

# **SEEKING THE SOURCE**

**Collected Poems**

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**Christmas 2000**

## SEEKING THE SOURCE

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## Seeking the Source

### Preface.

Poetry is a very personal medium, and it is perhaps impossible to know how widely a poem will appeal to other people. So a decision to put together a collection of poems is something of a step in the dark.

‘Seeking the Source’ represents what writing poetry means to me. I find myself drawn to an effort to express perceptions about the times we live in, which are often difficult to nail down. It is usually an exercise of intuition rather than a process of objective thought. So what you believe is laid on the line equally with what you may think. It also means that you look to poetry in some measure for its revelation of truth.

What counts perhaps is the relative success of the poet in articulating what is in his heart and mind. It involves trying to go beyond mere logic, and may leave a number of considerations hanging in the air for further pursuit. That is why poetry can be both haunting and powerful.

I enjoy longer poems of narrative and description, but have never been able to pursue that line myself. I am also conscious of a failure to relate to a lot of modern poetry, simply because I am unable to understand what it is saying. But although some poets repay hard work by the reader, poetry is essentially something to be enjoyed and re-read for pleasure rather than for a major intellectual challenge.

So it is encouraging that a great deal of poetry withstands the test of time, and continues to appeal to succeeding generations. There is a continuity in spirit and in truth which is truly eternal, and which is part of the acceptable face of humanity.

## **Wartime and After**

The poems written during the war years reflect, however immature they may be, the immense hope engendered by Frank Buchman's work (*Moral Re-Armament*) in the pre-war years. If war could not be avoided it had to be fought in the conviction that this time the opportunities that came with peace would be grasped. That meant an increasing commitment to building something totally new, with no easing off in the wake of victory. Revolution was still a popular word with those who looked for radical change, though without violence. For those who lived through the thirties, the Second World War was a more significant spiritual turning point than is often realised. It was a moment when hard realities had to be faced, but the teamwork it engendered has often been the subject of comment. Cynicism was driven out by a commitment to ideas and values which needed to shape the future. The upset election victory by Labour in 1945 reflected the changed perception of what its nature should be.

## Early Reflections at Cambridge 1941

Rich with its classic buildings and air of quiet content,  
Stands Cambridge, midst a land of corn and sun,  
A mirrored image of the new-born summer:  
And all around the flat, unending countryside,  
Acre on acre of farming land both fen and clay;  
And here and there are market towns of great antiquity,  
Symbols of man who down the years has toiled upon this land,  
And still his spirit broods behind the scene, possessing it,  
The spirit which can make or mar this perfect heritage.

And here to-day breaks out in tumult stark reality,  
For men have followed long their own desires and lust,  
They carp and criticise instead of build,  
Unwilling yet to drop the broken reed of self  
And face th'exacting ways of God, demanding discipline.  
Imbued with all the vanity of human wisdom,  
They let their sin become the standard of their life,  
In thought and deed accept the Devil's censorship,  
As wantonly they tread the path of self-destruction.

But we are pledged to bring God's light on earth,  
E'en now have lit that candle which shall ne'er go out.  
For through the Cross displayed in daily clash with sin  
We find a vision, and aim with strength revived  
To build a new thing in the hearts of men, to follow  
Daily God's revealed word to all who listen,  
Daring to seek reality and true dimension.  
And as this spirit lights our hearts and steels the will,  
A unity is built, with blade keen-edged and capable  
To cleave the tangled world we know so well.  
And in its place our new-skilled fingers build;  
Giving new heart to starved, exhausted land,  
Piecing anew the shattered fallen cities;  
Able at last to work, because with mind at one.

And so a team, born out of sacrifice,  
Finds itself equal to the heaviest load,  
For many hands hold firm the weakest link  
And thus unbroken stand its every strain.  
At which triumphant faith deep-surges in us,  
As now we stand, expectant for the miracles to be.

### Seasons of the spirit

The old year fades, its sombre beauty falling to decay,  
Its life lived out to the last weary dregs,  
While yet the new light's pale, its dawn a weakling ray,  
Nor even strengthening as a young lamb finds its legs.

For these are not the seasons known to man,  
That follow each a fixed appointed course,  
But a new stage of life in history's timeless span,  
Unfolding new creations from their holy source.

Pioneers already blaze the undiscovered trail,  
Yet there are few with eyes to see their work,  
So that man plunges till the last hopes fail,  
Till there is nothing left in life to shirk.

Seeing this weakness yet our hearts were proud,  
We tried to laugh without a heart for mirth.  
In bitterness at length our heads were bowed  
E'er we'd accept Christ's gift of second birth.

Spring 1943



To my brother John.  
Killed in action.

Death cannot end the life we know today,  
No longer resting on the spindle thread of flesh.  
For God is quick to answer those who pray,  
His springs of living water full and ever fresh.

And scattered yet together we walk  
In Him who bore for us the cross.  
Pledged still to serve, the Devil balk,  
Who'd make us selfish at his loss.

For John a warrior lived and died,  
And trod decisively the unknown trail,  
Which still he marches on the further side  
Victorious in the fight that shall not fail.

And with his spirit closer still  
Our hearts are knit to stay the course,  
Determination that no sin can kill  
Is crystallised, releasing new won force.

Something bigger than man's desire,  
Something stronger than our human care,  
Enters and purifies with fire,  
Giving new appetite to risk and dare.

For life's a pattern when you have the key  
That asks no fretful puzzling to make clear,  
As Jesus came the warm heart to make free  
To cherish new experience without fear.

May 1943

Whitbourne September 1943

Part 1.

Richest of lands wherein our hearts  
First stirred and loved this country's beauty,  
And carry it throughout the furthest parts  
Of earth; a faith, a vision and living home.

For many memories remain to me  
Of hills and banks, and woodland streams,  
Of blossom and many a gnarled and crooked tree  
That grace the orchards with the sanctity of age.

While on the hill the horses strain  
To top the crest with the last load of hay.  
And in due season follows longed for rain  
To ease the cracking of the thirsty clay.

Eternal spirit that looks forth  
Upon this varied life of Man,  
And sees the slow and steady growth  
Built up through each succeeding span.

Part 2.

And yet so transient is Man's success,  
His progress is a matter for debate,  
And wise men all as one assess  
The selfish source of many a bitter fate.

For Feudal days may be rung out  
And systems smashed and broken,  
But we shall be a prey to doubt  
Whate'er our leaders' token.

For Church no longer is the hub  
Of a busy village life:  
Both good and bad are in the pub,  
And everywhere is strife.

Old ways linger more in name  
Than in a people's heart,  
Whatever comes it's not the same  
Wherein the yeoman bore his part.

Yet deeply still the old blood stirs  
To shape a future yet unborn,  
Too strong for any selfish spurs  
Of greed by which this world is torn.

So here's the kernel of a future's hope,  
The fire that knows no easy way,  
Through all the four dimensions scope  
Shall blaze the brilliance of the unborn day.

### Part 3.

Ample peace is freely found  
By any seeking country ways,  
But earthly paradise is bound  
And weakens with succeeding days.

For through the battle of the years  
The craftsmanship of human kind  
Grows from the work of pioneers  
Who served with all their heart and mind.

Blood bought and forged in sacred steel  
This family together grows.  
Bound by what every heart must feel  
As giving all it overflows.

Far beyond the wildest dreaming  
Lies the end to which we build.  
Countless new creations streaming  
To a world His spirit's filled.

For it's not the infinite  
That calls for all our future thought.  
But the growing inward light  
That on the Cross by Christ was brought.

Here together we unfold  
Patterns past Man's understanding,  
Something that shall ne'er grow cold,  
Armies that know no disbanding.

For it's new men make new nations  
And a constant change hand down.  
As e'en the noblest of orations  
Won't escape the cynic's frown.

So no idyll but a wonder  
Out beyond one man's surmising  
Speaks with an all celestial thunder,  
Tribute to a team's uprising.

## To Endurance

Unheralded he came to speak,  
And deeply burned to bring to birth  
The things that wise men ever seek,  
The living bridges that shall span the earth.

Great was the promise and goal  
But slow to unfold into deeds,  
For many good men on the dole  
Have passed and gone and no one heeds.

Perhaps after all came the doubt,  
You are only a child of the flesh,  
Raising up just another vain shout  
As you seek to escape from Earth's mesh.

Or worse the truth will not be heard  
And vain will have been the battle  
That needlessly your soul has stirred  
To herald Death's last rattle.

Perhaps again the present lustre  
Will not shine throughout tomorrow,  
As the troops begin to muster  
Hope comes face to face with sorrow.

For the road so lightly started  
Needs a strong man to pursue,  
Lifelong friends may yet be parted  
For the chosen are but few.

But the strength of one man's vision  
Spreads with undiminished power,  
Born of the daily small decision  
That duly wins the crisis hour.

True to the spirit that's his guide,  
In discipline that looks not back,  
Authority o'erwhelms the pride  
Of those who simpler wisdom lack.

For surely progress stands forever  
To point a future destination;  
Pilgrimage that Time can't sever  
Through the pangs of new creation.

November 1943

Unity in war.

Clearly the way leads onward now,  
No more the uncertainty, conflict of desire;  
To His will and our destiny these heads we bow,  
One spirit, one heart, the purity of fire.

One man alone that first Good Friday  
Took up His Cross, the fate that could not pass.  
His to pioneer the now well known way,  
The future in his hand, brittle as glass.

In the might of God's power  
That raised Jesus Christ from the dead,  
Is the seed of that flower  
To which now we are led.

Those who have gone before,  
Warriors of two thousand years,  
Are part of our common heart and core,  
Our leaders and our peers.

Unbreakable that power, that super force,  
When millions answer from the heart of one.  
Surely this rising tide shall run its course,  
Against the odds His will on Earth be done.

For where self is lost for ever  
Springs the secret of Creation,  
Light comes through the great endeavour,  
Teamwork finds its consummation.

And even the stars in their courses,  
Moving in the majesty of space.  
Symbolise the Spirit's hidden forces,  
Against the day we meet Him face to face.

For the pattern of this team's uprising,  
Outstrips dimensions of a single man:  
Its myriad perfection so surprising,  
Who knows the limits of its growing span?

Easter 1944



## End of a war

The last long winter lies ahead,  
At least we hope the last;  
All Europe's rivers have run red  
To expiate the past.

Not only old men stand today  
By hard years worn and grim;  
In every land they kneel to pray  
Who've sipped the bitter brim.

Fresh hopes and plans can now take shape,  
And daily talk grows louder;  
But those who've seen a country's rape,  
Find naught to make them prouder.

The cynic nothing can believe,  
Yet even he is fooled.  
To wear his heart upon his sleeve  
By worldly standards ruled.

For now throughout the land we love  
Satanic spirits stalk,  
The snake has venom for the dove,  
The hopes for peace to baulk.

Still must we fight to win the prize  
For which this blood was shed,  
It was not for a pack of lies  
The rivers ran so red.

Yet surely must the Spirit work  
To shape new men and ways.  
If greater tasks we shall not shirk  
Nor snatch at fainter praise.

October 1944

## The hope of Christmas

Jesus is born in the promise of the ages  
He to redeem and turn weakness to strength,  
A child of destiny to change all history,  
He to make love uplift passion and power.

Strongly in the veins of the fighting men,  
Runs the spirit which the Babe has brought to earth.  
Theirs to inherit the torch of the greatest,  
Burning with hope at the Saviour King's birth.

Christmas 1944

To the post-war years. 1945-46

The drums have ceased and war is done.  
Our vigorous armies soon disband.  
And shall they seek with victory won  
Fresh fighting for a better land?

Now are the days of decision,  
The dawn of the climax we've sought,  
Here we are matched with our vision  
That the pioneers dearly have bought.

For chaos now's the course we drift  
And evil men will raise its flood,  
By chance we cannot hope to lift  
The prize so fully paid in blood.

Yet more than hope is there to greet  
The men with eyes to see,  
A force is ready now to meet  
Its long sought destiny.

A prophet voice spoke through years  
That shame us in awaking,  
And he has built mid hates and fears  
A force for world remaking.

Its leadership is fully trained  
To match this hour and need;  
New heights will surely be attained  
And good ways greater breed.

We have no fear now if we fight  
For all that we are shown;  
The passion of our heart's delight  
Will swell the seed that's sown.

For millions now have heard the call  
That's touched Earth's furthest part.  
Your answer waits, as once in Paul  
It struck from head to heart.

The battle sharpens to a line  
That names it black or white;  
You cannot ask a clearer sign  
You'll have to join the fight.

The evil men are few beside  
The millions of goodwill,  
But well may they the good deride,  
Whose softness dupes them still.

For millions are not fighters yet  
But seek their own desires,  
And so their course is quickly set  
And yet more quickly tires.

While some there be who stand four square  
On all that's firm and true,  
A worthy burden is their share  
But chained by point of view.

For greater yet in spirit  
Is the age we come to build,  
By more than human merit  
Is its new creation skilled.

While greater still shall Britain be  
To measure this occasion,  
And launch this ancient of the free,  
The Spirit's great invasion.

For only in the war torn lands,  
The bitter scene of strife,  
Will loosened be the clutching hands  
That strangled out their life.

At France though trampled in the mire  
Let none dare cast a stone,  
Her gifts will yet the world inspire;  
Repentance will atone.

But humbly should we purge the dross  
That nearly brought us down.  
And ponder just how close our loss  
In every cynic's frown.

Democracy's a faith within,  
Its genius to advance  
Most surely will cast out our sin  
By change and not by chance.

For never as the world stands now  
Dare we seek out position.  
The future lies with all who vow  
To build a new tradition.

Full round the Earth the scene is set  
Amid the strain and strife.  
To bring to birth the greatest yet –  
A new creative life.

And in each new creation  
Is a promise greater still,  
That sings the consummation  
Of united heart and will.

So simple and far reaching  
Is that distant Christmas tale,  
Its voice the years beseeching  
That His promise cannot fail.

A nobler passion stirs the heart  
To give us grace and care.  
In all our weakness we've a part,  
The Christ Child makes us dare.

## Reflections

Reflections often made at Christmas or Easter holidays explore the continuing path of faith. The nature of the Christian experience and destiny, which promises the ordinary man a part in remaking the world. In a post-modern, and what some consider a post-Christian age, a great many are unaware of the inheritance which they seek to reject. We are not much given to reflection, or even to understanding the religious dimension. A book entitled 'Religion – the missing dimension in statecraft', might be one sign of a turning point. The more so that it comes out of Washington, and is the product of an extremely varied team. Because there is such a dimension, and its truths are enshrined in the flights of the human spirit, not to some rarefied height but to the deep recesses of the human will. The point at which we truly learn to deal with human nature – our own.

To make human nature our priority is still something that needs to be explored, because it cannot be done simply by following our own preferences. Observation and experience are more helpful than theoretical studies, but it remains a notable gap in the contemporary scene. It is also perhaps the key to putting new life and faith into the role of democratic politics.

No human affair

Peace, Power and Passion,  
No human heart's fashion,  
Could inspire His living,  
So humbly forgiving.

Torn like the temple's veil  
Pierced by the iron nail,  
Child of storm with your birth  
Came true freedom to Earth.

Christmas 1946

## Post war struggles

The world awaits this Eastertide  
The death of man's most stubborn pride.  
Desires enthroned within his will,  
That hold the world in bondage still.

Would that he knew what freedom meant,  
Before his heritage was spent.  
Beyond what hearts may yearn to give,  
The will behind the way we live.

The clear decision to obey,  
No longer pick and choose our way;  
The dedicated fire and fight  
That sets the hearts of men alight.

Where else creative talents spring?  
Or fresh words leap to lips that sing?  
What greater theme fulfil in art?  
Christ's promise to the pure in heart.

No living man but longs to know  
The truths that from the Cross must grow:  
The power over death and life  
To end today's familiar strife.

The pattern for the world to be,  
Achieved in men who now are free:  
As when the stone was rolled aside,  
The doubt in His disciples died.

Easter 1955



## A hidden decision

Alone in Christ, dependent on his will,  
The day's new dawn has come, yet all is still.  
The struggle over and the battle fought  
That for each one a destiny has bought.

Alone in Christ, the pure in heart and mind,  
Shall see their God, and in His shadow find,  
The honest purpose and the grace to give  
A faith in Jesus, that His Cross can live.

Alone in Christ to face a world in need,  
Where evils multiply; confusions breed.  
Yet round the world a thousand points of light,  
The chosen men who give whole nations sight.

Alone in Christ, that with this new born vision,  
His will on earth be shrined in each decision.  
Source of the strategy: Himself the way.  
Ours is the choice. His the Easter Day.

Easter 1957

## Beyond calculation

A child with destiny foretold  
The son of God, a gift of heaven:  
A challenge even to the bold  
Of what must be a new world's leaven.

The well-beloved Christmas story,  
That day two thousand years gone by,  
Springs still with power and with glory  
For millions yet who know not why.

The greatest gift in Him God gave,  
The secret of new living.  
A solid token to the brave  
Who all in faith were giving.

A knowledge still beyond this earth  
Experience none can measure,  
Moving unchanged from death to birth  
His own eternal treasure.

Christmas 1960

A road for men and nations

The miracle of God's way,  
The summit of His Will,  
Speaks in Easter's dawning  
When all the world is still.

None rang the bells that morning  
Nor faced the crowds their shame.  
But destiny was given,  
Eternal in Christ's name.

Bought with the price of blood  
That drains no life away,  
But offers through the cross  
God's key to every day.

There lies the source of power,  
No traitor's hand can still,  
The birthright of free men  
Made perfect in His will.

Faith out of doubt and distress,  
A day it was hard to believe;  
Till lifted beyond any hope,  
They ran to the tomb to receive.

What lies beyond our knowing,  
We glimpse through those who've gone;  
On whose slow steps at going  
The Holy Spirit shone.

But destiny is with us  
In every step we tread,  
So fear not now to feel  
What the heart has left unsaid.

Let Easter reach the millions  
In ways no man contrives  
That ultimate decision  
In the service of our lives.

Easter 1962

Love everlasting

Love is God's gift,  
A lever to lift the earth.  
Love is a child,  
A gift with every birth.

All speak of love,  
But today long forgotten  
Is its true nature  
Whence it is begotten

In a letter to Corinth  
Paul set out its meaning,  
A text all have studied  
For fresh facets gleaming.

Is it part of a man  
In his body or soul?  
A comfort or a joy,  
A journey or a goal?

Can cruelty destroy?  
Can poverty efface?  
Fulfilment of man's spirit  
The silent gift of grace.

Bought with the price of blood  
Is the love that endures.  
Bred in man's heart and will  
Is the care that outpours.

To all humanity  
Jesus said – 'I am the way'  
The Cross, the Resurrection  
Lead on from Easter Day.

April 1969

The battle for truth

The hope of our history  
Is cradled with the cattle.  
Today and every day  
The Cross commands the battle.

Christmas the worship of our lives,  
Thy will be done on earth.  
A faith to reach the nations,  
True honour to Thy birth.

The road that led to that green hill,  
Was surely shod with pain.  
But triumph wells in every heart  
Which takes that way again.

No Church could hold perfection,  
No human vessel last,  
But men reborn at Christmas  
Are in His image cast.

The wonder of God's grace and gifts  
Beyond what men afford:  
Can modern man yet understand  
Why truth should be a sword?

Christmas 1970

## Human potential

The candles light the tree,  
And thoughts once more take wing  
Of past and future free,  
The spirit's path to sing.

Across the span of time  
Since Jesus came on earth,  
The so familiar road  
To unexpected birth.

The clamour of the conflict,  
The sudden note of war,  
They touch the lives of thousands  
Who've walked this way before.

Yet from the wells of hatred,  
The bitterness and pride,  
Can flow the healing passion  
With which Christ lived and died.

An unexpected answer  
For the power men would wield,  
A universal truth  
To which our natures yield.

And while so many ponder  
How the world has turned aside,  
They miss the new dimension  
In the lives of those who've tried.

The wonders of reality,  
The purposes of pain,  
The chemistry of nature,  
The compass of the brain.

Yet history tells men's longing  
To reach the aching nerve,  
And open paths of greatness  
Where all men learn to serve.

Christmas 1973

A daily destiny

There is joy in the battle to be won,  
Abundance in the land,  
A renaissance when human strength is done,  
A grace that can withstand.

The shadow of the bomber stretches far,  
The weight of a city's chains,  
The violent raise no eyes to see the star,  
The body feels its pains.

But millions can look up, and could be fed,  
The secret in His will,  
A freedom for the leader and the led,  
A voice insistent still.

Can farmers dare to feed the rich and poor?  
Healing a long history,  
Can farmers shape new economic law?  
Human nature their mystery.

There is hope in every promise to be born.  
A faith to be fulfilled,  
The breaking of the early Christmas dawn,  
A gift much more than willed.

Christmas 1974



A way of life

The bell that tolls to mark your birth  
Has called to those who till the earth,  
Has called through centuries of toil  
Creation from the living soil.

The wonder that you share our life  
Brings unity to man and wife.  
To pray 'Thy will be done on earth'  
Brings silent power to its birth.

The pleasure of a well known way  
May still inspire a farmer's day,  
Yet even things which seem the same  
May link to an eternal aim.

The understanding of his ways  
Brings fellowship to mark the days,  
The Kingdom that he came to give,  
The daily secret how to live.

Christmas 1976

The whole world in His hand

Moments of truth that strike us dumb  
Before a world in need,  
A fresh experience grips mankind  
For which Christ was the seed.

A Christmas gift to stretch our hearts  
Beyond all pain and loss,  
The universal brotherhood  
Of Christ upon the Cross.

How strange to some who wonder  
Why the road is hewn in stone,  
How hard for some who question  
Why no man can walk alone.

The dissidents whose column grows  
Have seen destruction fail,  
A hollow claim the death of God  
To those He touched in jail.

Say not the riches of our time  
Can shut our ears to God  
When those who walk through misery  
Are with His spirit shod.

The wonder that a child is born,  
The greatest man to be:  
A lesson that obedience  
Is the passport of the free.

Christmas 1978

## The spirit of friendship

An age when one man reaches millions;  
When his faith may be seen and heard.  
An incarnation of the spirit  
Measures the meaning of the word.

The threat to human rights, he said,  
Is linked to sharing with the poor.  
Freedom may fall to selfishness,  
As well as the force we abhor.

Christmas in the image of the Creator,  
A new heaven and a new earth.  
Every key to the Father's kingdom,  
The brotherhood of a new birth.

Not just a birth to marvel at,  
A passion for the pure to find.  
Today's chance of knowing Jesus,  
A friendship that's real for mankind.

Christmas 1979

A destiny granted to men.

The government shall be upon his shoulder,  
Isaiah's word for the babe in the stable.  
Imagination conceives nothing bolder,  
Nor could a child on the road seem less able.

Even with the hindsight of history  
We doubt the power of the Holy Spirit,  
Without patience to pursue the mystery  
We spurn here and now our chance to inherit.

Men without fear enter a new dimension  
Able to live and work untouched by strife.  
With blackmail and terror in contention  
They are free to serve, and lay down their life.

Free to walk in the spirit and to care,  
Theirs is not the courage of the stoic.  
Springboard for men committed and aware,  
To a task that is truly heroic.

Can we believe this destiny for Man?  
That all those who will listen and obey  
Shall quit the humdrum of the also ran,  
Born and reborn in Christ on Christmas Day.

Christmas 1980

## Beyond violence

Through centuries the spirit speaks  
And violence cannot stifle  
In short decades the themes of truth  
By casual bomb or rifle.

Nor shall the threat of atom war  
Or holocaust control  
The destiny of mortal man  
And his immortal soul.

Alone he shall not lose his grasp  
Despite a tyrant State  
Which seeks to drown all protest  
And organise it's hate.

Nor shall a vote alone uphold  
The standard of the free,  
But every waking minute spent  
On what a man should be.

Beyond all understanding  
God's peace for which we pray.  
Through Christmases in conflict  
He says 'I am the way'.

Christmas 1981

## **Personal celebrations and memories**

Anniversaries come and go, but some may be remembered by issues which were current at the time or experiences shared. Every family is different perhaps just as every individual is unique. But those who are tempted to think the days of the nuclear family are numbered, may find the evidence hard to come by. It is certainly not something which can be revealed by statistics.

For John and Jean at their wedding

Great streams of energy,  
Which power the drive and thrust  
That carry men to space,  
To rise in triumph or to fall in dust.

These to some are marvels  
Who seek not the secret of life;  
The fresh moment of wonder  
Each time that a man takes a wife.

For John and Jean the choice  
Is to follow the unknown ways  
Beyond the gilt edged pleasures  
To the God-inspired days.

The destiny we're seeking  
As millions long for a part,  
Shall find its realisation  
As the world walks through your heart.

December 12<sup>th</sup> 1959

For James Turner  
President of the NFU (England & Wales)

The whisper of wind in the trees,  
And the stillness of a summer night:  
There are moments alone with these  
When I glimpse what is hid from men's sight.

Moments when the land speaks her heart  
And the simplest ways are strong  
When her people seek their part,  
And I know the time's not long.

Theirs are the wonders of earth,  
Her fullness of creative scope,  
And who shall enlist their worth  
In the dawn of a new world's hope?

You, who have sprung from Yorkshire dale,  
And the land of granite rock;  
You have a heart that will not quail,  
The flint that will spark the lock.

You shall know as the storm clouds gather,  
And the load seems great indeed,  
That many shall travel together,  
And gay hearts give you speed.

For food shall move this nation  
To the paths that she should tread,  
To live a transformation  
And give millions more than bread.

July 9<sup>th</sup> 1947



For Peter's birthday

A soft December day  
With the gulls behind the plough,  
Moments of recollection  
It's your heart that speaks now.

Speaks to the silence of God  
Where the simplest ways are strong,  
Where fresh green corn is shooting  
Nor asks him yet how long?

As yet no grip of winter,  
Caressed by wind and rain,  
Your ear could hear his whisper  
Yet you ask if there'll be pain?

Hark to the word he's spoken,  
Throw off the cloak you wear,  
The greatness of his wisdom  
Shall presently appear.

"Save you be as children..."  
Those were the words he said.  
Laid in a cattle manger  
Yet wonderfully led.

December 1948

## Our first Christmas in Longlands Farm

Longlands is quiet and breathing,  
With the solitary calm  
Of life's eternal pattern  
In the story of a farm.

Over the stable a star,  
To mark the special birth.  
Shared with the farmyard stock  
This destiny on earth.

Speak to the soul of Britain  
And strike her very will.  
In purity and freedom  
That Christ may enter still.

1963

## My father's 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday

Firm are the fluted pillars  
That have carried it these years,  
And short though is its story  
It has known its hopes and fears.

Set on a hill that all may see,  
It stands come wind or rain  
For all the Squire represents  
And's fought for might and main.

Yet not for him the lesser course,  
His principle runs true,  
In service of the countryside,  
The many not the few.

And though old days are passing  
And times may surely change,  
A sound work stands for ever,  
So the new may not be strange.

For all in Britain that is great  
Has cost us much to build,  
Yet mighty harvests lie ahead  
From a soil truly tilled.

September 12<sup>th</sup> 1944

For my mother

From Whitbourne to the world,  
From nought to eighty eight,  
Your banner clear unfurled,  
Your aim right up to date.

To bring a deeper change  
Than Church or State foresaw,  
The Spirit's mountain range,  
God's word beyond the Law.

February 1972

For a younger generation

What is needed that truth prevails?  
What can shape a new age making?  
The courage that daily assails,  
The stir of fresh passion waking.

To spend and to be spent,  
To sow with a free hand.  
This is the work of creation  
To lift and power this land.

There will be no easier way,  
No chance to hitch a ride.  
Those who spurn revolution  
Will join the long slow slide.

Those who care will seek cure  
Beyond critic or protest;  
Workers in solid rock,  
Yet with bubble and zest.

On the possibility of childlessness.  
For K, Christmas 1966

With Jesus born to walk the earth  
And wonder in the sky,  
The miracles that come to birth  
May light on you and I.

Should children be our heart's desire,  
And the Creator's will,  
No human effort can aspire  
To measure or fulfil.

Instinctive wish to live beyond  
The ways we now may plod?  
Or here and now to forge the bond  
That links our steps with God?

He had the faith to walk the earth  
From cowshed to the cross,  
The miracles that come to birth  
May spring from searing loss.

Uncertain though the steps we tread  
And strong our hearts desire,  
He answers not with stones but bread  
And purifies with fire.

An opening of new perspectives

So many worlds to conquer  
So many gifts to give,  
A deep creative longing,  
The hidden will to live.

The sudden flash of insight,  
The mirror of a truth,  
A road to revelation  
That knows not age nor youth.

The breaking of the old mould,  
The fight to shape the new.  
A moment of uncertainty  
Before the final view.

The end of dull conformity,  
The death of selfish aims,  
No guarantee of victory  
But set to stake high claims.

The doubts lie now behind you,  
The waters are in spate;  
A joy that's all compelling,  
The daring to create.

September 22<sup>nd</sup> 1975

## The marriage bond

All is more precious with you,  
The journey and the end.  
Count not the passing years  
That together we spend!

So much to do or try,  
Scorn the shadow of success,  
Where our human hopes die,  
That God may richly bless.

His is the grace that's given,  
Without counting the cost;  
The painless endeavour  
As new thresholds are crossed.

September 22<sup>nd</sup> 1977

## Wedding Anniversary

Through the kaleidoscope of years,  
A special blessing that one shares;  
To be together.

So much more fun to share a life  
Despite the growth of this world's strife;  
A prize for ever.

A single step upon the way  
May mark the most two hearts can say;  
Of high endeavour.

July 28<sup>th</sup> 1981

To someone who always wanted  
to do more than there was time for!

Beyond the best of birthday wishes  
A morning shoal of silver fishes.  
The threads to knit another year  
Before the autumn leaves are sear.

The ponies win without a care,  
A quality that we can share,  
In sifting all the things to do  
Through God's own mills to just a few.

So time can even be a friend,  
Which never measures journey's end,  
But leads us on to further sight  
And fills our hearts with pure delight,

Birthday wishes September 1985



## To an Indeterminate Age

Count not the passing of the years  
To measure life's design,  
The shadow of your darkest fears  
Can only blur the line.

But clearer dawns your birthday sun  
Despite the autumn's sway,  
And battles still may have their fun  
To light another day.

No earthly cares can suffocate  
So let the spirit dance,  
To shape your steps for all who wait  
And seek a further chance.

## In a Dry Time

Bone dry or brimming to the banks,  
The thread of life is held.  
The faith that holds the serried ranks  
From dust has somehow welled.

A gift out of the desert's space,  
Unmeasured in the gauge,  
Can quicken with an unseen Grace:  
The thirsty soul assuage.

Beyond all rhyme and reason  
Or need of some success,  
The heart survives this season:  
Can still the spirit bless.

Thanks to my wife

It's sixty years along the road,  
A new home in the making.  
So practical to take the load,  
And always first awaking!

I owe you more than heart can say,  
Through nearly half your life.  
A debt I cannot hope to pay  
To dogsbody or wife!

But greater are the gifts of God  
This year will render yet,  
In tune with all your soul's delight,  
Achieved without a fret.

Sept 22 1990

Greeting a new home on retirement

A lovely home your labour's made,  
That speaks to all who come.  
And all your myriad efforts  
Are experienced in the sum.

Count not the passing of the years,  
Experience brings its dower,  
When all the jungle of green leaves  
Burst out in glorious flower.

September 22<sup>nd</sup> 1989

Thirty Years On  
Our thirtieth wedding anniversary.

How precious to belong to one another,  
To share a path so long as life has breath,  
An open heart that has no need of cover,  
But beats secure until the bridge of death.

Such love can take us through the strains and stresses,  
Across the lands that we are led to roam.  
For thirty years a pattern that He blesses,  
A shaft of light that brings us back to home.

Retirement has brought a new creation,  
A quickening joy to match still active pace.  
The home that holds our hope for every nation,  
May only grow as mirror of His Grace.

Old friends and strangers share the faith we build,  
God's gift to nourish all the lands he's made.  
The spirit means the hungry shall be filled,  
This love will show we need not be afraid.

July 28<sup>th</sup> 1992

Shortly after the death of Kristin's mother.

Among the things remembered,  
Is always might have been.  
The things that passed unnoticed,  
Are now so clearly seen.

They do not come to plague us,  
Though we wish to live again,  
A failure of attention  
That could lift a passing pain.

A challenge coming daily  
For stranger or for friend.  
To make the greatest effort,  
A beginning or an end.

In Time there is no knowing,  
The day to part is here,  
So every present moment  
Is a moment to hold dear.

In frailties un-numbered,  
The Spirit's hold is strong,  
To heal every weakness  
Nor turn a right to wrong.

June 23<sup>rd</sup> 1991

For Edward

When Welshman married with a Scot,  
Great grandfather a line begot.  
Which in the Whitbourne soil grew  
More English than the graveyard yew.

So Edward schooled to fill a role,  
Could greet success with heart and soul.  
Yet under challenge showed the spine  
To strike out on a different line.

Where ashes of a precious pride,  
Could help him cross the class divide:  
Support the best but not conform,  
So cast out fear and face the storm.

In Erica he found a mate,  
An anchor in this new estate:  
Which finally described with relish,  
No muse is needed to embellish.

Big brother's shadow, distant seemed,  
Till on the farm I found we're teamed.  
But Edward's thrust to seek God's end,  
Made me his partner and his friend.

These weeks have seen a life fulfilled,  
In hope and distant soils tilled.  
His pleasure, seeing others reap,  
And with his God a date to keep.

April 13<sup>th</sup> 1996

## **New Paths and Purposes**

Countries, like people can inspire poetry either through experiences lived there or through perceptions of their destiny. Sometimes this is reflected in a news item or current event which suggests more than it actually tells. A change of direction may soon become apparent, but the mechanisms of motivation may only appear much later. A variety of explanations may be advanced, and the poet may be forgiven for contributing his own perceptions.

Indeed it is a pity that such subjects seem to be less commonly a theme for poetry to-day. It reflects perhaps a certain retreat of faith in the face of scepticism. A timidity about affirming positive propositions that are too big for human shoulders to bear. Yet many such affirmations still ring out from the past despite at times becoming a butt for mockery.

Yet faith in the future and in human destiny needs to survive. That is sufficient justification for attempts to put it into words.

Beyond the reach of ambition

What shall we build on earth?  
To what aspire?  
The milestones from birth  
Can only tire.

To battle through the years,  
The spirit unyielding?  
Drowning out all the fears,  
The pride we are shielding.

Where is the spirits stumbling?  
Or the proofs of success?  
In moments most humbling,  
The weakest to bless.

Grace that each is given,  
A prize without earning.  
How much we have striven  
Yet still the heart's yearning.

Moment on a roof top  
With the world at your feet.  
Possession is a sop,  
But possessed is more sweet.

September 22<sup>nd</sup> 1988

## Preparing for the 1990s

A Christmas wish to measure need.  
To know that freedom's discipline  
Can match the growth of rampant seed.  
In breakdown order can begin.

A distillation of the years  
Can pledge the lives laid down for truth,  
Dissolve a repetition's fears,  
Bring back the surest hopes of youth.

To leave the measurement of cash,  
The ancient lure of market deals.  
To strike out all alone and rash,  
The measure of a heart that feels.

Democracy's a world to win,  
With many ways to reach the goal.  
Man may not recognise a twin,  
Till looking deep into his soul

To know that Christ has walked the earth,  
Perception of a life to be,  
The promise of today's rebirth,  
The constant bid to turn a key.

This is a way no man can own.  
The unmarked footsteps of the blessed  
May dash a foot upon a stone,  
But risking all, remain possessed.

December 1989



## Facing the Facts

Born in pain, and born in hope,  
That's the human horoscope:  
Reaching soon beyond our sight  
Star of beauty or of blight.

The deepest wellspring of our acts  
Undoes the peace built up on pacts.  
In fatal hurt, and wounded heart  
We cannot face the place to start.

Nor plumb fate's irony to mete  
The 'joy-rider' in the street.  
Make meaningless another dawn.  
When mind and flesh at once are torn.

For though it is God's work we scan  
We're programmed on the works of man;  
And all that man can organise  
Must be remade to his surprise.

To celebrate the spirit's way  
In silence or in what we say,  
The struggle of the human will  
May be redeemed and so fulfil.

Let the random cry complain  
Of the things we can't explain.  
But banish off the face of earth  
The sins which dog us from our birth.

November 1991

## The Challenge to the West

Within our hearts the greatest threat to peace,  
Perhaps a threat to life itself allowed:  
Values cut down, aborted to our will,  
The compromise to keep our pride unbowed.

The dissidents have earned their right to speak,  
Spared to impart their words before the grave.  
Harsh discipline has shaped their word of truth,  
Have we the grace to let their lesson save?

A word from Poland ventures to suggest  
That Western ways can wilfully delay  
The end we long for to a dead régime,  
Unheeding of the Power to whom they pray.

Peace, perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee,  
Who draws his power from a faith restored,  
Clear-sighted through the battles fought at home  
To understand why truth must be a sword.

Christmas 1983

God's hand in history.

Christmas in chaos or in civil war  
Seems to the faithless to deny their right.  
Who then will rally to the spirit's poor?  
What eyes will see beyond the bounds of sight?

Those who do not find in history  
Something far beyond their knowing.  
Simple issues stripped of mystery  
Pave the road to where we're going.

Life's short years invest for ever  
In the splendour of the truth.  
Sacrifice and high endeavour  
Will no longer seem uncouth.

No database enshrines divine creation,  
A million microchips match not its span.  
God's strategy sheds light in every nation,  
To trust the steps of each obedient man.

My brother's keeper

Christmas - the source of God's own love,  
The greatest strength in which we live.  
That knowledge wrests our eyes above  
To learn what makes men give and give.

To learn the love of Mother T,  
Light years beyond our Charity.  
The death to set a nation free,  
That priest of solidarity.

Yet those who want to enter in,  
Must know they can't abolish sin.  
Or offer just to lend a hand  
And not go on to understand.

The basic need to give our will  
And tread the path that leads uphill,  
Not to some summit of success  
But changes broken men can bless.

That blessing of the Christmas night,  
Which spoke to hearts through simple sight.  
The timeless ransom of the pure,  
God's true reflection, makes us sure.

Christmas 1988

(Mother T of course refers to Mother Teresa, and the Priest  
of solidarity to Father Popiluesko who was murdered by the  
authorities in Poland.)

## The gifts of Grace

A purpose stripped of selfish aims  
Piercing every complication,  
Reaches the heart of our motives  
Which so often hold back all creation.

Not for us the vain struggle of wills,  
The assertion of power,  
When only an action in faith  
Can unfold the full flower.

The flower of a life's fulfilment,  
A destiny granted at birth,  
The gift of a walk with Jesus,  
What it means to inherit the earth.

Christmas 1984

### An acceptance

Love is the gift of Christmas,  
No gunman can efface.  
The everlasting glory  
Of God's fulfilling grace.

The source of deepest purpose,  
Turns suffering aside,  
An all embracing discipline,  
Love cannot be denied.

Possessed by such a vision,  
We reach not, though we strive  
To touch eternal secrets.  
God's gift - to be alive.

Christmas 1987

## Whitbourne

Could Whitbourne be a window on the world?  
A wellspring of the wonders still to be?  
Where quite unheeded by the news reports  
A challenge met ensures that men stay free.

Men who can feel the strength of this red earth,  
Were granted life not just for conservation:  
Theirs to fight on and joyfully create  
The character that still can save a nation.

Man's history may be written in our walls,  
The timbers which can trace the hands of time,  
But still Man's spirit longs for worlds uncharted  
Beyond the trails a soaring jet can climb.

Beyond such figures writing in the sky  
Where trace is quickly lost of pain or pity,  
The quality of man's decision rests,  
An instant heartbeat from eternity.

August 5<sup>th</sup> 1972

## The Millennium

The quest of souls in silence deep,  
Who have a destiny to keep.  
A bid to tap that hidden power,  
Which brings a desert into flower.

To celebrate two thousand years,  
The sensitive may start with tears.  
But joy or grief and all we feel,  
Are meant to shape the tempered steel.

The cutting edge, a sword of truth,  
Which wakes again the fires of youth.  
To serve a purpose placed in pawn:  
Redeemed, reclaimed and so reborn.

1996

## People and Countries

Sailing out of Cork harbour

The hidden passion of the seas,  
That blow and boil, then calm,  
Can heal the wounded spirit  
With its own beloved balm.

Though business may be faltering  
And tempers growing short,  
The sea remains a challenge  
Where realities are taught.

But greater now for Ireland  
The vision needs to be,  
Not just to hold and keep the faith  
But live in victory.

Her sons too need that vision  
That lifts beyond routine,  
That has them up and running  
For the glory they have seen.

May the rebirth of new passion  
In Irish hearts begin,  
Till all lost causes dwindle  
And every fight's a win.

1967



## Australia

Once banished to the ends of Earth  
Another life to live,  
Few saw in history's chancy birth  
A land with worlds to give.

We wonder at her mighty space  
Where people seem so few,  
What will the writing finger trace  
As early settlers grew?

The aborigine may lead  
And touch a million hearts,  
For all of Asia sow the seed  
From which new order starts.

The power of a free heart's force  
Can pour across the dam:  
A passion from a healing source  
Redeem in Viet Nam.

Through China's half seen puzzle  
By India and Japan,  
The spirit none can muzzle  
Will move from man to man.

Unlikely to the men of old  
The shape of such a task,  
But trust Australia to be bold  
Beyond what we could ask.

1972

Written for the Royal Thai Army on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of their final victory at Khao Khor. 1989.

This army trains to meet a need,  
On barrack squares it can't be drilled.  
It's strategy to sow new seed.  
An army which can fight and build.

The crushing weight of endless war,  
And villages with people killed,  
To live our lives we must restore.  
An army which can fight and build.

Lets celebrate the engineers  
In power, roads and water skilled,  
Who calm the war torn farmers' fears.  
An army which can fight and build.

At dawn in silent meditation,  
The soul is with the spirit filled.  
An endless source of true creation,  
For Armies which can fight and build.

## Getting to know Thailand

Land of the smile said to be,  
the open face of secrecy.  
We strain the eyes but look in vain  
for pointers that will make it plain.  
We follow on the temple bell,  
but only find an empty shell,  
The mystic slips beyond our range,  
and leaves no blueprint for a change.

Yet still we seek that heart and mind  
get glimpses of another kind.  
Because we learn to love this land,  
may yet begin to understand.  
The simplest things within our reach,  
lead on to help us learn or teach.  
No need to have to hope and wait,  
but with some purpose meditate.

July 1991

## Political panorama

The flowers have withered in China,  
Though Westerners flock from afar,  
Professing to find a new order,  
But perhaps just misreading her star.

In India the tides of her freedom  
May seem both to ebb and to flow;  
But thousands of uncharted sources  
Initiate things that will grow.

So free are the patterns of giving  
Bereft of position or power,  
The proof of a democrat's living  
Emerges through faith into flower.

Can Europe speak now to her nations,  
To those whose response may seem least.  
Whose chains both in fact and in fancy  
May await a new star in the East?

A continent's Christian tradition  
No longer imprisoned in stone,  
May cause men to rise up in wonder  
At the simple truths millions have known.

## One world

To one man of science the Universe seems  
More like a great thought, than a great machine.  
Air waves alive with myriad beams,  
Carrying clear messages but unseen.

We have perhaps to look beyond our culture,  
To find the faith which puts this world at one.  
Nothing computed in systems structure,  
But fresh perceptions of what could be done.

A civilisation to come for all the world,  
A sense of service rising in the West.  
So other cultures warm to love unfurled,  
The simple summit of the human best.

Then truly faith is one, the world to win,  
Beyond the form of temple, mosque or church.  
Ploughing straight through our common state of sin,  
To crown with purpose those who vainly search.

We come in awe to contemplate Christ's birth,  
With fun and family to mark the day.  
Possessed by truth He offered all the earth,  
Our lives must tell much more than we can say.

Christmas 1992 (Inspired by Sir James Jeans)

Thoughts at Asia Plateau  
India

Timeless, eternal, while the millions grow,  
The human brain pursues its explanations,  
Those who are reaping, think not what they sow,  
The anarchy of mortal man's creations.

Timeless the truth of what one man can be,  
Who steels his will so that the spirit wakes.  
The plain example of a Gandhiji  
Who stands alone, and fears not man's mistakes.

What is computed by the best machine  
May count no more than what men seek in stars.  
The naked truth may pass us by unseen  
A bogus doom enclose behind its bars.

Scorched by the sun, and marked by life and death  
You need no words to read the face of men,  
All that they know may rise in living faith,  
Marching the path of destiny again.

April 1978

Dr Patil's farm at Walwe, India

Banana and coconut palm outline the yard,  
The Khilar cattle have a desultory feed.  
The dog lies flat - no need for mid-day guard,  
Beyond, the Krishna river flows with leisure speed.

Source of the sugar cane, the vegetables and fruit,  
Which mark this green oasis on a browning plain.  
Creative wealth, that ever with fresh green tips shoot,  
Outstripping all whose longed for plenty waits for rain.

The mighty factory stilled for its monthly clean,  
Pleases the eye with height and light of good design.  
While silence lends surprise enchantment to the scene,  
To concrete and industrial power of line.

The brothers Patil till the land of years,  
Inherited through time by all the four.  
The doctor with his hospital in town,  
The other three, held firm by country lore.

What is the bridge to unify again,  
This stream's divergence as the pressures grow?  
India shall seek it in the needed rain,  
To reap a crop that few have sought to sow.

Melted the feelings that seemed so hard to tame  
Gone in the healing warmth of sun's accepting choice:  
Traditional yet nothing still the same  
Save quiet persistence of the inner voice.

The mango tree has seen it all go by,  
Through all those years since father's hand had sown.  
Scorched by the flames it breathes a soundless sigh,  
But sets its fruit for boys to manhood grown.

Sunday, January, 1987

## Passing moment in Poland

A sadness sits on Solidarity,  
The exultation dies, is drowned.  
Conflicting ends in measureless disparity  
Mark not the place where answers might be found.

Theirs is the day whom power has spoiled,  
Ideals burst, tin Gods that guard success.  
They tread the paths wherein a nation toiled,  
Nor found a soul with any words to bless.

They hold the strings of hidden power, to mime  
A Mafia in the body politic.  
If nothing pays you simply take to crime,  
A leadership that leaves the country sick.

Yet in another space and age I found,  
The same ideas could live in sacrifice.  
Ignored, derided from these rules unbound  
They fought with vigour till they paid the price.

Man thrives on battle for what e'er he gives,  
That knowing not to peak or valley sent.  
The flame of passion burns in all he lives  
His purpose firm, the will can not be bent.



## A Polish patriot

The Polish patriot has special passion,  
Which in disorder burns beyond the law.  
A courage which can scout the current fashion  
Nor question what a faith is granted for.

This freedom could seem mired in confusion,  
With money making motives in dispute  
Reality has shattered much illusion,  
Proving the Poles a great deal more astute.

One writer gave his friend a strange correction,  
Asked if his spirit chafed at life today:  
'One of those times Poland has God's protection.'  
He left us wondering what he meant to say.

His life full spent without much thought of God,  
He didn't look towards the Polish Pope.  
Yet seeking truth he caught a hidden nod,  
Which set his heart on paths divine in scope.

(Inspired by an obituary of Gustaw GOTTESMAN)

Two voices from Russia.

Eternity no longer stirs her blood.  
With sense of nationhood or glory.  
The busy Martha's foot falls with dull thud.  
Can Mary's listening heart revive her story?

Novosibirsk .. self-confident city,  
Where men of science shaped the world to be.  
A wise professor warns us not to pity.  
Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy give the key.

Old Russia plumbed the depth of evil lives,  
Repentance proved the road to resurrection.  
Lit by heroic souls, where one man strives,  
A way is laid for wholly new direction.

Conscience awakes beyond the throw of dice.  
Easter illuminates hard paths they trod.  
The Russian spirit pours through breaking ice,  
To shape a future in the hands of God.

November 1994

(Inspired by the words of Professor Grigori Pomerants ..  
Moscow and Professor Vladimir Suprun .. Novosibirsk)

## South Africa

Today the bitter foes are reconciled.  
He told me it's the norm.  
Years that our weak humanity defiled,  
Unloosed beyond the storm.

A tide turned back against its history.  
A miracle they said.  
But in this onward march no mystery,  
For these by love are led.

Communities of each unhappy city,  
Wherein the poorest teemed,  
Poured out a balm beyond the price of pity.  
A destiny redeemed.

(Inspired by the surprise of a British farmer visiting South Africa for the first time in the wake of Mandela's release from prison)

## Forgiveness

Bishop Tutu gave thanks for surprises.  
They said he demanded the wronged forgive.  
Maybe he knew the truth still comprises  
A painful road through the waste land to live.

For men have turned from the killing fields,  
Saying we have not made any mistakes.  
Nowhere the depth of scorned bitterness yields,  
But to spirits such martyrdom makes.

Nelson Mandela wrote after release,  
That the idea of an all party plan,  
Came from an unexpected source of peace,  
A communist leader and a white man.

We know that the heart has its reasons,  
And the spirit enlists heart and mind.  
To place in a man for all seasons  
God's will which with blood was once signed.

December 1997

## Miscellaneous observations

### Farewell to arms

Those who reject the sacrifice of war  
Or count as nought the trails traced in blood,  
May wonder what life's harshness takes us for  
Or call our pains as counterfeit and dud.

Yet even those who worship nature's ways  
Must dip their fingers in a world confined,  
The lips of beauty but for empty praise  
The purpose still much more than Pan designed.

The contradictions stretch beyond our knowing,  
However bright the warm emotion's light,  
And who can say what waste must mark their going  
Or leave no future for our dying fight?

No passion spent, where spirits daily surge  
To pierce the unread secrets of tomorrow,  
The meaningless and meaningful can merge  
To shape again beyond the shores of sorrow.

After reading Howard Spring, 1974

## Reflection on Blood Sports

A placard and the earnest face  
Of those who would protect our race:  
Who watching Attenborough on telly  
Ignore how Nature fills its belly.  
We share the wonder that he brings,  
The myriad ways of living things,  
But push our species through the gate  
That separates from Nature's fate.  
To make the lion and the lamb  
Accept a false Utopian sham.  
To shape some artificial clone  
That we have viewed but never known.  
Isaiah's vision for mankind,  
An ordered will in God to find.  
For those who walk in Nature's ways  
May find a tongue to utter praise.  
Even temptation to abuse  
May tempered be to kinder use.  
The vein of philosophic man  
Who finds no answers in a can,  
But seeks unpackaged truth and free  
As far as inward eye can see.  
Perhaps directed from above  
The paths that lead to deeper love,  
Where life and Nature run their course  
At last to bring us to their source.

October 1992 Soil Erosion

It doesn't really happen in Britain,  
A settled farming is so well sustained.  
For centuries the soil has met our need,  
Though no one knows last night how hard it rained.

The brooks are swollen running muddy brown,

So thick a colour that no sharp eyed trout  
Can see the fly, which may be swept at speed  
With all that soil, to bring a moment's doubt.

Or further north where march winds blow things dry  
It takes no hurricane to raise the dust,  
In storm so thick its hard to see to drive,  
But soon enough its gone and no one's fussed.

But those who wander overseas to wilder climes  
Can see the drama of ravine and rock,  
Where earth is stripped so bare, no soil is left  
To dull or to deny a soul in shock.

Such is the impact of man's carelessness  
On nature's ways, the wisdom of the years  
Is overthrown to meet a people's growth.  
Renewal moves but slowly through the gears.

A century may measure some decline  
In soils given to wheat and wheat and wheat.  
But will some sixth sense bring us into line,  
Before fresh millions wonder what's to eat?

December 1987

## The Shetlands

The call goes out, disaster stalks,  
With swelling floods of oil.  
The sea birds die in blackened shapes,  
And men prepare for toil.

The newspapers rehearse the scene,  
With television too.  
The pounding waves prevent the acts  
Of would be saviours' crew.

The broken ship has emptied all,  
And still the storm winds blow.  
The clean-up services await  
To do what best they know.

A morning comes when all is past,  
Nature has run her course.  
Men start to see a clear new sea  
And ponder on its source.

For men must strive to turn their steps  
To walk in nature's way.  
To face surprise before their eyes  
Where humans own no sway.

Jan 1993, In the wake of the Braer oil tanker



## Spring's challenge

Unforced the rising of the spring,  
As daybreak moves the birds to sing.  
No promise, but eternal fact  
That takes its course howe'er men act.

The birth of myriad living things,  
The buzzard planing on his wings,  
Are glimpsed as part of nature's stride  
Past those who praise or who deride.

The most a man can hope to do,  
Is see this pulsing season through.  
To feel the sap within him rise  
Nor set his face against surprise.

The ultimate unknown of life  
Whose certainty is bred in strife,  
Uncaged and far beyond man's measure,  
Fulfilling life's elusive pleasure.

1991

## Heaven

Heaven is the time when we go home to God.  
We stumble, skip or fall, but no longer plod.  
The moment of understanding, seen face to face,  
Known ways suspended in a free fall through space.

No earth left to mark the ending of our race  
Nor gravity's pull defied only by grace.  
An unexpected union with the best of our hope,  
The overwhelming gift which enlarges our scope.

None sees in the broken body or violence done,  
The light and the warmth that may lie beyond the sun.  
Beyond judgement and beyond our perceived goal,  
The entry to eternity of another soul.

Heaven is the greatness of God ungrasped in life,  
A union in the spirit beyond the bounds of strife.  
It is not a destination or final station,  
But the immortal soul takes on a new creation.

Summer 1992

### 38<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary.

Gone are the energies of youth,  
But not the passions ignited.  
We stumbled on the path of truth,  
But still our hearts delighted.

Onward and upward the way,  
Though not to be measured in time.  
The wonder of a wedding day,  
Beyond the wit or shape of rhyme.

July 28<sup>th</sup> 2000

#### On being tired out

To know when weary to the bone,  
The pleasure to lie down alone.  
To know beyond all recompense  
The last collapse of swirling sense.

The burner of the midnight oil  
Will never know the pains of toil,  
When mind and body ache to be  
Beyond the reach of gravity.

And those who pass to older years  
Though sorely tried, may have their  
fears  
That they may now have quit the  
league  
Which knows renewal through fatigue.

Jan 1989

## Voices to be heeded

Our critics from another world  
Who spoke from prison cells,  
We're pleased to call eccentric  
Warped by their private hells.

We shrug away their honesty  
For nothing is 'not done',  
We follow where desire leads  
But find life little fun.

Men who can fight from each day's dawn  
Nor yield the spirit's doubt,  
Know what it is to blunt the thorn  
And what life is about.

November 1985