyes; folk rock drowned out the words. Gone underground, down-sized yet in rude health - until next time, so keep it to yourself; new songs to tell it like it is when roused by breach of commonwealth.

First published: 'Red Hill'

Peter Branson

'If life were a thing that money could buy -'

'All you can see is houses, houses, houses, it makes me prostrate with dismal.'
Jim, Bob's father, about Peacehaven, near Rottingdean, Sussex, circa 1930s.

For Bob Copper, born 6th January 1915; d. 2004

Some say your joyous, high church harmonies
led Sixties' young revivalists astray.
Back there, where so few carriers of Folk
survive, to copy-cat and idolise,
your Copper-full of song rings true (still stirs
today); inspires the Waterasons, then Steel-
eye Span rock-glam struts by, high price to pay,
bucolic idyll Kippered, pseuds in smocks.
Recall 'The Black Horse' in your father's day,
ripe language, ale, tobacco, wassail songs
for every season, pass the jug arounds -
at shearin's, hollerin' pots and harvest homes;
grace notes, diminished fifths, as delicate
as wildflowers, charming chalk-hill-blue South Downs.

First published: 'Red Hill'

Peter Branson

Jizz-jazz Joy for a Dog-eared Boy

Strangers broadcast, blow-overs, rovers off
their beaten path, exotic rarities
that seal his breath. With something choice, he knows
immediately, so everyday white noise
is filtered out. He tries the simple checks
at first – voice, flight form, plumage, size and stance,
yet knows, where there is doubt, the casting vote
resolves round habit, calendar and clout.
He shuffles well-thumbed golden treasury,
the pocket guide inside his head, to dowse
for images of possibles, then, text
to conjure with, he discards what won't suit
till, final piece in place, jigsaw complete,
he's awestruck, joyous, appetite replete.

First published 'Hawk and Whippoorwill Magazine' (US)

Peter Branson

John Barleycorn's Lament

There were three men rode out o' the west,
Dame Fortune by their side.
They couldn't slay our bold Sir John
No matter how they tried.

*Chorus: We've farmed round here with Barleycorn
From days of slash and burn. Now
We've overdone things big time. Hope
It's not too late to learn.*

We've overdosed on fossil fuel,
Pollution, CO2.
We're poisoning the air we breathe,
We've in an awful stew.

We're spreading toxins on the land.
This wanton noxious brew
Kills insects we depend upon,
Small mammals, songbirds too.

What if the harvest fails for years,
With spring and summer drought
Or monsoon rains the season long,
John Barleycorn caught out?

They say we're at the tipping point,
Clock ticking, come what may,
Starvation, storm and pestilence,
Our grandchildren to pay.

The oily grip of Adam Smith
Has brought us to the brink.
Let's mend our ways, cooperate;
It's later than you think.

We'll work with old Sir John and shun
False idols from our past.
We'll triumph over chaos, but
This chance will be our last.

Peter Branson

Libraries way back

were sacred, thought-police on your case,
silence enforced, stray giggles gross,
like church, sly farts a deadly sin.
Weird glass-eyed fiends with goblin ears,
like guides in sandals stalking through
a nettle patch, no warning signs,
their siren blasts remove cold tramps
or drunks on drowsy afternoons.
Kids in a gang are history,
the rest, at least those ones who've brought
their forms back signed by mum, your guilt
or innocence their call, one strike
you're hooked, paws scrutinised before
you get to stay or handle books.

Peter Branson

Middle Englishmen diggin' their blues

For Black History Month

Stiff-collars open at the neck like smiles,
so crass these days, they're centre stage, these cool
white dudes, jeans comfort-size, in rank and age,
play early twentieth century black men's tunes,
the musings of a suffering underclass.
They dream, far out of time and place, don't hear
the loud here-now heartbeat of poverty's
mean streets, slip blinkers on with seamless grace.
They're stirred by rhythm, style, the music of
oppression: there's no down 'n' outs, no trade
ships out of Africa, no beating heart,
no lash, no price to pay, no substance here,
no chains of slavery emblazoned on
the soul, no noose, no fiery cross, no fear.

First published 'Ropes Anthology 2020', University of Ireland, Galway

Peter Branson

Pub Folk

*The Greyhound, Newcastle
For Martin D'Arcy*

Not in it for the wealth or fame, don't crave
an audience, beyond each other, in
the moment, dancing fingertips a blur.
Small talk is jigs and airs, sour-sweet grace notes,
same tune on fiddle, banjo, mandolin
and flute. Brother and sisterhood, streetwise,
apprentices and artisans, maestros,
they play for pleasure, raise themselves above
the everyday. Their instruments are wild
things, reeling, bucking broncos, bulls with blood-
shot eyes. Each sense alive, at stretch to stay
onside, they seed each other's gaze with smiles.
This is subversive, dangerous, black art;
pure energy, communion of parts.

First published: 'Red Hill'

Peter Branson

Revival

For Archie Fisher

He's learned to pace himself,
draw breath, to give each song
the craft to plumb its ring
of truth, technique hard-earned,
the runes embellished down
the years, like worry lines.

Against the tide, what lies
beneath, the common muse,
dowsed back to life, he tells
as is, new words, old tunes
relined, the golden eggs
he carries warm as toast.

First published: Troubadours Poetry Anthology

Peter Branson

The Ballad of Jo Cox

In memory of Jo Cox, MP

The good die young, the saying goes,
cruel sticks and stones of Fate,
her cause to heal the world she knew
of prejudice and hate.
She's killed because she spoke her mind,
a senseless, violent death;
some zealous bigot fuelled by lies
has robbed her of her breath.

A stranger armed with knife and gun
assails her in the street.
'Put Britain First' he's heard to cry;
Jo's bleeding at his feet.
A man who's passing goes to help
but he gets stabbed as well.
While ambulance and police arrive,
Jo's fading where she fell.

Chorus (First verse repeated)

She sided with the underdog
where fairness was at stake;
now freedom and democracy
are stumbling at her wake.
Injustice and small-mindedness
were suits she wouldn't wear.
'This hatred's aimed at me alone'
the cross she chose to bear.

Chorus (First verse repeated)

So the good die young, the saying goes,
cruel sticks and stones of Fate,
her cause to heal the world she knew
of prejudice and hate.
The Queen of Heart's her epitaph,
so ardent, loyal, kind,
true daughter, sister, mother, wife
to loved ones left behind.

*(Tune adapted from 'The rambling Royal', traditional)
(First published: 'New Coty Songster')*

Peter Branson

The Ghost Dance

Late Swallows, August

With rain clouds drawing blinds
across the sky, the air a warm
damp sponge, those first few spots
appear. Young swallows wheel
and weave in shoals just inches from
my head, dance low across
the shallows trawling gnats.
I flinch. They show no fear.
In feeding mode, the trials
they face, they flaunt
pure instinct like a badge of pride,
preoccupied, seem unaware
I'm near. Wings waving flags,
backs jet, their bellies white,
safety in numbers ploy,
Morse acrobats, they flash
day – night like blinking eyes.
At dusk, as though they sense
we've made things worse,
our shame, their death lament,
they circle wagons, trace
their first long pilgrimage
towards the light.

Peter Branson

The Potteries Peterloo

BURSLEM, The Potteries, North Staffordshire, 6 August 1842

The Peterloo Massacre, St Peter's Field, Manchester, Monday 16 August 1819

The Newport Rising, Newport, Monmouthshire, Monday 4 November 1839

For Jason Hill

When times are hard they dock our wages,
The bosses swear they're not to blame,
They've ample food laid on their tables,
But that's always been the same.

*Chorus: Our soldiers fire on their own people,
Josh Heapy dying where he stood,
Cry shame for Peterloo and Newport,
Burslem cobbles red with blood.*

Though Chartists have their own agenda,
We're grateful for their help today.
But 'Votes for All!' is just a pipedream;
We march because they've cut our pay.

We're miners, potters, textile makers,
'A living wage!' our battle cry.
It's bread we want not revolution;
All the rest's a downright lie.

Their lot control what's in the 'papers,
Support the bosses, not the poor,
They call us violent agitators,
But we're not out to break the law.

One man is killed, scores more are wounded,
British troops, beyond the pale.
Fifty-four men get transported,
Three times more locked up in gaol.

They say some others badly-injured
Were carried home to die in pain.
Their families dare not call the doctor,
Fearful they would be betrayed.

To pay the rent and feed our children,
We're forced to organise and fight.
Fair share of profits we're creating,
We only claim what's ours by right.

(Tune: adapted - 'Georgie Barnell' – broadside, trad.)

Peter Branson

These times need changing still

Joan Baez in concert, The London Palladium, March 1st, 2019

Joan Baez sings 60s protest songs
We heard long years ago.
We thought we'd change the world for good;
How little did we know.

Chorus:
Sing Woody songs like 'Deportee',
'The Ballad of Joe Hill',
But 'Don't Think Twice' won't cut no ice,
These times need changing still.

So 'Where Have All the Flowers Gone'?
We have to face the truth:
We haven't rung the changes as
We promised in our youth.

With red necks hot for Donald Trump,
There's troubles on the way.
We need new anthems to inspire
Faint hearts with feet of clay.

While plutocrats pile on more fat,
Life heaven for the few,
Poor folk are going under with
The rest of us make do.

Religion fused with politics
stirs violence and hate:
The answer's 'Blowing in the Wind',
Don't leave things till too late.

When 'We Shall Overcome' rings out,
Peace, equal rights, fair play,
On this side of the pearly gates,
Walk tall and seize the day.

(Tune: 'The Wabash Cannonball' – American traditional - adapted)

Peter Branson

This Land

For Woody Guthrie

This land is your land, this land is my land,
From Seven Sisters to Holy Island,
From Norfolk broad to Derwent Water,
This land was made for you and me.

From crystal trout stream to mighty river,
From wooden footbridge to Blackwall Tunnel,
From northern fell-side to Chalk Hill Blue South Downs,
This land was made for you and me.

From ancient Stonehenge to the A1 Angel,
From Paddy's Wigwam to Wren's Cathedral,
From Pendle Hill to Glastonbury Tor,
This land was made for you and me.

From Thomas Telford to Bob McAlpine,
From Geordie's Rocket to Brunel's iron craft,
From working folk who shaped with eye and hand,
This land was made for you and me.

From Boudicca to women's suffrage,
From Leveller to Tolpuddle Martyr,
I hear their voices on the wind,
This land was made for you and me.

Not just the rich bods in their fine houses,
Stock market spivs and merchant bankers,
The people sing out loud and clear,
This land was made for you and me.

Each one of us who's made our home here,
No matter when, or where we hailed from,
Join with me now and raise these rafters high,
This land was made for you and me.

*(Tune adapted from 'This Land is Your Land' by Woody Guthrie.)
(Repeat first verse as chorus)*

Peter Branson

Turn, Turn, Turn

("There is a Season")

For Pete Seeger

You sing for Ho, John Henry, Irene, old
Joe Clark; blacklisted, never cross clear lines
you've drawn, pro union rights and ban the bomb,
what's held in trust. You take an axe to Bob:
"Truth's in the words," you say. *"There's no shortcuts."*
Great man, can't lie to you, like Orwell's tramp,
affected, Eton-caste, though all you say
rings true, too smooth for me, that voice don't suit.
No Woody, hard-nose, sour as coffee-grounds,
you sweeten folk, yet when it really counts,
no compromise, your heart Clearwater sound.
At peace inside, Digger and Leveller,
Christian and communard combined, you rhyme,
nudge hope to life, raise ghosts for modern times.

First published: 'Hawk Rising'

Peter Branson

Ver Sacrum

The Song Collector

*"We do not recognise any distinction between higher and low art
Art is the property of everyone." 'Ver Sacrum' - Vienna, 1898
For Annie Morris*

The vicar brings him, hoping we won't mind,
The Royal Oak, one Saturday; queer cove,
warm-hearted though. It's drinks all round and will
we give him stay - no trace of hereabouts,
that much we know - to note down all we sing
and play. He gets us to repeat each verse
until he's captured every word, live tunes
mere tiddlers on the page, like dead men's runes.

While text needs changes, local terms replaced
and smut removed, with harmonies and parts
defined, I'm certain they'll prove suitable
for choirs to sing and orchestras to play.
These melodies are too refined to be
the work of labouring folk. No way that's true!

Peter Branson

Yer rock 'n' roll

Fifteen, defiant, rebellion on the rise,
fag smoke indoors, pea soup outside, we swop
our chains for jives. Shoe-polish black, starch-white,
they're all shook up, grey rationed world, short back
'n' sides. Hard-rock the stance, electric heart
'n' soul: edgy, wrecked hotel rooms, drugs, booze;
high wastage - martyrdom adds value too;
both sacrificial lamb and golden goose.
Deep pockets picked, taste bought and arses licked,
poor workers' kids worth millions, country piles.
Now CBEs, these mutton-jeff old coots,
establishment spliff-rollers, strum away
old age, their style exposed as hype, betrayed,
what three chord riffs placated in their youth.

First published: 'Hawk Rising'

Lynne Chesworth

Lynne is one of a great group of friends who came together through playing and singing along with the ukulele

The special thing about this group is that none of the authors had written poetry prior to lockdown.

If something good has come out of these last few months, it's a belief that we are all still capable of finding hidden talents within ourselves.

Lynne Chesworth

Feeding Time at the Zoo

Woken at four, outside clattering bowls,
Out of bed in a flash, who is the fool?
More biscuits darlings, I slide them a tray,
For a moment all shy, they look away.

It's the hedgehogs you see, they visit each night,
Inspecting *'their'* garden, it's a magical sight.
They love my cats' biscuits which they eat by the box,
Crunching and grinding, they're a real noisy lot.

Back in the house, I retreat,
Where there are four puss-cat faces, now waiting to eat.
"Hello mummy's babies, do you want biscuits too"
A bowl each for Wilfy, Paddy, Doris and Boo Boo

Cilla's now awake and needing attention,
She has been very poorly, with pneumonia infection.
Supplement-food diluted and fed by pipette,
My sweet house-rabbit, my ailing pet.

I'm standing in the kitchen, bare-footed and cold,
The husband shouts "Slippers, Oh! You won't be told".
A flick of the kettle to make 'him' a brew,
Then it's back into bed for another hour or two.

I wake at eight. Why aren't I up?
Side of the bed, there's a cold tea-cup.
Quick look out the window and a trip to the loo,
Oh, that's right, 'It was feeding time at the zoo'!

Lynne Chesworth

Following in Jeannie's Footsteps

I took the path down by the river,
as I followed Jeanie's footsteps.
I saw the bluebells and wild garlic,
make way for nettle and bittercress.

Buttercups with their twining roots,
The flowers not yet come.
And the dandelions saying "hurry up your fools"
we need to catch the sun.

Oh, what's the hurry rustled Willow,
you weeds will always be.
Just stop and breathe and wait a while,
And come and hug, me.

But we need to drink the morning dew,
our roots they are quite shallow
And we like to twist and face the sky
If you giants will allow.

Willow whispers in the gentle breeze,
"You don't need our permission,
To live and love this land of ours
should not be on condition".

Lynne Chesworth

Sun Hat

My bonce is sore and not from consumption
It hurts to touch and I need to scratch
It burns in the shower and when I rub with the towel
My bonce is sore, there's not enough thatch.

My bonce is sore and I've not bumped or banged it
You can see it's bright red 'neath the strands that are left
I'm glowing like a beacon on top a lighthouse
My bonce is sore, should wear a sun hat

Graham Corcoran



Graham Corcoran was born in Birmingham 73 years ago, but has lived in Lichfield since 1977.

He spent most of his working life as a Civil Servant until taking early retirement on health grounds in 1995.

He has been writing poetry and short stories for many years some of which have appeared in the local newspapers.

He is a member of Lichfield Writers group which meet twice monthly in normal times.

June 2020

Graham Corcoran

Coronavirus Pandemic 2020

Unloved and uninvited
There's an enemy within;
It wants to drag us under
But we'll never let it win.

With far too many casualties
And more to come, no doubt,
United now, let's do our best
To kick this monster out.

With nurses, doctors, family, friends,
It's something we can beat;
Let's not be just a memory,
Statistics on a sheet.

Even those in lockdown
As they tuck themselves away
Can proudly claim they did their bit
To keep the bugs at bay.

With courage and compassion
We can surely see it through;
We'll win the day...we'll find our path,
It's what we always do.

Graham Corcoran

OUT OF LOCKDOWN

We're coming out of lockdown!
I can't believe it's true.
Ten long weeks, and now we're free,
I think it's great - don't you?

People...faces...voices...smiles,
The chatter in the street.
Things we never thought about,
Now something of a treat.

I can natter with my neighbours
If we stay six feet apart.
We're still not back to normal
But at least we've made a start.

Though it makes my glasses misty
And it bends my ears down,
I'll have to wear my face mask
If I'm going into town.

I can't go out without it
Or my wife will give me hell;
She cut my hair last Tuesday
So I'll wear a hat as well!

The virus hasn't left us,
But we've learned a thing or two;
Reviewing and rewriting
What we should and shouldn't do.

We're coming out of lockdown, now,
What more is there to say?
I don't know where it takes us,
But I'm pleased we're on our way!

Graham Corcoran June 2020



Lorna Davies



Lorna Davies has always dabbled in anything that interests her, writing poetry, short stories and songs; arts and crafts; folk music; photography with the aim of capturing memories.

She spent several years as the general “girl Friday” to Peace through Folk and very many more years producing the North Staffs Folk Diary, a job made redundant by the Covid 19 lockdown. At this point, she took to sharing bits and pieces of news, poems etc shared by others, jokes and amusing photographs with the intention of keeping in touch and keeping spirits up.

As everyone knows, Lorna is not 21 until next birthday, the sketch above was by Charlie Walker just before her 20th birthday!

Lorna Davies

Cassie's Breakfast

Pearl and Cassie
went away
to stay
at Three Hedges

and they stayed
down a lane
with Jane
at Three Hedges

a twin room
both did share
up the stair
at Three Hedges

breakfast time
cereal, toast
from the host
at Three Hedges

Cereal poured
From the packet
What a racket
At Three Hedges

Cassie screamed loud
what did she see
wandering free
at Three Hedges

an eight legged spider
fell from the packet
cause of the racket
at Three Hedges

Jane was laughing
like a drain
why complain
at Three Hedges

in the scheme of things
Jane said
nobody's dead
at Three Hedges

*Jane had the last word
she said
spiders won't hurt you
and if you don't like them
you can pay double to stay up the road
from Three Hedges*

Lorna Davies

Hair Raising

When Tom awoke that Monday morning, he little thought that he would face the most terrifying four days of his working life.

Tom felt a prickle on the back of his neck as his hair stood on end. Someone or something was behind him. He had seen no-one and nothing out of the ordinary as he walked up the path. Taking a deep breath and with his heart thumping, he prepared to turn around, but before he could move – Crash! – something hit him across the back of the knees and sent him stumbling forwards. He put out his hands to break his fall and dropped the letters he was carrying on to the step. Catching the wall he righted himself quickly and spun round in time to see his assailant readying himself for another attack. Tom kicked out savagely and ran back down the path being chased all the way. Luckily his van was not locked and he jumped in, slammed the door and started the engine within seconds. As he pulled away he noted the insolent intense stare and checking his mirror realised that he was being chased along the road.

Next day he pulled up in front of the house but before he could switch off the engine he once again felt his hair stand on end. His attacker was there, watching and preparing to strike. Tom drove off. “No post today, missus” he thought “But it is all junk mail anyway.”

The following day was very warm and Tom was driving with the windows wide open, he realised his mistake as soon as he pulled up at the house and a head was thrust through the window, eyes blazing. Tom shouted loudly and stabbed at the window control. As the window started to rise, the startled head withdrew. No chance of making a delivery today and Tom drove off quickly totally shaken by the whole experience.

On the fourth day he was aware that the mounting bundle of post would have to be delivered, he had a plan but was not sure that it would work. He drew up at the front gate as usual, his enemy was there waiting again watching his every move. Tom put the bundle of post on the passenger seat ensuring that it was securely fastened in a rubber band. He undid his seat belt and started to open the door this ensured that his attacker took up his position. Tom reversed at speed back to the main driveway to the house and on to the drive itself. He jumped from his van, threw the post on to the bonnet of the owner’s car and was back into his van all in seconds slamming the van door shut securely. Once again his hair stood on end, he was shaking and dripping with sweat, he had so nearly been caught, but his speed and keeping both the van and the car between himself and his assailant had denied the rogue pheasant his chance of another attack.

As Tom drove off the drive and into the road, the bird ran across the lawn and through the hedge taking up his position on the garden wall ready to chase the van along the road once more.

Rowena Dawson

Rowena is one of a great group of friends who came together through playing and singing along with the ukulele

The special thing about this group is that none of the authors had written poetry prior to lockdown.

If something good has come out of these last few months, it's a belief that we are all still capable of finding hidden talents within ourselves.

Rowena Dawson

Celebrating the Green

Looking through the window, it's a beautiful scene.
I'm looking at my garden with its many shades of green.

The rain has recently fallen after many days of sun.
Everywhere glistens and sparkles, spring has truly sprung.
The newly opened leaves partially block my view of the hills,
But the vivid yellow of the rapeseed fields splashes amongst the green.

Blue forget-me-nots, red tulips, pink bergenia too,
Tall pompom primulas with their bright purple hue,
The shrub with the dainty white flowers,
I can never remember its name,
Pansy faces smiling so thankful for the rain,
But as I look out through my window the predominant colour is green.

Green is not my favourite colour except at this time of the year.
But it signifies new growth and life, everything we hold dear.
So looking ahead, a year from now, we can reflect on what we have seen.
We can look through the window, and celebrate the green.

Liz Dyer



Liz Dyer was born in New Malden Surrey in 1942, but from six weeks old lived in many places. Her parents' roots lay in Somerset, Shropshire and Scotland. She is a folk singer, and was formerly married to singer/songwriter Dave Goulder, with whom she ran an independent walkers' hostel in Glen Torridon, Wester Ross. They made several albums for Argo in the early 1970s, notably *January Man*, and *The Raven and the Crow*. Although long parted, they stay in touch.

After many years as carer for her husband Neil, Liz was widowed in 2003 and was tempted back into folksong by Andy Worth (her dentist!) and Kendrick/Needham of the Derby Gaol.

To her surprise she also became an author. A life-long secret scribbler, her first published piece was an unattributed contribution to Lesley Close's 2014 book *"Assisted Dying: Who makes the final decision?"*

Encouraged by a U3A writing group and a promise she made to Neil, she has published three volumes of memoir *'Not Forgetting'* *'The Cure for Clever'* and *'Surreal Housewives'*. She is working on a fourth. Liz Dyer has lived in Derbyshire for almost thirty years. She still sings ... or at least ...

Liz Dyer

An Element of Living

When I was a child, there was a tradition, not only for my family but for everyone. It was called 'Fresh Air'. Like our 21st Century '5-a-day' it was a government recommendation. The media were thick with images of men in white singlets flexing themselves at windows. First thing every morning we must throw wide the casement and take five deep breaths. These images were British and middle-class, and ignored those who lived with the whiff of coal dust, pig-poo, and the stinking marsh gas of industrial estuaries.

Eventually we cleaned up the poisons, or at least rendered them invisible, and we bought cars so that we could go and breathe in the countryside. So did the rest of the world, especially those who lived with monsoons, dust-storms and volcanic eruptions.

Everyone wanted to be somewhere else and drove to get there, taking their fumes with them. They flew to hot and arid places, lying on the barren beaches to darken their skin while scorning those who were born that way.

Air is one of the classical elements. It is the one we can least do without, and yet, despite all warnings we have stripped great forests and smothered nature with black and tarry miles, that suffocate and destroy.

Humankind has many father-gods, but only one Mother Earth. She has warned us, as mothers do. She spoke through the prophet Attenborough. We ignored her. Now she is speaking for herself ... while she still can.

The world is in lock-down. Cars and planes sit silent. A pandemic sweeps around the globe suffocating thousands, and annoying the rest who fear the virus, but still want to get back to 'normal'. Mother Earth despairs. How far does she have to go?

Then a black man dies, subdued under a policeman's knee. Cities burn. Will we listen now? How clever we have been, how strong and fearless to subdue the Earth! Now she cries out as George Floyd did.
I CANNOT BREATHE

... and if we do not get our collective knee off her neck, Earth too, will die.

Liz Dyer

Futureshock

I wrote this poem more than twenty-five years ago. I wondered if it was prophetic. The changes of tense are deliberate.

After the end of all time,
When time had just begun,
And the grass punched up through the M25
Where the gerbils bask in the sun,
There lived an ancient yuppie
With hair as white as snow
For the last of his bottle of hair-dye
Had been finished long ago.
Beneath the shade of a weeping oak
He made his simple home
In a rusting BMW
With neither wheels nor chrome,
And he dreamed of Old MacDonald
Who never had a farm
And a french fry here, and a french fry there
Won't do us any harm.
And the swallows nest in the flyover
Above the waving grass
And skim through the clouds of gnats that hang
By the flooded underpass
For England had built a Ship of State
That no one could underwrite
And the Lutine Bell had tolled its knell
And The City died overnight.
What news? What news of Wall Street?
What news of Nikkei ... Dow?
But the cell-phone lay dumb midst the insects' hum
As England returned to the plough.

1995 (*ish*)

Jeff Eardley

My name is Jeff Eardley. I was a Potteries child of the fifties and now live in the Staffordshire Moorlands village of Cheddleton. After a spell playing in rock bands in the early 70's, I gravitated to the acoustic guitar and the folk scene from the early days at the Cock Inn at Stapleford, via many musical mutations, to present days being a resident at the Cuckoos Nest club at Leek along with my old pal Dave Rhead. I have been, for many years the resident guitarist at the Ramblers Retreat restaurant in beautiful Dimmingsdale. I am also part of folk "Supergroup" Eardley, Rhead and Crosby who have had some fun nights at the Hollybush down by the canal at Denford.

I always loved verse at school but got fixated on the Stanley Holloway monologues, often recited with great humour by the likes of a Bernard Wrigley. I have written many, many humorous tales of happy days rambling around the Peak District with my loyal band of brothers "The Peak Pub Warriors" who are firmly in "Summer Wine" territory.

I make no apology for being a Pam Ayres fan as most of my scribbling features the silliness of everyday life, particularly in these strange lockdown times.

Jeff Eardley

A Bat Round the Head

In praise of the lovely lady selling tea and coffee at a local beauty spot. The amorous attentions of a cricket-obsessed gentleman led to this tale of disaster.

She smiled at the customers waiting
Serving drinks from the back of a van
When out of the mist came approaching
A balding, bespectacled man

He ordered a cake and a latte
As out in the sunshine he sat
Whilst there by the vehicle was leaning
A willowy old cricket bat

She said she'd been watching the Ashes
On the telly the evening before
She drooled over batsmen and fielders
While bowlers she truly adored

'Twas then that he fancied his chances
With a clever and crafty approach
By telling her he was an expert
A qualified cricketing coach

She smiled with delight as he told her
(By now he was on a good roll)
As he offered to give her instruction
To teach this young lady to bowl

He placed his left hand 'neath her armpit
His right hand he put round her waist
It looked very much from a distance
Like a passionate, tender embrace

Which is just what her husband suspected
Who arrived on the scene from the back
As he rolled up his sleeves for a battle
And carefully planned his attack

He stood there all spitting and fuming
His face like a beetroot was red
As he picked up the bat with a vengeance
And smacked the poor bloke round the head

He fell to the ground in an instant
As there on the car-park he lay
Whilst thinking, a blow of this order
Can have an effect on your day

Now when he awoke they'd departed
On the back of his head was a lump
As he struggled to get himself upright
He said to himself, "I've been stumped!"

He knew that she'd taught HIM a lesson
Of that he was never in doubt
When trying to bowl maidens over
You'll think that you're IN... but you're OUT!

Jeff Eardley

A Rant

It's one rule for them and it's one rule for us
Who do as we're told and we don't make a fuss
Now the argument's over, no time to discuss
Yes it's one rule for them and it's one rule for us
And they didn't write that on the side of that bus

Jeff Eardley

Cricket

The game of Cricket I will state
Goes back to fifteen fifty eight
Upon a field in Guildford way
In Surrey, many miles away

The game was played by many more
Up to the English Civil War
The village game was in the swing
With many people gambling

By sixteen ninety seven then
Each side did have eleven men
With many punters in the stands
And lots of money changing hands

The game was coming to the fore
In seventeen hundred sixty four
The Star and Garter club would be
The famous, future MCC

By eighteen hundred, play was far
As India and Australia
But not in North America
As baseball had developed there

In Hambledon down Hampshire way
For thirty years the game was played
With bowlers bowling overarm
And many batsmen came to harm

And later on, we saw the face
Of famous W.G. Grace
A batsman who was always feared
Who had a large and bushy beard

By eighteen hundred sixty four
The game was popular for sure
As Cricket knowledge didn't lack
Inside the Wisden almanac

And so up to the present day
The game of Cricket we will play
The sound of willow hitting ball
Will echo over one and all.

Jeff Eardley

A Specsavers Tale

There's many strange and spooky tales
From those who walk the hills and dales
Where things they never go to plan
For my old friend, a bearded man
For he was walking one fine day
Upon the hills near Ashbourne way
When he was heard to cry and shout
"My glasses lens has fallen out"

He searched and searched but all in vain
In spite of wind and heavy rain
His lens, alas, had gone for good
All swallowed up by Peakland mud
It rested there till Summertime
Emerging from the Winter slime
The lens, which from the mud did peep
Was noticed by a passing sheep

Now sheep they say, from rams to ewes
Are not possessed of high IQs
He picked the lens from off the ground
Then licked his lips and wolfed it down
It stayed inside the creature's gut
Till Autumn time when he was put
Into a lorry heading for
A far and distant abattoir

This factory, that never stops
Converted him to juicy chops
Delivered to an Aldi store
My bearded friend, he purchased four
The chops now sizzled in the pan
As supper for the bearded man
He sliced the first one with great care
And guess what he discovered there

The lens, it had returned they say
That once was lost that Winter's day
The bearded man was full of glee
So pleased again that he could see.

Jeff Eardley

Dance Macabre

We're all becoming dancers now
In these dark days
Like the towpath two-step
Where we get annoyed
At oncomers
We must avoid
As one of us pushes
The other
Into the bushes
Then to Salsa in Sainsburys
To Tarantella by the Paella
And tango by the Tango
With a twirl by the Twirls
Then a Rumba
Whist choosing
A cucumber
And soon we'll be asked
Or tasked to be masked
Like the Carnival in Venice
We'll stroll the waterways
Our eyes full of menace
Or even more drastic
We'll trip the light fantastic
But it's not so romantic
When we're wrapped up in plastic
So dig out the cling-film
And get yourselves ready
To preen and be seen
On that flickering screen
Be you ever so keen
To be
On
STRICTLY COVID NINETEEN

Jeff Eardley

Distancing

With all this insistence
On keeping our distance
We'll soon be stir crazy
And needing assistance
All sat on our hands now
Or banging our pans now
Our sole conversations
With blokes in white vans now
And starry-eyed lovers
Are soon to discover
You can't grab a kiss
When your faces are covered
But when it's all over
We'll all be in clover
We'll point ourselves south
And be heading for Dover
The days we are counting
The pressure is mounting
To stroll by the sea
And to gaze at the mountains
To stroll through the pines
And enjoy a good wine
Or a trip down the Rheine
With a pretty Fraulein
But for now we're all schemers
And Internet dreamers
All waiting for Boris
And friends to redeem us.

Jeff Eardley

Masks

It maybe today
Or it may be tomorrow
We'll strap on our masks
And we'll walk round like Zorro
Avoiding the dangers
From all of those strangers
We'll cry, "Hi Ho Silver
Here comes the Lone Ranger"

And then we'll give thanks
We can start robbing banks
Our faces concealed
With no features revealed
We'll stuff all the swag
In a Sainsbury's bag
The cops non-existence
All keeping their distance

We're searching for heroes
Those Robert De Neros
The guys who look cute
In a Spiderman suit
It's this man, it's that man
It's Robin and Batman
But if anyone asks,
"Why the bright rainbow mask?"
It's for those who give all
Standing ever so tall
Always there to impress
It's our brave NHS

Jeff Eardley

Murmurations

They come from near and far away
Around the ending of the day
To gather high above the town
Just as the sun is dipping down

Filling up the dusky sky
They swirl and twirl and multiply
Oblivious of those down there
With open mouths who stand and stare

With arrows darting left and right
It truly is a splendid sight
An aerial display so sweet
The finest fireworks can't compete

The hungry owl denied a chance
Among this swirling dervish dance
And falcons sit, a sorry sight
No supper here for them tonight

But all at once the sky is dark
As silence settles on the park
Their leader calls and down they go
To bunk-up in the trees below

A splendid ending of the day
And so I head my homeward way
As with a bucket 'neath the stars
I wash the guano off my car.

Jeff Eardley

Ode to Old George

There's a Pheasant living in my garden shed
It's the place where every night he lays his head
He's been here for a month or maybe two
Resplendent in his coat of red and blue
He struts around as if he owns the place
A look of hunger etched upon his face
I try to feed him every time he squawks
Then he follows me when I go on my walks

Now a long and lasting friendship we have forged
I've even started calling him "Old George"
But if he flew back to the farm next door
Old George would soon be dead I know for sure
He'd soar above the rooftops way on high
For some bloke below to blast him from the sky
And like his friends, surrender to his fate
To be a fancy meal upon a rich man's plate

Now if you keep a Pheasant as a pet
You'll get some funny looks down at the vet
The bills you get will often make you sad
While your family and friends think you've gone mad
But George and I, we'll stroll across the land
His tiny wing rests in my waiting hand
The welfare of this creature is my quest
And for George there can be nothing but the best.

Jeff Eardley

Pilates

She started a Pilates class
Upon the Internet
The town was still in lockdown
So she knew some work she'd get
She started on her webpage
Working hard into the night
She knew it wasn't easy
So she had to get it right

But she wasn't good at spelling
As her friends had often said
For 'though she was a clever girl
She wasn't widely read
A small but such a big mistake
She should have typed "PILATES"
But got her "L's" and "R's" mixed up
And ended up with "PIRATES"

She got to bed at midnight
With her laptop stashed away
To dream about the customers
That soon would come her way
Then logging on with relish
At the rising of the sun
Her Inbox it was bulging
She was having loads of fun

But on her screen were lots of blokes
With faces to be feared
All brandishing their cutlasses
And dribbling in their beards
From Peg-Leg Pete to Cut-Throat Jake
A load of them appeared
A Dead Man's Chest with fifteen men
Their bellies full of beer

She knew she'd started something
The Pilates was no more
She had a different mission now
Her income was secure
The 19th of September
Is the time, or so they say
When Timbers all get shivered
Check it out, "WORLD PIRATE DAY"

Jeff Eardley

The Aldi Song

It's dark and it's dreary this time of the year
When nobody likes to go shopping
It's cold, wet and grey like it seems every day
Your feet and your fingers are dropping
It might just be you who has contracted 'flu
Because you refused the injection
But I know a place and to there you must race
For a cure for your every infection

So hurry on down to the Aldi in town
It's oh so much better than Lidl
We go in for cheese, bananas and peas
But we always buy stuff from the middle

Now one day a bloke came over from Stoke
He was buying some veg for his mother
When his eyes did alight on a beautiful sight
An exercise bike for his brother
And then he did spy, and proceeded to buy
A children's electric pianner
A new set of drills, some vertigo pills
And a set of adjustable spanners

So hurry on down to the Aldi in town
It's oh so much better than Lidl
We go in for cheese, bananas and peas
But we always buy stuff from the middle

Then a lady went in for a bottle of gin
She was very polite and so courteous
But got riddled with guilt when she bought a new quilt
Which was such an incredible purchase
And there by the door she was tempted once more
She knew that she just had to risk it
It stood way down there, a box two feet square
Containing a thousand dog biscuits

So hurry on down to the Aldi in town
It's oh so much better than Lidl
We go in for cheese, bananas and peas
But we always buy stuff from the middle

So I'll take extra care, next time I'm in there
Aware of the cash implications
And like the best thinkers I'll wear my horse blinkers
Avoiding the risk of temptation
I'll have to insist, just the things on my list
Then all will be fine and so dandy
But hey, wait a bit, there's a nice first-aid kit
With a torch, that could come in quite handy

So hurry on down to the Aldi in town
It's oh so much better than Lidl
We go in baps and we come out with crap
Sure we always buy stuff from the middle

Jeff Eardley

The Boomers

They call us the Boomers
Those sixty-plus Zoomers
Those fans of the Eagles
Bob Dylan and "Rumours"
Collecting our pension
And still in contention
The evergreen fanbase
Of Fairport Convention
Whose mums and whose dads
Had it ever so bad
With war and depression
And endless recession
We got off our jackseys
And paid all our taxes
Whilst driving old Beetles
Cortinas and Maxis
We had all the brains
And we filled all the planes
Did what we were told
And we never complained
But if we can't travel
Our lives may unravel
All lost and forgotten
Like old Jimmy Saville
So all you young shavers
You rappers and ravers
You NHS angels
All striving to save us
The best of our nation
With great admiration
We Boomers say thanks
To this new generation.

Jeff Eardley

The Laughter Class

I picked up the paper while down at the caff
At one of the stories, I had a good laugh
A tale about someone who's charging a fee
For making us laugh, which we all do for free

For we laugh at the things that we did long ago
We can laugh at young kids as they play in the snow
We can laugh when we think of our mums and our dads
We can all have a laugh at those Specsaver ads

We can laugh when we're reading the Leek Post and Times
Except when we're reading of burglars and crimes
We can turn to the back where we find all the sport
We can laugh at the pictures of blokes wearing shorts

We can laugh at each other and laugh at ourselves
We can laugh at those photos we have on our shelves
We can laugh with our kids at Nativity plays
We can look in the mirror and laugh everyday

We can laugh when we welcome a fluffy young pup
We can laugh when our lottery numbers come up
With a smile on our face, Lady Luck we will thank
While proceeding to laugh all the way to the bank

We can laugh till we cry at a Peter Kay song
We can laugh when our Do-it-Yourself goes all wrong
We can laugh in the pub, we can laugh on the hill
We can have a good laugh at a Morrisons till

With a bunch of good friends, we can laugh till we cry
We can have a good laugh down the W.I.
We can laugh at those times that we fell out of grace
As we laugh and we laugh till we're blue in the face

So we all like a laugh as it does us all good
It tones up the muscles and stiffens the blood
But to charge us a fee, well it seems a bit naff
As a cockney would say, "Are you having a laugh?"

Jeff Eardley

TOO OLD TO DIE YOUNG

He thought, "I'd better do it while I can"
So he bought himself a second-hand camper van
He got himself a banjo and he grew his hair
His kids said he was crazy but he just didn't care
And so he set off for the wild beyond
Picking and grinning and singing his song
But it's hard to make a name in the music press
With, "I LOVE SAGA" tattooed on your chest
HE WAS TOO OLD, TOO OLD TO DIE YOUNG

He thought he'd be a legend like the great James Dean
That he read about once in a magazine
For nobody knows you when you're old and grey
Was a line in a song that he wrote one day
He told you not to step on his blue suede shoes
When he asked for concessions he was never refused
His knees were knocking and his back did ache
But he knew that stardom was his to take
But he was TOO OLD, TOO OLD TO DIE YOUNG

A Silver Surfer on a sea of dreams
A restless wanderer with some crazy schemes
His old denim jeans hanging round his knees
His dentures flying out every time he sneezed
But there's a lesson from those of us
Who use a free pass when we get on a bus
We're going to be around for a few years yet
So you young pretenders should never forget
That we're TOO OLD, TOO OLD TO DIE YOUNG

Jeff Eardley

Vera

A fine and sunny Summer's day
And now our Vera's slipped away
Auf Wiedersehen, we'll meet again
We don't know where, we don't know when

A proper looker in the day
A smile to chase the blues away
The sweetheart of our boys abroad
The lads of Juno, Gold and Sword

With Spitfires swooping high and wide
Above the chequered countryside
Invoking memories of the blitz
For schoolboys with their Airfix kits

And steamy jungles heard the sound
Those long-forgotten lads had found
Some solace in the songs she chose
On crackly, static radios

Oh Vera, how we wish in vain
That you could light our lives again
We're stuck inside a different war
A curse we've never known before

We're yearning for the days to be
When distancing's a memory
And high above the Dover Shore
The Bluebirds will return once more.

Malcolm Hawksworth

As everyone knows, Malcolm is the director of Peace through Folk. This is what he says about the song “**Jo Cox**”

History shows us that Folk en masse can be inspired to cause, participate in or at least tolerate acts of immense evil. Actions that they very often live to regret.

I believe however that the potential for goodness also exists in most Folk.

This was exemplified in the inherent goodness of the message of the late Jo Cox - “We are far more united and have far more in common with each other than things that divide us.”

Folk from all walks of life when acting together through songs, poetry, music and all genre and creative forms can choose to celebrate and promote Peace, Friendship, Reconciliation, Social Justice, and a better, kinder, more sustainable Planet Earth for future generations.

The murder of Jo Cox on 16th June 2016 and the constant rise in hard right/ hate based cultures in society graphically illustrate the extreme polarities of the Human Psyche.

Each year since Jo’s death Peace through Folk has organised a ‘Great Get Together’ in Leek; one of over 5000 such events that happened all over the UK. Unable to do such an event in this Pandemic year, the old song ‘Joe Hill’ came to mind and in a matter of minutes, out of the ether came the recrafting of the words of Alfred Hayes, and a new verse. ‘Jo Cox’ and her message is alive as you and me, if we want her to be.

The voices and deeds of ordinary folk have changed the world for good rather than evil and can continue to do so, especially as we move forward into the 'New Normal'. There are examples of 'Jo Cox' already on Youtube just click to follow the links

Pete Morton & Phoebe Rees	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=96ZeGNHvbFA
Rich Heady	https://youtu.be/bYU1L3zcrvE
Rick Ford	https://youtu.be/F7FsFbNBX6A
Moose Rosser	https://youtu.be/p5RT9EbT9wY

You can get involved, sing 'Jo Cox' loud and often.

If you would like to add your own video recording to the collection please follow this link for details.

<http://www.peacethroughfolk.org/page156.html>

Malcolm Hawksworth

Jo Cox

An adaption of "Joe Hill" an old and familiar campaign song to help us do the job of folk music – *to comfort disturbed people and to disturb comfortable people* (WG).

The spirits of both Joe Hill and Jo Cox are alive and more needed now than they have ever been since they were murdered for what they believed in.

Alfred Hayes wrote the words and Earl Robinson wrote the tune to "Joe Hill" in 1936.
The "Jo Cox" new lyrics were created by Malc for Peace through Folk in 2020.

I dreamed I saw Jo Cox last night,
Alive as you and me.
Says I "But Jo, you're four years dead"
"I never died" said she,
"I never died" said she.

"The Fascist thug he killed you Jo,
They stabbed you Jo" says I.
"Takes more than knives to kill a lass"
Says Jo "I didn't die"
Says Jo "I didn't die"

And standing there as big as life
And smiling with her eyes.
Says Jo "What they can never kill
Went on to organise,
Went on to organise

From Batley, Spen to London Town
On every speakers' box,
Where folk have more in common,
It's there you find Jo Cox,
It's there you find Jo Cox!

I dreamed I saw Jo Cox last night,
Alive as you and me.
Says I "But Jo, you're four years dead"
"I never died" said she,
"I never died" said she.

(Alfred Hayes / Earl Robinson 'Jo Hill') new words M Hawksworth arr. L Simpson 2020

Jo Cox

Key of C, ♩ = 120bpm

Melody Sop.

Alto

Bass/Tenor

I dreamed I saw Jo Cox last night al - ive
The fac - ist thug he killed you Jo they - stabbed
And stan - ding there as he big as life and smil -
From Bat - ley Spen to Lon - don town on ev -
Repeat verse 1

S.

A.

B.T.

as you and me Says Takes I but Jo you're four years dead I
you Jo says I eyes Takes more than knives to kill a lass says
ing with her eyes Says Says Jo what they can ne - ver kill went
ery spea - kers box Where folk have more in com - mon kill it's

S.

A.

B.T.

ne - ver died said she I ne - ver died said she -
Jo I di - dn't die Says Jo I di - dn't die -
on to or - gan - ise Went on to or - gan - ise -
there you'll find Jo Cox It's there you'll find Jo Cox -

NB - Sing verses 1 to 4 as above, followed by a music only verse 5 then repeat verse 1 to finish

John Hobby

John is one of a great group of friends who came together through playing and singing along with the ukulele

The special thing about this group is that none of the authors had written poetry prior to lockdown.

If something good has come out of these last few months, it's a belief that we are all still capable of finding hidden talents within ourselves.

John Hobby

Eyes Wide Open

(Bagnall Woods)

Walking in the gentle breeze,
Dappled sunlight through the trees
Celandine by the path I tread,
Bluebells and campions just ahead,
A blackbird screeched from a nearby bough,
Trying to move the magpie
but wondering how.
Squirrel Nutkin dashes up a tree,
It seems to say "stay away from me".
Walking through the wood has given me much pleasure,
Nature so wonderful,
And it's ours to treasure.

Helen Hopkins

Helen is one of a great group of friends who came together through playing and singing along with the ukulele

The special thing about this group is that none of the authors had written poetry prior to lockdown.

If something good has come out of these last few months, it's a belief that we are all still capable of finding hidden talents within ourselves.

Helen Hopkins

Around the Sprink – as the locals say

(Kingsley)

Around the Sprink we go,
Every day and at a pace,
I know it's not a race,
But we must get fit,
So off we sprint, around the Sprink.

So down the bank,
Through the woods where bluebells dwell.
And on the banks the springs still swell.
The 'pop' they made in days gone by
Would slake our thirst when we were dry
So on we sprint, around the Sprink.

On and on, still at a pace.
Now on our left "The Falconry"
With peacocks in their finery.
Hawks and owls and birds of prey.
We hope to go another day.
But on we sprint, around the Sprink.

Now up the hill, don't slow the pace.
And on the right there's Cold Lea Farm.
A barking dog comes out to greet us.
No harm in him, just likes to fuss.
So up we sprint, around the Sprink.

Now we arrive at Hazel's Cross.
There is no cross, a small hamlet.
A farm, some cottages, a postbox and a seat.
But no time to rest,
Along the road now,
But at a sprint around the Sprink.

Back to the village; nearly there.
No time to linger or to stare
At gardens mowed, plants newly seeded
Hedges trimmed and flower beds weeded.
Our walk is timed around the Sprink.

Now we're home, we must be fitter,
Our time is getting better and better!
A cup of tea, a welcome rest,
Another day – another test!
Then again we'll go,
Around "The Sprink"

Alan Lewis

Alan is one of a great group of friends who came together through playing and singing along with the ukulele

The special thing about this group is that none of the authors had written poetry prior to lockdown.

If something good has come out of these last few months, it's a belief that we are all still capable of finding hidden talents within ourselves.

Alan Lewis

A Limerick

A foolish young fellow from Malpass
Was often seen riding a small ass
One day on a tour
The ass trod in manure
The rest of this tale is too crass

Alan Lewis

Sonnet on Huntley Bridge

Across the fields and over the bridge.
Beneath flows infant Tean, ahead the wooded ridge.

I walk these trails often, which times past I ran.
The sky brilliant blue and the warmth of the sun.

I climb through steep woods at long bursting speed.
But thoughts of what's above mean I pay this no heed.

Atop the ridge at last as I pause to take air.
Such beauty around me I haven't a care.

Birds sing as I stride on this firm grassy ground.
Rhododendron and bluebell around me abound.

The silver birch shimmer in dappled sunlight.
And soon from the style at ridge end I alight

A beautiful walk on a gorgeous spring day.
A steep meadow below me, I go on my way.

Pamela Moore

Pamela is one of a great group of friends who came together through playing and singing along with the ukulele

The special thing about this group is that none of the authors had written poetry prior to lockdown.

If something good has come out of these last few months, it's a belief that we are all still capable of finding hidden talents within ourselves.

Pamela Moore

My Walk Along the Railway Path

(Cheadle, Staffordshire)

I walked along a railway path where train lines used to be
but, beneath my feet was shale and grass, no train tracks could I see.

There once was a station at the end
And, points on the track and a siding too.
There are houses there now and you can't get through
So, I turned around and walked back.

Then I stopped, looked up at the sky so blue,
Then, looked at the trees with the sun shining through
And I thought, how lovely is this glade
The air, so still, no sound being made.

And memories came flooding back of years quite long ago
When my boys were small, to school I'd take them
This way, to and fro.

My daydream ceased when I heard a blackbird
Chinking its alarm,
Don't worry beautiful bird I say
I won't do any harm.

Then, all the birds they started singing
It gave me such a thrill
It's so lovely here, I shall come again, tomorrow,
Yes, I will.

Phil Poyser

Phil is the author of self-published poetry pamphlets which are available from himself or on Amazon.

“Eric Bloodaxe? And Other Verse” - £5
“Seconds Out” - £7
or special offer - £10 for both

Amazon

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Eric-Bloodaxe-Other-Verse-Poyser/dp/1500925721>

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Seconds-Out-Phil-Poyser/dp/1519471971>

Phil has also written quite a few gardening/Brookfield Lane Allotment Association-related poems and put together an A4 self printed collection.

“BLAA, BLAA, Black Sheep” - suggested £5 donation

Available from Phil

philpoyser1@gmail.com

All sale proceeds go to “Prostate Cancer UK”.

Phil Poyser

Cricket Bat Calypso

My bat is in pristine condition,
though it isn't much younger than me.
If I were an artist like Titian,
I'd paint it for posterity.

O cricket bat, my cricket bat,
for smackin' ball, not swattin' gnat.
O cricket bat, my cricket bat,
stroke it through the covers. Howzat?

We'd gone to the Notts. match at Steetley,
had my mammy and pappy and me.
The pros hit the ball oh so sweetly,
they'd reached more than 300 by tea.

O cricket bat, my cricket bat,
for smackin' ball, not swattin' gnat.
O cricket bat, my cricket bat,
pull it through mid-wicket. Howzat?

This was Cyril Poole's benefit season,
the raffle prize an autographed bat.
We all used to love it when he's in,
so we bought us some tickets for that.

O cricket bat, my cricket bat,
for smackin' ball, not swattin' gnat.
O cricket bat, my cricket bat,
leg glance it to the boundary. Howzat?

In the raffle my ticket was drawn out,
so that autographed bat it was mine.
Mammy she scream and pappy he shout
and Old Man Sun he started to shine.

O cricket bat, my cricket bat,
for smackin' ball, not swattin' gnat.
O cricket bat, my cricket bat,
late cut it through the gulley. Howzat?

On the bat: four counties; two nations;
retired, they drink sun-downers with ice.
Some still watch the next generations
and some wear their whites in Paradise.

O cricket bat, my cricket bat,
for smackin' ball, not swattin' gnat.
O cricket bat, my cricket bat,
Straight drive it for a big 6. Howzat?

*© Phil Poyser, Macclesfield, 28th. February and 1st./3^d. March, 2013
Started as a 5 minute exercise (writing to a possession) in Joy Winkler's workshop. Joy
suggested re-writing it as a calypso.*

Phil Poyser

Stick'Em Up: The Great Rhubarb Heist

It was a quiet sort of day towards the end of May,
a fresh wind sweeping strong across the plot.
The ever present crew were keeping viral threat at bay,
social distancing (though sometimes we forgot).

It had been so very dry. Most Springs were in recent times,
well worn the path twixt water butt and patch.
The soil was like the desert sand you find in warmer climes,
with grass like tinder waiting for a match.

A mere two weeks before, Jack Frost came nipping at the door
and burnt imprudent fingers that weren't green.
Dwarf beans which thrived and flourished were all shrivelled to the core:
for we gardeners a devastating scene.

With more seedlings to be grown and bad memories almost flown,
thoughts turned to harvest other early crops.
There was salad bowl and radish from seeds I'd earlier sown,
though greenhouse Cherry Belle had been a flop.

Now my rhubarb at the back vital nourishment did lack,
the spindly stems no use for making jam,
anorexically thin, scarce a mouthful nor a snack,
not produce that you'd offer to your Mam.

It's quite a curious thing what several plots away can bring.
for Nigel's rhubarb was the stuff of dreams,
whilst mine, I've said already, wasn't fit for a damn thing
and his required harvesting by teams!

With Nigel's kind permission, I set myself a mission:
to take home lots of rhubarb which I'd cook
once soaked a day in sugar with ginger an addition,
a distinctive taste that could not be mistook.

So I almost couldn't wait to reach plot 17's wooden gate.
Its hinges creaked in protest at my push.
I soon had armfuls of the stuff, the stems all thick and straight.
One small thing escaped my notice in the rush!

For I forgot to say that Nigel's plot is 17A
whilst this rhubarb had been grown on 17B.
It would appear here I was stealing in broad light of day.
I looked around. Did anybody see?

Now I really felt a melon. I'd been watched by Bob and Helen
though scrumping rhubarb is no capital offence,
but cursed by sheer bad luck, I was suddenly a felon
which still would be remembered 10 years hence.

And thereby hangs my tale how I went beyond the pale,
ending up with egg (or custard) on my face.
I whistled as I left and tried to look the alpha male,
but deep down I wished to vanish without trace.

There would be no relief from fingers pointing at the thief.
"He's the one," they'd say with a knowing glance.
"The rhubarb robbing Robin Hood. It just beggar's one's belief".
Forever more they'd look at me askance.

Jean Reilly

Jean is one of a great group of friends who came together through playing and singing along with the ukulele

The special thing about this group is that none of the authors had written poetry prior to lockdown.

If something good has come out of these last few months, it's a belief that we are all still capable of finding hidden talents within ourselves.

Jean Reilly

A Walk by the River

I took the path by the river's bank
It wound over tree roots,
Through bluebells and wild garlic shoots
Whilst the water's flow rushed, tumbled and sank

It eddied, circled and danced
The warm sun catching millions of bubbles in its light
I was entranced!

I came upon a willow that wept,
Its long branches trailing in the water, where they crept
full of buds and new growth
I hugged its trunk and looked up at the smooth sky of azure blue
Listened to the calls on high, of wild geese as they flew.

Jean Reilly

A Walk Up to Toothill Rock

(Alton)

From the river the rocky path leads up the hill,
It twists and turns steeply up past an old mill
I spot a grassy Croft grazed by Gritstone sheep,
They look so content, leaping lambs at their feet.

I struggle and puff til I reach the top,
Then settle to sit on the edge of the rock
I look down to the green fields in the valley below,
They slope up away from the river, running lazy and slow.

Leafy silver birch branches dance in the breeze
Hover flies cluster round the pale green leaves
My gaze wanders over to grand oaks in a row,
Hugging the old railway into the distance they go.

Distracted by the sounds of a horse nearby
Snorting and galloping round it's paddock I spy,
Its heavy hooves beating a rhythm in time
Like the sound of a drum, is it a sign?

In the endless blue of a cloudless sky
I see Alton Castle, its turrets pointing high
Up towards the heavens, so proud and strong,
A lookout over the valley where it's always belonged.

As I look up and gaze at a lone aeroplane trail,
Faint in the blueness, so white and frail
I see buzzards soaring, circling high in the skies
And catch the sound of their plaintive cries.

Dave Roberts

Dave is one of a great group of friends who came together through playing and singing along with the ukulele

The special thing about this group is that none of the authors had written poetry prior to lockdown.

If something good has come out of these last few months, it's a belief that we are all still capable of finding hidden talents within ourselves.

Dave Roberts

A Squirrel's Stare

In the garden reading, while sipping a small beer
I noticed a young squirrel, he was coming very near
Right along the fence he came, he didn't seem to care
Then he stopped, quite still, and gave the 'Squirrel Stare'

He stayed unmoving, not a twitch of muscle
Despite the birds around taking flight with a rustle
I thought 'I know what he wants, he's after my nuts.
He'd like to come and get them but hasn't got the guts'

I put a plate upon the bowl, to hide the nuts from view.
I said 'If dry roast nuts are bad for me, they're certainly not good for you'
He stayed unmoved, his gaze, intent on where I sat
As we faced each other down, what was he looking at?

Now reading books is well and good, sometimes quite enlightening
But beer and fiction can create scenarios quite frightening
Unnerved, I adjusted my position just to avoid his stare
When I looked up he'd gone, thank goodness the dog was there!

Dave Roberts

Little Piece of Grass

A wooden fence surrounds our garden
As a show garden it would not pass
For it's mainly golden gravel
And a little piece of grass

Plants have never been a strong point
In the ground, a basket or a trough
With all my care and attention
I've usually killed them off!

Dave Roberts

The Sun is Out

The sun is out,
a gentle cooling breeze
The sky a stunning blue
You might have removed limbs from trees
But they will always reach out to you

Dave Roberts

Malcolm Robinson



Malcolm Robinson is a member of Tamworth Folk Club and runs their YouTube and SoundCloud channels. He is also a member of Mitre's Well and The Anker Valley Boys

Tamworth Folk Club:

www.tamworthfolkclub.co.uk

Archives of Tamworth Folk Club on YouTube, for all the videos:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCeYKGMlihpg8JIUsg_fUWQ/

SoundCloud:

<https://m.soundcloud.com/user-940585468>

Malcolm's own website

www.cprcounts.com

where people can, if they want, read about his fantastic good fortune in having his life saved in 2017

Malcolm Robinson

There's been a lot said lately about people overindulging during the 'lockdown', of course it doesn't apply to me!

Healthy Eating

A food that's very good for you I've often heard it said
Full of juice, full of taste, and larger than your head
Is a large and juicy watermelon, you know how big they grow
But it's not so good and healthful if you drop it on your toe.

© Malcolm Robinson 2017

My Burning Heart (The Dyspepsia Blues)

I have an indigestion problem that I'd like to share with you
Dewitt's Tums and Alka Seltzer have no effect – and that's true

I've tried
Magnesium Trisilicate, Sodium Bicarbonate
Aluminium Hydroxide Gaviscon and Bisodol
Remegel and Bismuth Haritaki Nixocid
Sodium Hydrogen Carbonate
Calciprite and Zanprol

Ranitidine and Charcoal
Gavilast Gelusil
I became quite suspicious
As to why I felt so ill

Pills powders potions
I've devoured the bloody lot
I've got to tell you something
My guts were feeling HOT!

I've lived on Pantoloc Control
Gastrocote and Acidil
I was getting to the point
Where my tum would not keep still

There had to be an answer
Somewhere out there in the fog
I was spending half my days
Sitting on the bog

A bit of Pepto Bismol
Maybe that might do the trick
Followed by a dose of Settlers
To stop me being sick

But Milk of Magnesia Slippery Elm and Rennies too
Seem to do the trick for me, and I hope they do for you.

© *Malcolm Robinson* 2016

Malcolm Robinson

Tears

(How many emotions cause them)

Her gaze dropped down to the crying child
The hours before had been ragged and wild
But her tears that flowed were tears of joy
As she cradled her new born boy

Through his toddling days and terrible twos
Sometimes she'd win, sometimes she'd lose
To his demanding ways, cries and shrieks
Frustration moistened her cheeks

The big boy turned six, then he ran away
There's a better life out there - he'd heard others say
But by dinner time his tummy - pulled him in off the street
And she cried tears of relief

At school and at college he truly excelled
It's graduation day, there she is - overwhelmed
Were they tears of happiness, or tears of pride
It mattered not - she just cried

*Don't be ashamed to shed a tear
There's nothing wrong with that my dear
Said the mother to he who'd reached twenty one
You'll still be a man my son*

So the years rolled by, as ever they will
He gained a wife and his own little girl
SHE watched over them out of love and of fear
Tears of gladness were always near

All in all at the end, she'd done of her best
And felt that she'd earned a long peaceful rest
They said when it came it was blessed relief
He could only, shed tears of grief

Don't dry those tears that wash your cheek
Whether happiness, sorrow or pain they seek
If you try to be strong or tend to be weak
Let your tears, like rivers, run free.

© Malcolm Robinson 2015

Malcolm Robinson

The sorry, self inflicted, tale of the Big Game Hunter who decided to eat his kills.

You are what you eat
Is a phrase that's very true
I knew a man who started hopping
'Cause he'd eaten kangaroo.

He looked for an antidote
Something that would stop it
He tried the local hospital
They instructed him to "Hop it!"

He failed to quell this motion
By eating heavy ostrich eggs
Then he shot and ate a crocodile
But started biting people's legs.

So he went off to the doctor's
Who said, "This is a rum to do
Try eating bread and butter pudding
That should work for you."

The pudding did lie heavy
Just as the doctor said
But it didn't work at night
He kept hopping out of bed.

Something more substantial
He started looking for
A hefty chunk of lion meat
And he started then to roar.

He was getting hopping mad
And scaring all his mates
A roaring bouncing lunatic
He was in a right old state.

So he shot himself a sloth
Thinking that would slow him down
Now he roars from up a tree
Frightening everyone in town.

If you want to go and see him
I believe he's still up there
But whatever you do don't feed him
Any dish containing bear!

© Malcolm Robinson 2017

Malcolm Robinson

What Are We Heading For?

Is all our recycling recycled?
It's a question that's puzzling me
Is the actual truth being stifled
And is it all getting dumped out at sea?

Five trillion pieces of plastic
Are floating out there on our oceans
It's a figure I find quite fantastic
What to do, right now, I've no notions.

I don't care if it's flotsam or jetsam
It's still a global disgrace
The world needs to urgently set some
Environmental awareness in place.

Now, imagine an ocean that's lifeless
A sea that's no longer wet
A heaving plain of detritus
The way we're going that's what we will get.

My plea is to those who're in power
To take this issue, by the scruff of the neck
Otherwise, hour by hour
Plastic - will kill us, by Heck!!

© Malcolm Robinson 2016

Helen Wainwright

Helen is one of a great group of friends who came together through playing and singing along with the ukulele

The special thing about this group is that none of the authors had written poetry prior to lockdown.

If something good has come out of these last few months, it's a belief that we are all still capable of finding hidden talents within ourselves.

Helen Wainwright

Still the River

Still the river's running wild
Over the rocks and under the stile,
While Covid's here all is still –
Over the bridge and up the hill
Past the old oak; standing – still

Peace and quiet; beautiful bird song
Fresh air and clean
No pollution to be seen
While I wend my way along

How will it be in a little while?
Shall we see the pretty stile across the field –
Where the bees still hum.
Will the birds still sing their song?

Let us all appreciate
The sights and sounds we now can hear and see
Even the noisy buzzing bee, and high above
We can see the land and sky we love

All is clear and the air is sweet
Making our hearts miss a beat,
To gaze in wonder at the the scene.
This is how it's ever been.

Now we slow down and learn to learn again
Listen to each other's voice
Silence is unbroken –
Do we have a choice?

Come with me and you will see
A beauty unsurpassed
A world amazed and silent.
Let's all come together and remember
What happened in the past.

While we pause, let us together care for this world
All the beauty that surrounds us
Let us plan to preserve and share
All the wonder that is there.

Julie and Steve Wigley



Julie Wigley is a prolific songwriter and poet from Derby. Steve is a poet and artist. Together they perform as a folk duo at clubs around the country.

They are about to publish “Duet” a poetry and song book containing their poems and songs in this collection along with many more and also, their sixth album of Julie’s songs “Only a Wingbeat Away”.

Julie and Steve Wigley

A Blackbird Sang

This poem is in grateful thanks to the heroes of the NHS, Emergency Services, Shopworkers, Delivery Drivers and Carers. March 2020.

The Blackbird sang each morning, high within our Hawthorn tree
And from the topmost branches, so very far could see.
Each Spring he'd watch the season change and welcome back the sun,
As his father and grandfathers had, since time had first begun.

The roar of traffic passing, often drowning out his song.
The street filling with people, always hurrying along.
The many children off to school, all filled the air with noise,
So no-one heard him singing, or the beauty of his voice.

Then something strange he noticed, as the month of March passed by.
The streets had emptied, all was quiet and from his branch so high,
No cars were moving, nothing stirred, just as in years gone by.
No vapour trails and engine noise disturbed the springtime sky.

Until one evening, as he sat and watched the evening fall,
As darkness came and he began to sing his evening call,
The doors all opened, windows too, the lights were streaming bright,
The gardens filled with people with their hands and arms raised high.

Applause began with one or two and quickly grew until
In waves of joyful sound like thunder, over distant hills,
The Blackbird joined in with his song of thankfulness for life
As we thanked those heroes of our time, for all their sacrifice.

Steve Wigley



Julie and Steve Wigley

Aspirations – by Julie Wigley

Sometimes I wish I had the skill
To stitch a seam, a flounce, a frill.
To knit a scarf or woolly hat,
Shape dough into a farmhouse plait.

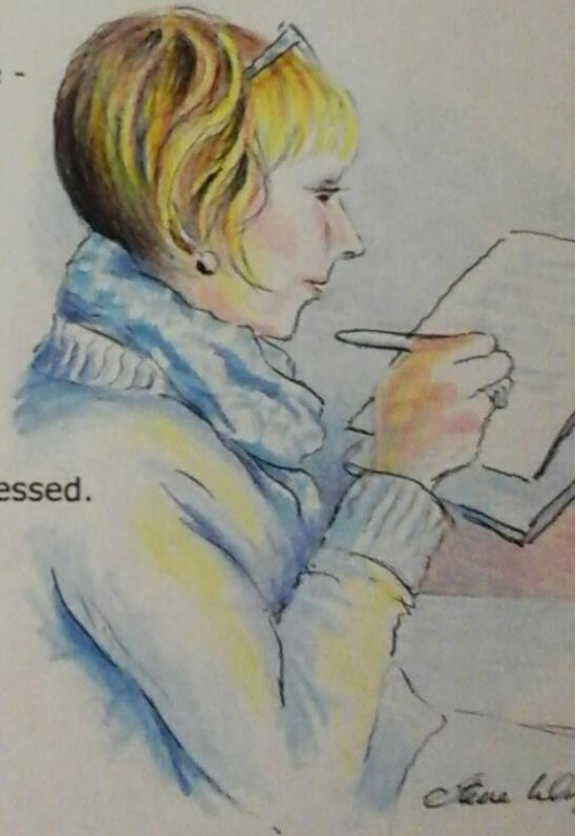
To rustle up a gourmet stew,
Cook French cuisine like Brothers Roux!
And bake as well as Mary Berry -
Scones so light, with fruit and cherry.

Oh, to paint a masterpiece
Like Monet, Manet or Matisse.
Perspective perfect – no contortion,
Every detail in proportion.

Sculpt like Rodin, Hepworth, Moore -
Maybe at modern art I'd score.
A pile of bricks, an unmade bed
Can't be that hard when all is said.

Perhaps ceramics would be good,
Or carving a career in wood,
Or blowing glass, or throwing pots.
But none of these has been my lot.

So I will cease now in my quest
And stick with what I have been blessed.
My niche, my forte all along
To pen a rhyme and sing a song!



Julie and Steve Wigley

Bees like Begonias

Bees like begonias
They really do
Slim stripey honeybees and furry fat ones too
Some bumble aimlessly
From bloom to bloom
Some hover gracefully, some home straight in and zoom
They have no preference
Pink, red or white
The pollen's much the same wherever they alight
They say without them
We'd never cope
Humankind would fast slide down that slippery slope
So plant begonias
They grow with ease
Need no green fingers or vast gardening expertise
They're tough, begonias,
As hard as nails
I've never known one to succumb to slugs and snails
Just keep on flowering
So try some please
Help save the planet – then sit back and watch the bees!



Julie and Steve Wigley

Champion – by Steve Wigley

He crouched lower, behind the screen, eyes glued to the lights,
Right gloved hand tensed on the throttle, ready to react.
A twist of the wrist raising the revs, warming the engine,
Increasing the decibels, competing with the others on the grid.

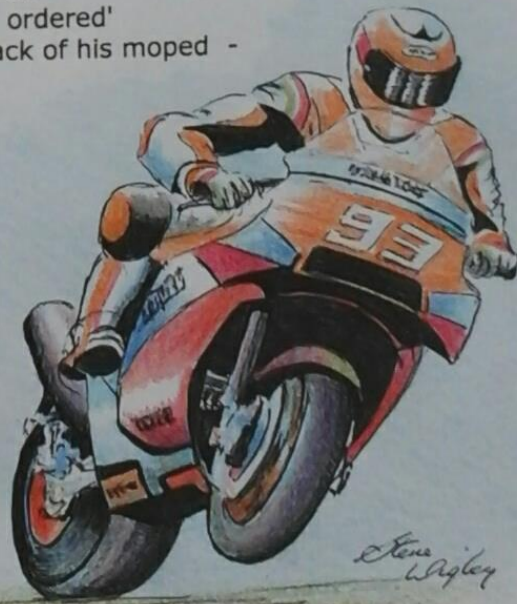
And off, leaning forward, fighting the bike's tendency to lift the front wheel.
The ribbon of tarmac ahead, bright in the sunlight,
Unwinding towards him, in a blur
And flashing past on either side.

Another machine, swooped past him, drifting across,
Leather clad rider crouched over its tank
Brightly coloured helmet turning
Glancing over his shoulder, contemptuously.

He swung wide, seeking the best line through the bends,
Pushing one bar and moving his weight across,
One knee out, reaching for the tarmac,
Guiding her through the sweepers.

Hard on the brakes for the final bend,
A quick look behind, then smoothly slowing, over the line,
Gliding to a stop, thoughts on the podium, the glory,
Champagne to savour! Removing his gloves.

A smiling figure stepped towards him as he pushed back his visor
And reached out, ready for the adulation.
'Three Pizza Margheritas' Mr Jones, as ordered'
He handed the boxes over from the back of his moped -
'Champion, son. Thanks very much!'



Julie and Steve Wigley

Good Morning Mister Magpie
by
Julie Wigley

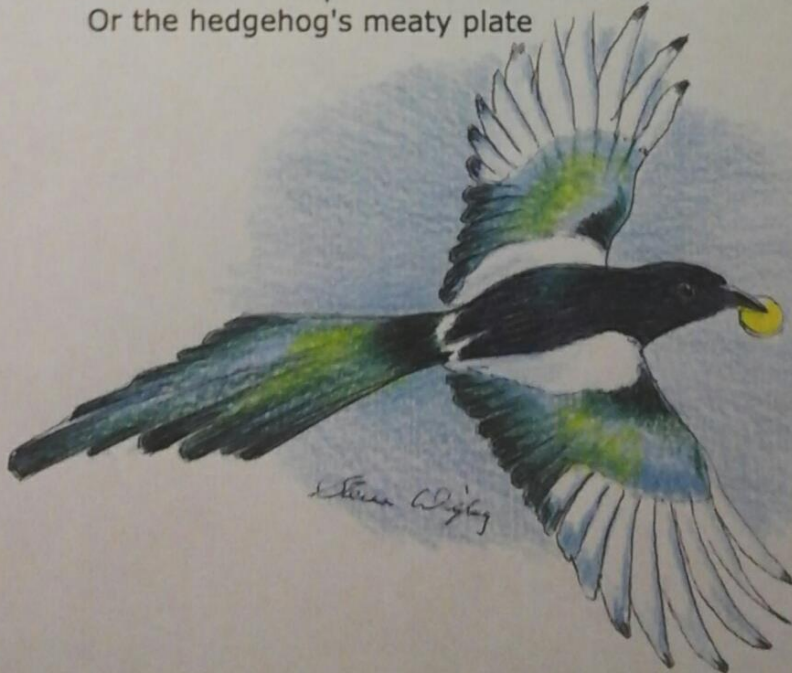
Good morning Mister Magpie
My, you're really quite a looker
Like a mobster from the Mafia
Dressed in best bib and tucker

How striking is your plumage
As you grace us with your presence
Purest white and midnight black
Infused with blue/green iridescence

Some brand you as a villain
Expert thief and bold marauder
With a lust for gold and shiny things
Reputedly a hoarder

All dependent on your numbers
Superstition lingers still
Some regard you as a harbinger
An omen, good or ill

But you're welcome, with your strident voice
And jaunty Magpie gait
To steal the scraps from our bird table
Or the hedgehog's meaty plate



Julie and Steve Wigley

Oasis

by
Julie Wigley

The candles lit, the lights aglow, peace reigns out on the patio
Save for the traffic's distant rush, still ceaseless in it's to and fro
And aircraft engine's changing notes pulsating in the evening air
Reminders, as I rest awhile, of those yet on the move out there

In England's clime this chance is rare – to linger here 'tween dusk and
dark

To see the hedgehog on his rounds and hear the fox's eerie bark
To watch the bat in swift pursuit of insects on the wing by night
And slugs and snails weave silvery trails, translucent in the fading light

A rustle in the undergrowth – perhaps a frog or mouse there lies
Sufficient movement to attract a passing feline's ears and eyes
Sweet honeysuckle's heady scent wafts on the balmy breeze, infused
with appetite rejuvenating haze, adrift from barbecues

Crepuscular contentment then in soft warm blanket wraps me tight
A panoply of stars emerge – The Plough, Orion, Venus bright
Notebook in hand and sparkling wine
I savour this – my quiet time.



Julie and Steve Wigley

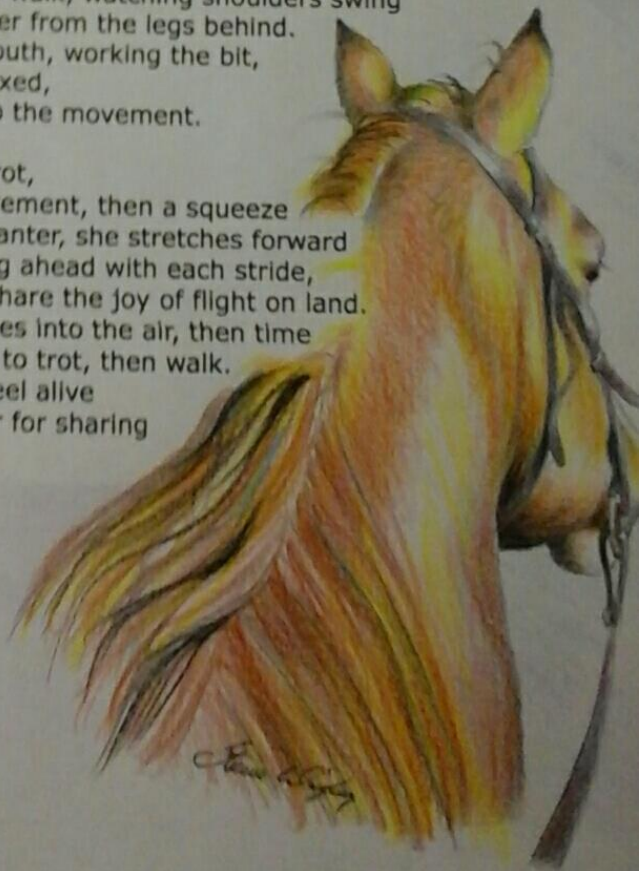
Sunday Morning Hack

Sunday morning, the stable yard rings to the sound of hoofbeats,
A snort and whinny, hot breath rising in clouds
As they are led from the stalls, to stand patiently
While saddle is slung carefully onto their back and bridle fitted
Over soft ears, watched, every move by huge brown eye.
The bit carefully eased into the mouth and noseband tightened.
Brushing boots wrapped around fetlocks, the girth tightened
And ready to mount.

One hand on saddle pommel, holding reins short.
One foot in stirrup and rise, swinging the other carefully over
As she steps sideways and tenses slightly,
Your weight settling softly into the saddle, relaxing, sitting tall.
Your view of the world suddenly different, at one with another being,
A gentle squeeze of calf against her flanks, one rein held aside
And she steps around ready to go.

You walk in procession from the yard, through quiet streets
And down the lane to the first of the fields.
Hoofbeats suddenly silent, as you step onto the grass,
Revelling in the gentle rhythm of the walk, watching shoulders swing
And feeling the lift and surge of power from the legs behind.
Reins softly contacting that gentle mouth, working the bit,
Signalling without words, totally relaxed,
Legs gripping gently, hips soaking up the movement.

An open stubble field, rising to the trot,
Ankles and knees absorbing the movement, then a squeeze
And tap of the outside leg and into canter, she stretches forward
And flies, her neck and head reaching ahead with each stride,
Flying into the wind, you smile and share the joy of flight on land.
The fields rush by, a lark, startled rises into the air, then time
To squeeze the reins and settle back to trot, then walk.
An hour gone by in an instant, you feel alive
And returning to the yard, thank her for sharing
Her freedom.



Julie and Steve Wigley

The Derbyshire Hare – by Julie Wigley

He's the finest of creatures, elusive and shy,
But with luck you will see him in field or farm.
Half concealed in the corn, with his ears standing proud,
Or abound in the meadow – you will bow to his charm.

He'll run, like the wind,
Gaze at the moon.
Should his eye meet your eye in unwavering stare,
He will surely hold your heart in thrall.
Cast under the spell of the Derbyshire Hare.

In March, madness takes him, his bride to defend.
Silhouetted, all boxing and biting, he'll prance.
All at one with the earth and his stars in the sky,
Like a coven of witches - in a strange ritual dance.

He's a trickster, shapeshifter, and legend does tell
He's possessed in the night, by a witch seeking pray.
Or the unquiet soul of a maiden, forlorn,
Vowed to haunt her deceiver – 'til his dying day.

Superstition surrounds him, in magic and myth.
A villain still hunted, by some without care.
But there's scarcely a heart left untouched by the sight
Of this omen of Springtime – The Derbyshire Hare.

He'll run, like the wind,
Gaze at the moon.
Should his eye meet your eye in unwavering stare,
He will surely hold your heart in thrall.
Cast under the spell of the Derbyshire Hare.



Julie and Steve Wigley

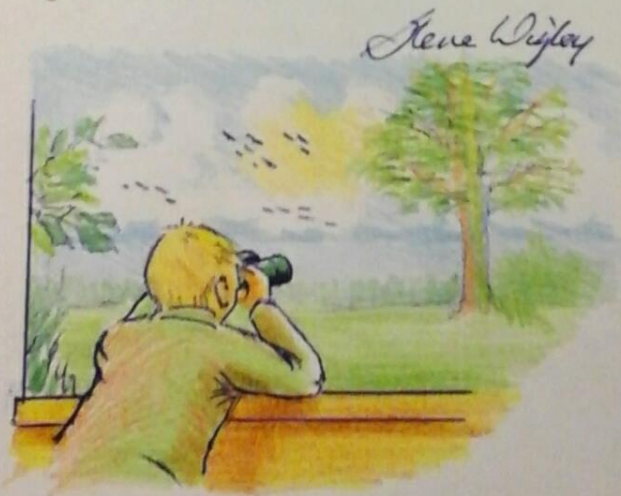
The Raid

They appeared as distant black specks
Low in the sky, the winter sun behind them
Rendering them difficult to spot.
Rising and falling slightly, in loose formation,
Clearly looking for trouble.

Following the formation leader, they wheeled,
Seeking their target, confident in their numbers.
I shrank back slightly, hoping not to be seen,
In hope that they might pass overhead
And hunt elsewhere.

They clearly knew what they were about,
The formation splitting in all directions,
Dividing my attention, some climbing overhead
While one group swung in from the side,
No chance that they would go elsewhere.

I crouched behind the partial shelter of the window sill
My binoculars lowered, no longer necessary.
Ready to note their number if nothing else,
For I was familiar with their markings.
I half turned, calling back over my shoulder-
'The starlings are back on the bird feeders!



Julie and Steve Wigley

The Rites of Spring

by

Julie Wigley

Coming down in the April rain -
The last of Winter's icy diamond jewels,
Beating time on the window pane
Then the rhythm's gone
Just as fast as it was begun
Such are the Rites of Spring

A host of daffodils -
Stand bowed as the sudden relentless squall
Fashions ribbons from golden frills
And the cherry blooms,
Fly as pastel confetti strewn
Such are the Rites of Spring

But the Green Man is stirring,
He stretches and yawns,
Rubbing the sleep from his eyes
The eagerly waiting new leaves he unfolds
And invites the sun with him to rise
Such are the Rites of Spring

Mischief makers, now away,
Restless spirits traversing the equinox
Time to cease in your reckless play -
Bid a last adieu
Let the Green Man bring life anew
Such are the Rites of Spring



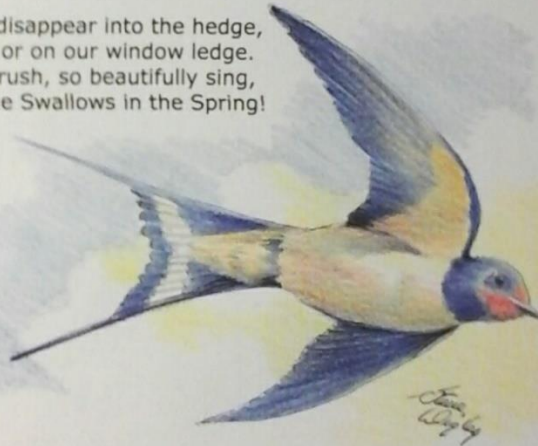
Julie and Steve Wigley

To See the Swallows

The Woodpecker's a dapper bird, of black and white and red.
They sometimes look for insects in the tree behind our shed.
They tell me there's another type, but that I've never seen,
With ruby crown and yellow rump and wings of brightest green.

The Nuthatch, buff and bluey grey, can climb while upside down.
The Treecreeper with speckled back and body mostly brown,
The Longtailed Tits who come in gangs and flit from tree to tree
The Goldfinches, their colours bright, much easier to see.

The Sparrows once so common, disappear into the hedge,
The Pigeons on the rooftop high, or on our window ledge.
The Blackbirds, Robin and the Thrush, so beautifully sing,
But joy for me is just to to see the Swallows in the Spring!



Julie and Steve Wigley

Two Brothers

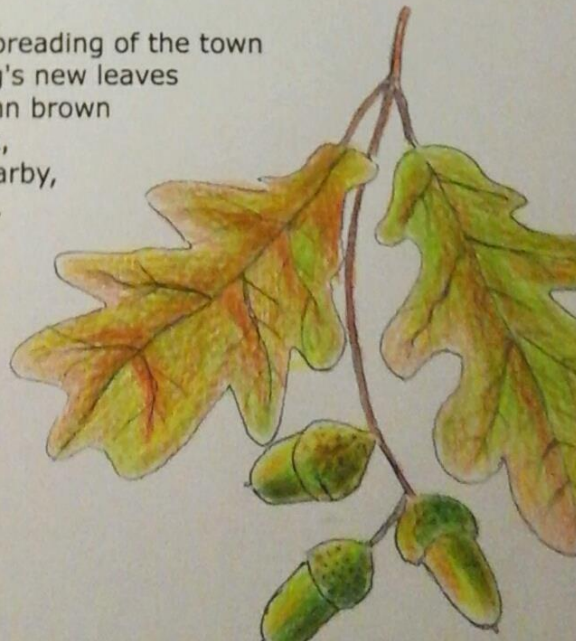
Two Brothers has always been my name for the two Oak trees which stand in the field as you approach Radbourne Lane from Station Road. They have been there all my life, but now the houses have spread into the fields behind them, blocking the skyline

Two brothers stand and cast their shade
Across the field where once we played.
They watched us pass, through childhood years
Upon that hilltop farmland where
We lay and gazed at Summer skies
Or laughing with friends, cycled by.

They stood in Winter frost and snow
Leafless and bare, they watched us grow
Into our teens, with girlfriends as we'd pass along
That quiet lane, our childhood gone.
Our minds on study, work and more
And as the years passed, we saw
New houses come to fill the fields.

The Water Tower still stands tall
Upon that hilltop as I recall
My family who once lived there
And though the red brick houses spread
Across fields and land where once we trod,
Two brothers still stand to greet,
Where Station Road and Radbourne meet.

I hope that they survive the spreading of the town
And I can take joy from Spring's new leaves
The Summer green and Autumn brown
For they remind me to the last,
Of those I loved, who lived nearby,
Two brothers watched us pass.



Julie and Steve Wigley

Winter Visitors

Friday night, the motorway South, a stream of red lights in the dusk.
Over on my right, three lines of headlights flashing past
Like tracer,
Wipers flick across, intermittently, distorting the glow
Of brake lights just ahead.
It feels like winter has arrived, with snow flurries in the wind
And black clouds hiding the last light of day,
But for a lighter streak in the South Western sky.

My eye is caught by movement in the darkness to my left,
Almost felt, rather than seen.
I glance quickly across, keeping one eye on the stream of vehicles ahead.
Yes, there!
Coming in, diagonally across the river of traffic.
Undulating, necks stretched forward, wings majestic in slow motion.
A skein of geese, an arrowhead in perfect formation, almost too many to count.

They sweep across the ribbon of red and gold lights, that is my path.
Momentarily silhouetted against the fading band of light
In the Western sky.
And there, above me from my left, yet more, close overhead.
I quickly kill the radio, wind the window down
And hear the mournful calls, that honking sound, above the traffic noise.
Wings catching the light, they follow their leader
Down towards the estuary of the River Severn.
My heart lifts!

Steve Wigley



Lilian Willis

Lilian is one of a great group of friends who came together through playing and singing along with the ukulele

The special thing about this group is that none of the authors had written poetry prior to lockdown.

If something good has come out of these last few months, it's a belief that we are all still capable of finding hidden talents within ourselves.

Lilian Willis

Picnic

Follow the river around the bend
Up the hill we will ascend
At the top an old oak tree
With a beautiful scene for you to see.

Beneath the tree a picnic I have made,
But wait a minute until Covid19 is gone and we are free,
Only a dream our picnic must be.

Bob Wilson



web site

www.stanleybagshaw.co.uk

facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/Bob-Wilson-authorillustratorsongsmith-241433982457/>

soundcloud

. <https://soundcloud.com/bob-wilsongs>

youtube

<https://www.youtube.com/user/bouchet07/videos>

amazon

https://www.amazon.co.uk/Bob-Wilson/e/B001KDA8GW?ref_=dbs_p_ebk_r00_abau_000000

Bob Wilson

Daren Dakes

My Mum's afraid of spiders,
My dad's afraid of snakes,
But I'm afraid of a boy at school,
his name is Daren Dakes.
His dad's an all-in wrestler,
His mother drives a tank,
And in the war, he says, his uncle Arthur sank
a U-boat single handed,
 And won the Iron Cross.
That's why at Kingsley Primary School,
Daren Dakes' the boss.

My Dad hates eggs with runny yolks,
My mother can't stand lard.
What I can't stand is Daren Dakes,
Cuz Daren Dakes' *dead hard*.
His fist's a deadly weapon,
He's expert at Kung foo,
And if you don't shift up he says he'll do,
a death punch called Chop Suey,
 That'll make your stomach burst.
That's why when we queue up for dinner,
Daren's always first.

My Dad's a bit unusual,
Because he's got a beard.
But Daren Dakes's family,
Are *really, really* weird.
His Mother's got a wooden leg,
His Dad has two glass eyes.
And sometimes, when he's drunk, he fries
the gold fish up,
 And once he ate a mouse.
No one ever goes to tea,
At Daren Dakes's house.

My Dad's afraid of going bald,
My Mum of getting fat,
But I'm afraid of Daren Dakes,
Because he's got *this cat*,
It's called a' Pit-Bull Persian'
It lives on human blood.
And if you ever told on him his Pit-Bull Persian would
leap up, and grab you by the throat,
And paralyse your face.
When teacher says - "What's going on?"
We don't tell - just in case.

Our teacher; Mrs Willard,
Who's thoughtful, kind, and gentle,
Says he's got a 'social problem'.
I think he's flippin' mental.
My Dad says just ignore him,
My Mother say "It's sad".
She says that Daren hasn't really got a Dad
and his Mum's not much to speak of.
That his life can't be much fun.
She says - "Just try being nice to him."
That's easier said than done.

Some kids are scared by Dracula films,
Some kids are scared of ghosts.
But if you asked kids at our school,
"What's the thing your scared of most?"
They wouldn't tell you - vampire bats,
Spiders, ghosts or snakes.
I bet you any money,
They'd all say
"Daren Dakes."

Bob Wilson

How to Recognise a Cow

After lockdown is finally relaxed and we are once more allowed to wander the countryside we may have difficulty in recognising or remembering the names of the flora and fauna we come across.

With this in mind I have written this helpful poem.

A COW
is larger than a python
and doesn't sing
like a cat, or a kettle
and in the Spring
unlike the small Siberian mouse
which builds a house of leaves and twigs
A cow - doesn't.

A COW
is taller than a salmon
and doesn't fly
like a bat, or a buttress
and this is why
unlike the large white POLAR BEAR
which has long hair to keep it warm.
A cow - hasn't.
But a cow is not like a camel.
(It's humpless and doesn't like sand)
And in much the same way
that frogs don't eat hay
Cows don't eat marmalade
and

A COW
is fatter than an OTTER
and not as wet
as a whale or a weekend
and when upset,
unlike the dinosaur of old
(which was, I'm told, a fearsome thing.)
A cow- wasn't

A COW
is brighter than a turtle
but not as cute
as a pie, or a pig
in a whistle and flute.
And unlike the COCKNEY Sparrow-Hawk
(which often squawks in rhyming slang.)
A cow - doesn't.
But a cow is not like a cricket.
(It's stumpless and hates flannelette.)
And for much the same reason
that hedgehogs have fleas on their backs
a cow doesn't
and yet

A COW
is younger than an oyster
and not as green
as a fly or a grocer.
by which I mean
before there were such things as these -
natural yoghurt, MILK and cheese
cows - weren't
And a cow can't count like a TOUCAN
(Most Toucans can count up to four)
How amoebas divide
has cows mystified
for a cows never tried to
because...
The average cow - (as a general rule)
has never attended Secondary SCHOOL
(or any similar institution)
So hasn't heard about evolution.
Knows NOTHING of BIOLOGY
Logic or Anatomy.
AND THUS
being ignorant of how
a creature might BECOME a cow
and also
unaware of what
the average cow is usually not

A COW

just

IS

(This information I think you'll find,
is of the very useful kind)

Because

One day you might just chance to spy
a creature swimming through the sky
like a dog - (but not dogmatic)

fat as a mouse - (but more aquatic)
cat-like - yet not categorically.

Old - yet not quite prehistorically,

Cold - but not as cool as polar.

carrying a satchel on it's shoulder,
full of school-books twigs and leaves.

And your companion can't believe
his eyes

and cries

"Hey look. Hey Wow Hey golly gee!

Whatever can that creature be!?"

Whereas once you'd simply say

"Gee Wizz!

I don't know what that creature is!"

With the information you've now got

You may also add-

"But I'll tell you what..

a cow

it's not"

(NB: A cow

by any other name

would almost certainly smell the same.)