

# John Paul Kirkham

## Afterglow of Zephyrs

Incandescent Extended Edition

Collected  
Anti War Poems



# Afterglow of Zephyrs

Incandescent Extended Edition

**Collected  
Anti War Poems**

John Paul Kirkham

Cover by Jan Kalinski

First published in Great Britain 2022  
revised and extended 2nd edition 2024

Copyright © 2024 John Paul Kirkham

The moral right of the author has been asserted in  
accordance with the Copyright,  
Designs and Patents Act 1988

All rights reserved

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a  
retrieval system or transmitted in any form, or by any  
means, without the prior permission in writing of the author.

[www.johnpaulkirkham.com](http://www.johnpaulkirkham.com)

Selected books by  
John Paul Kirkham

*Poetry*  
In Violet  
Zig Zag Road  
Rebel Hearts

*Autobiography*  
I Saw Her Standing There

*Biography*  
Clare of Assisi  
Gemma Galgani of Lucca

## Introduction

During English lessons at school we studied the great war poets and as Wilfred Owen was deemed a local Birkenhead boy he rated very high on our curriculum. Later we would discover Siegfried Sassoon, Robert Graves and be moved by Lawrence Binyon's lines:

*They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old*

*Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.*

*At the going down of the sun and in the morning*

*We will remember them.*

In 2012 we temporarily left city life behind for three years and I spent those thirty six months writing in East Anglia's quiet northern fenland landscapes and hang out in Rupert Brooke's Granchester during the long summer English days by the River Cam. This would shed a new light into understanding the futility and deep pain that war causes.

For us today, conflicts around the globe continue to rage and we are accustomed to daily news bulletins arriving on our TV's and mobile phones. But for many including

myself who grew up in a relative peace time there were many tales told by my parents who as children lived through World War Two and my Grandfather's who fought in the Boer War and World War One and their stories are poetically recalled in this book.

Whilst I was revising this incandescent extended edition that contains many new and exclusive poems I rediscovered and repeatedly played the 1968 cult classic album "*Odessey and Oracle*" by The Zombies. From out of nowhere the song "*Butcher's Boy (Western Front 1914)*" immediately halts you in your tracks and for two minutes you are transported to the World War 1 trenches with a mesmerising and haunting mellotronic accompaniment about a young butcher's boy taking the King's shilling only to have to endure and administer a different kind of horrific slaughter whilst those far removed back home still sleep comfortably at night and dare to preach about how fighting was the right and just thing to do on the battlefields. I contacted Chris White who was The Zombies bass guitarist and composer and

he very kindly gave permission for me to use this as part of my introduction.

War by its nature is visual, brutal and shocking but hopefully put into words on a page the poems here that feature events from the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries and range from tangential obliqueness to being provocative and uncomfortably detailed may give the reader a more meditative or contemplative reflective understanding of just how fragile humanity is and always has been and so this new version of the book is in effect an anti war - conflict collection.

I was born in the 1950s, growing up in Merseyside as part of the peace and love generation training at the Laird School of Art in Photography and Design which by a strange twist of fate today the photography annexe of the art college is now the local headquarters of the British Legion.

John Paul Kirkham is a poet, writer, photographer living in the city of Liverpool and is the author of over twenty books and collaborations including the autobiography *I Saw Her Standing There*, further books of poetry and is the official biographer of two Italian saints: Clare of Assisi and Gemma Galgani of Lucca. John Paul has written journal editorial, film and book reviews and has appeared both on television and radio.

## **Further acknowledgements**

To the band Hawkwind and its founder member Dave Brock who enthusiastically gave permission to use the songs “*Hurry on Sundown*” from the 1970 album “Hawkwind” and “*The Wind*” from the 2017 album “*Into The Woods*” to be reproduced as a prologue and epilogue.

To the band Saxon and its founding member and lead vocalist Biff Byford who gave permission to use the words of “*Kingdom of The Cross*” from the 2015 album “*Battering Ram*” as an intermission sequence as we take this journey and try to comprehend the meaningless quantities of war.

At the end of the book you will find an appendix of closing notes that without interpreting a poem or its meaning nevertheless briefly describes the background or inspiration that led to some of these poetic tales.

## *Prologue*

*Well hurry on sundown*

*See what tomorrow brings*

*Hurry on sundown*

*See what tomorrow brings*

*Well it may bring war*

*Any old thing*

*Look into your mind's eye*

*See what you can see*

*Look into your mind's eye*

*See what you can see*

*There's hundreds of people*

*Like you and me*

*Oh, hurry on sundown*

*Hurry on sundown*

*(Hawkwind: Hurry on Sundown)*

## Afterglow

The sky is plutonium turquoise

The child's eyes and hands  
sense the colours and textures  
of wood ...  
concrete ...  
metal ... turning to dusty rust  
the materials that built our world

In his hands  
a toy bear with fractured limbs  
offers some false comfort of survival and hope  
but the last ships have sailed  
with no clear horizon  
on the ocean's infinite waves

The child is left as one ...  
gazing  
into a sun slowly turning into  
a blackening disc

## A New Clear Day

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

People caught ...

fraught ...

unaware

running in the dust

of a blistering heat

odours arose to dull the senses

a pain ...

a pounding

and then

..... serene

## All For An Empire

All for an empire  
loyalty and lies  
setting sail by the moon  
at the turn of the tide

Battles in the sand dunes  
fought for an empire  
landings at dawn  
thrusting forth the sons fire

Charging and crawling  
through wire and trenches  
all for an empire  
and hearts that are wrenched

All those left behind  
touched no more and the reason why  
all for an empire  
a plume of ash in a blue sky

## All For An Empire - Part II

All for an empire  
conscripted to hellfire  
those who fought  
and thought  
and died for a king ... for peace ... for freedom  
honourably remembered and rightly so  
on some memorial obelisk  
within a quiet country parish green or churchyard  
victims of deception and death

But beneath these glorious trees of an English Eden  
buried deep lies  
the scandal of those who lied and died  
and left behind their teenage brides  
for what Haig termed ignoble crimes  
and shame on Major too  
to deny the final rights so due

Shell shocked fatigued and weary worn  
from mental shrapnel all around  
execution for the coward  
dishonourable death their fair reward  
to perish on another tree of staken oak  
murdered there by friends not foes

Given twelve hours to write and pray  
a scandal dammed to disobey  
six armed men at break of day  
set before the seal of fate  
tied blindfold to that oaken stake

The echo of their rifle shots  
into some young sons bleeding heart  
dawn chorus fearful flies the lark  
mainly conscripts manly boys  
the 6.00am innocent sacrifice  
all for an empire  
loyalty and lies

## **Ariana**

A foreign land times are hard  
politician's shuffle cards  
east or west has a better hand  
what about the people in a foreign land

A highway heading north leads to heaven  
a child puts a rose in an AK47  
the days are cold the skies are blue  
there is a man on the mountain watching you

People queue all day for a loaf of bread  
a soldier's belly's full with a piece of lead  
Ariana waits with her DC10  
she's the last one out with the all the president's men

## **Arm in Alms**

Arm in arm ... lets arm an army

arming theirs ... harming ours

Are we the hosts? or are we the hostiles?

selling arms and preaching peace

Alms for the poor, arms for the powerful

listen to the man for anything is possible

Fighting for a cause or dancing for your master

fuel for our engines to drive us to disaster

A man of peace talks to liberate

whilst forces wait to seal his fate

There are plenty of shells but no mother of pearl

as we follow a light to the end of the world

## **Before Bill Popped His Clogs**

Bill my other grandad popped his clogs in the fifties  
in his 50s  
before I were born

Lying about his age  
defying the law  
keeping the law  
sailing up the Yangtze  
on the HMS Dragonfly  
before the war

Deserting legally the navy  
instead a runway navvy  
fiddling with Bristol Bulldogs  
and other nefarious schemes got you discharged  
not quite honourably  
who else can say they served and survived of sorts  
in three of the three forces

You deserted again your family  
when your son was born  
and died of a hare lip  
running away to drift  
blagging and bagging your way  
to become Bob Hope's and Bing Crosby's caddie  
leaving your dad to plaster alone at home  
and business to crumble

A move next door but one to Lowry in Mottram  
becoming his friend for a time  
a model for a while  
sitting in Piccadilly Gardens on that bench  
bowler hat in a corner  
and the man on the wall but no-one ever knew  
apart from the red carnation  
flowering from a breast pocket

An adventurous life some may say  
it was years smoking tea leaves that did you in the end  
I have a photocopy of a photo  
rare so rare an image  
of a old looking northern war worn man in his fifties  
holding a pint to the camera  
Guinness ... mild ... or brown ale I can't tell  
its monochrome  
and before I were born

## Bikini Atoll

The fireball red cloud serpents and plumes into an  
almighty fist

X-Ray blast ionisation  
descending on the local population

A ring of blue turns for an instant into foaming steam  
under luminescent skies  
the tortured landscape dies

North Pacific streams of wind  
skim and shift the toxic sands  
now where only poison grows  
for miles around the concrete coffin dome

Megatons ... strontium and all is forever done  
ugly bunkers all deserted  
on this perpetual graveyard of the doomed

The seas are seized with caesium  
plants and race deformed  
wildlife fish and children  
radiate and glow as dusk falls  
and all failed  
for thinking about winning an un-winnable war

## Chelsea Pensioner in a Chinese Restaurant in Greenwich

Sitting alone in a corner of "The Vietnam Restaurant"

I thought it was Father Christmas

he looked like Father Christmas anyway

Dakota red coat ... cuff trims and bushy beard

I heard him order a pork bun dim sum

and some more ... sweet and sour

I wanted to thank him for

fighting for

in a war

but I somehow got distracted

by his arriving plate of hot sizzling beef

Well done ... well cooked I saw

not like meat that drips blood

he's probably seen enough of that

I struggled to guess his age  
calculating by wars fought  
Sword Beach ... Korea or Aden maybe

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

## Coup

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

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

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

Mortars and rockets overhead  
children huddle together on rags for beds

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

## Damn That Torpedo

A slow reverse from Pier 54 into the Hudson River  
elegantly turned by twin tugs  
into the pale May midday hazy New York sun  
steaming and stoked ready for a calm hometown run

Waiting ... waiting the stalker bides his time ...

U20

the terror laden tubes of menace  
just ten past two ... ten miles from shore  
perfect light ... perfect strike ... starboard dive  
cold the water inward flows

Shouts and screams

confusion reigns

lifeboats crash

and crush the rush

choking cries

pulled down and petrified

Hordes diving like rats from their gilded cage  
rivets creak and pop  
snagging the clambering drop  
turbine's hum louder  
propeller blades rising out of the sea  
to tangle ... mangle and slice  
a humming orchestra of death

A cold blooded enemy watches  
and records its victory  
and slinks away to the west to deeper waters

As the masted deck  
glides relentlessly to stricken depths  
the last passenger  
Barbara Anderson aged just two  
lost and clinging to a submerging deck  
is bravely lifted into the arms  
of Purser and Scouser Billy Harkness  
cradling her escape seconds from doom

The stern swings slightly and judders  
before immersing vertically to its seabed grave  
exploding beneath the waves  
releasing a tidal wave of corpses and foam  
a boiling cauldron in a wilderness  
... then a placid sea  
and the wreckage left was only human

Drifting on the tide off Kinsale Head  
the Peel Fleet Wanderers sail into the Irish Sea breeze  
to trawl and catch the surfacing surviving living flotsam  
and amid the weeping for twelve hundred drowned  
a lone voice carries across a setting sun  
*“Damn that Torpedo”*

It's May again and I take a walk  
along Canning Dock waterfront prom  
shielding momentarily my eyes  
from the glinting bronze propeller  
a salvaged savage memory  
memorial in the hazy sun

On the smooth worn cobbles  
a child lays a single Cunard red rose  
that is gently blown to roll  
and tumble away into the Mersey  
sailing away to be reunited with Lusy's lost souls and  
loved ones

## **Dandelions Around Andy's Grave**

The 9th May has come round again  
one of those mid spring days  
that warms the earth  
after last nights rain

Nineteen in 1979

when your body was blasted and shattered  
but you were lost in yesterday's news  
when Manchester Woolies went up in flames  
with another northern rising death toll

That day also affirmed that Brezhnev and Carter would  
sign an agreement limiting nuclear arms  
but nothing has really changed  
and the toll from bombs lives on  
and lives are ripped and torn apart  
and still will be when tomorrow comes

There is a kind of early evening flame orange glow  
on the red and yellow bricks of the buildings of our city  
and in that quietness of unearthly silence  
I sense ... then see ...  
the dandelion heads turned to blowballs  
dancing in a whipped up breeze  
around Andy's grave  
they dip  
then float momentarily  
before their ascension towards a bluer heaven  
drifting and lifting  
like tiny souls  
vanishing into the deep afterglow of the setting sun

## **Execution of Duties**

In a quiet corner of a Staffordshire forest clearing  
the dawn chorus birdsong  
once fearful and long gone has finally returned

Three hundred and six sacrificial stakes  
standing ... innocently ... hauntingly  
and the burden of those weary souls  
finally laid to rest in peace

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

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

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

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

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

Protesting revolution and party unrest  
reclaiming the streets of Budapest

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

## **Ghosts of Culloden**

The Holy Week of Eastertide could not foresee  
the settling of the clan against clan  
when the setting of the sun  
plied sons against sons

The Jacobites last stand for the throne of kings  
weary and hungry at dawns first light  
as pipers played  
caught in canon fire  
pelting rain and musket shot  
brutal bayonets  
striking down two score men a minute  
till the toll of one short hour had driven home the kill

Today outside Inverness  
I take a break and stroll across an empty Culloden Moor  
to the sound of distant car hums  
or maybe drums  
on the wind and faint cries across the gorse and heather

Blades of dagger sharp grass point skyward  
a cluster of ladybirds cling to the tip  
like a drop of clan blood  
in this place of wild haunting nothingness

At the Glenmoriston

I dreamt last night  
of the ghosts of a bonnie prince's men highlanders  
in moonlit Campbell blue  
charging and chanting pipes their cause  
rebel souls seeking revenge  
rebel souls laid to rest

## **Ghosts of The Atlantic**

Able Seaman Adams left Liverpool  
that September of 1940  
bleak grey skies lay ahead  
wild and foamy as the swells heaved  
and the dazzle ships to stern constantly rose and  
crashed back down into the icy waves

Skipper Donal leaves Killybegs today  
ten days a trawling the ocean to sonar the shoals  
his hull housing the creel that holds the wasted Krill  
used to bait the haddock and hake

But today an autumn detour is to be made to Rockall  
throwing a wreath to the west  
to float away under anodyne skies  
putting to rest  
the weeping cold souls of the "Benares"

## Gruelling Grey Skies

Commemoration not celebration  
by the waters edge  
for it has been forty years now  
since the Exocet's struck  
Cunard's Atlantic Conveyor  
causing crew to duck  
and be killed

My mum pleaded with me back then  
not to go to war  
she was safe in that ... you'd never get me near a gun  
after spending my days photographing  
and shooting the graphic horrors  
they had done

Today old men in their sixties  
well not really old  
but forlorn and worn looking  
in stiffened dry cleaned khaki or blue uniforms

withered a bit perhaps around the cuffs and trims  
stand in line at the Pier Head  
like old bamboo shoots  
slightly yellowed at the tips  
wavering under the gruelling grey skies  
as the padre prays with words  
taken away by the late spring blustery wind  
sailing in from the west off our big river

## **Haiku No 13**

Supply arms and yet

Preaching and praying for peace

Fanning the wild flames

## Hiroshima

Looking up to a clear bleached sky I can see  
the grey and black atomic human shadows  
blast etched by intense heat and light  
onto the white washed walls of Hiroshima  
the negative stains of mass destruction

The quietness of the park today is in harmony  
with the gently distant resonating bell  
tolled from dawn to dusk by those who yearn for peace  
as a small group of school children run up to my bench  
and place in my hands their gathered flowers

## In Another Landscape

Why did they lie to us  
parted in these fields of shame  
departing crime to hell's domain

To a place of things we can't control  
to talk about tonight tomorrow we're told  
if by some fluke we may survive another day  
the storm of guns and thunder rages on

Take the darkest night  
and find the light  
so sad to think of home and forever England  
in this brown decaying slaying wilderness  
fair fades the flower in my pocket  
that photograph of Emily  
in another landscape

## Kamchatka

The Sage from the west and the Sifu from the east  
meet outside the high city walls  
under a laden sky awaiting the dawn  
comparing their visions of the night

The air is yellow from the dust borne sunrise  
clouds rolling into thick white waves  
dancing to the tolling bell

Behind a shingle beach  
the wild wind blows away the harsh sharp sand  
revealing the old stone bunker  
open now to the elements  
once a closed confessional sanctuary to guns of war

The Sage and Sifu point their hemlock staffs to the stars  
Kamchatka and the eastern Kuril shakes  
whirlpool to the western depths  
awakes the slumbering Kraken  
chaos as we tamper with destruction

## Kenny's Tank

After all that fishing  
with the pulling in of the pots and lobsters  
to feed the Dorset visitants  
time for a breakdown out of the blue

The stormbringer of thoughts roared  
the tempest of the long dark night  
the western gales would finally bring  
... a peace  
and pieces of shrapnel and shells  
buttons and bones

As rumours raged abound  
stories unfold  
tales untold  
Churchill's paranoia in forty four  
all those years ago ... Overlord ... Utah  
distant places on the doorstep

Shouts and screams  
skimming torpedo's  
straight as a die  
blasting in the early light  
landing craft with strikes  
sailors and soldiers combat the cold blue  
swimming in fear  
sinking to the depths  
in freezing death throes  
survivors sworn to silence  
for decades of shadowed years

For that tank did plunge  
to sink and settle  
upon the soft seabed  
to rest for fifty years  
snagging the trawl boat's nets  
till Kenny's one man mission campaign  
to raise the beast from the doomy gloomy depths

Today in Torcross I take a break and a bag of chips  
to sit on the bank of grass and rocks  
then pat the side of the Sherman tank  
resting on its row of beach cobble stones  
turret and gun facing to the sea  
quietly pointing to the tragedy of war  
a memorial to the 800 lost souls  
of Slapton Sands  
and  
Kenny Small

## Lament of a Yorkshire Maiden

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

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

I saw her sitting there  
old and fair  
upon the Yorkshire stone  
as she had sat and stared  
across the moors  
all those years

about what might have been  
if he had from war returned

## **Last Post**

As the sun sets each evening  
falling over the souls of sons  
a lone bugler blows out  
and plays the “Last Post”

It was beautiful - emotional  
and melancholic  
under that shimmering purple sky  
at the end of the day  
and a gently descending dusk  
enfolding and turning the white gravestones grey

## Lawrence

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

1914 the Government calls  
fit young men  
fighting spirits with strength

A cripple looks in with an offer to help  
maybe making factory bayonets, bullets and shells

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

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

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

## **Letter Writer**

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

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

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

## Midsummer in Granchester

The meadows by the Cam are cut and folded away  
the light grassy dust mingles  
with meadowsweet pale pollen  
fresh from the frothy flowers  
bobbing backlit in a balmy haze dance

English tea and scones  
or buns  
jam and honeyed  
beneath the sweet orchard trees  
cups are raised at ten to three

Remembering those souls and Brook  
who roamed these hallowed grounds and land  
whom have lived and been and gone  
to further pastures wide and high and long  
or rest in Saints Andrew and Mary's graveyard beyond

The village shadows silently lengthen  
retiring and reclining in the garden of the Blue Ball Inn  
to the narcotic buzz of nectar bees  
competing with the hum  
of hovering evensong lawnmowers

## Nagasaki

A burst of rose white light  
seen before the shattering sound  
with its cyclonic echo  
shooting across the plain  
as a tsunami of vaporising destruction

The wave of intense atomic heat rips through windows  
and doors  
tearing flesh from bones  
and turns the youngsters in the classroom to charcoal  
cinder children melted to their desks

The small boy playing in his mountain village cave  
peering through the putrid smoke and dust surveys this  
new kingdom of the slain innocents  
put to death by the Fat Man  
and terror from the once clear skies

He is no more than ten years old as he places his baby  
brother into his rucksack  
flaccid arms and laden head resting in a deathly  
peaceful embrace

A lonely walk across miles of monochrome wilderness  
blackened by fine slate grey falling flakes of dust

He silently and sadly waits his turn outside the  
makeshift Nagasaki crematorium and shuttles forward  
looking straight ahead upright spent and tearless

The Cremator in a white mask takes the dead child by  
his hands and feet and tosses him into the fire  
the flames danced high ...

another momentary burst of burning bright light  
till all that was left was ash

The flames finally burned low like the sun finally  
setting and the boy turned and walked silently away

## Nan's Wars

The men had left the mills that day

for their King's shilling

The Flag Market heaved

as the hordes signed up

to the Preston Pals and Kitchener's brigade

and the girls all waved them off that August afternoon

to adventure and death

in Flanders foundering fields

but the mills would soon be running smoothly again

with a woman's touch

Never again

said the naïve nation

in speeches to end all wars

in vain

and a new King and another coin

The blitz bombs and doodlebugs  
would often stray away from Manchester  
with no shelters in the rows of concrete yards  
and back to backs  
only the hard wooden oak kitchen table  
providing refuge from the whizzes  
and penetrating whistles above  
and a distant near enough miss

Stearin wax tea lights wrapped in flax flame proof paper  
and a kerosene trench lamp grandad brought back from  
the trenches twenty years before would keep the  
darkness away  
behind the blackout shutters  
before the calm of dawn  
listening for the all clear from the air raid wardens and  
Home Guard

Nan was on the Liverpool Gladstone Dock  
that day in May 1945  
and dad was excited to watch a fleet of U-Boats in a  
surrendering flotilla

The crowds wildly waved them in  
not in anger  
but in welcome that the worst and war was over  
and scared and terrified faces on both sides  
might smile once more

## Intermission

*We have now reached the halfway point on our journey through and across wars. Occasionally we are given glimpses of peace and hope but conflict is and always has been ever present somewhere out there in our world. I have visited Flanders in Belgium to help search for someone's final resting place and there is terrible beauty that hangs over the endless rows of immaculately kept white grave stones.*

*In 2015 the great British rock band Saxon released an album called "Battering Ram" and the epic final six minute song is exceptionally hypnotic as it is haunting and becomes a moving memorial to the millions of lost and fallen. I am grateful to Saxon and Biff Byford their lead singer and lyricist for his willing contribution to the book.*

*What is this place across the field*

*Where poppies stretch and sway*

*In Flanders days of war are gone*

*But memories will remain*

*Comrades of their different codes came to fight and die*

*From all sides they stood and fought and fell beneath the sky*

*Where is this land where I am now*

*A million spirits cry*

*A generation loved and lost*

*Never asking why*

*It didn't matter what you told to the general,*

*it's how you died*

*But to your families back at home,*

*you were heroes side by side*

*The unknown soldier never known*

*A cross to mark your grave*

*But we remember what you did*

*In our hearts you will remain*

*Where is this land where I am now*

*A million spirits cry*

*A generation loved and lost*

*Never asking why*

*So wave the flags and say goodbye*

*To a generation lost*

*They are marching out to history*

*To the kingdom*

*The kingdom of the cross*

*A cross the psalm and Flanders lay*

*A generation gone*

*Came to fight the war of the wars*

*The father and the son*

*Marching band cheer of joy*

*Sent you on your way*

*To face the brooding battle fields*

*And lives just thrown away*

*An inch of ground was heavy won and lost*

*Too much a price to pay*

*Young man lost*

*Their future gone*

*That's all there is to say*

*So wave the flags and say goodbye*

*To a generation lost*

*They are marching into history*

*To the kingdom*

*The kingdom of the cross*

*The paper said you'd all be home for Christmas*

*But politicians sang their battle hymn*

*Soon the bones will start the slaughter*

*And the end of innocence will begin*

*There is no one left that made it home*

*Their lives will see no more*

*Gone to meet their fallen friends*

*In Flanders fields of war*

*In the kingdom of the cross*

*A generation gone*

*Remember they were men like us*

*Remember everyone*

*So wave your flags and say goodbye*

*To a generation lost*

*They are marching into history*

*To the slaughter and the loss*

*Remember*

*A generation lost*

*They are marching out together*

*To the kingdom*

*To the kingdom of the cross*

*(Saxon: Kingdom of The Cross)*

## Nightingale's Lamp

Through mud and rain  
and encamped tents  
the troops trudged  
at Crimea's edge

Another war  
Scutari far from home  
defending for ... fighting for ... the alliance empire  
and borders drawn

Under Balaclava vaulted stone ceilings and coves  
Nightingale patrolled her corridors of hope  
by night with her flickering flame of light  
and lantern glow

No longer is it cathedral bells and smells  
but shells and hell  
and the falling snow and sludge and slush  
with a new reign of terror from above  
and terraces of Crimea and Kiev

Families once again torn apart  
border refugees and days of queues  
take bitter sanctuary in and under  
purple brick crypt chambers ... cellars  
basements or metro

A child's white wild eyes  
peering out from a different balaclava  
looks cheerful and confused  
in the deep freezing winter cold  
and in the hesitant wavering shimmering light of the  
power cutting underground  
a strange descending warmth from the overhead storm  
of bombs and fires  
fans the slightly eerie swinging shadows  
off a Nightingale lamp

## **Poppylands**

Above what lies beneath the far country fields  
a plume of ash rises to noble empyrean heights  
as the final pounding and screaming fades into the  
contrite violet twilight sky

Fresh frozen ground thaws each early spring  
and the ploughs furrowing divulges a trenches secret's  
locked away for a century or more  
preserved in deathly silence  
a shattered shuttered shelter

Without family or mourners  
the forlorn fallen finally returns from Flanders  
by train and cortege and the Union Flag  
to the loneliest headland North Norfolk Church  
and a cliff top grave  
carried on a rickety cart down the crunchy gravel path  
... home at last

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

The corporal corpse is lowered to rest again under  
sodden earth

the wild sanguine poppies bend in a bitter easterly  
wailing wind

in remembrance to the end of time

## **Remembrance**

I sit on a quiet bench almost hidden  
in a tiny city centre park  
thinking about those  
who are setting out on their journeys  
condemned even without their knowledge  
by those who condemn ...  
camouflaged by cowardly acts

Where I sit  
I can just hear  
the rumbling hum of the underground  
an enclosed space  
exploding smoky shrapnel  
forcefully tearing  
and pulling flesh from broken bodies  
a final agony in the darkness

It's time to get going  
and let someone else rest awhile  
bringing their lunch hour picnic  
escaping a stressful morning in the office or shopping  
the new city wildflower garden is in full bloom  
whispering ... bobbing in the breeze filtering up from  
the Mersey

## Reconciliation

In the quiet Olberg woods and hills above the  
weaving Rhine Valley  
in it's meandering paths and lanes  
I met a shabby old man at a bus stop

Eager to speak in fast flowing torrents  
I hadn't a clue  
so we talked single sided  
Germanic versus Anglo  
until we slipped into broken English

I mentioned Lancashire the place of my birth  
and then I surrendered to his words "*Blackpool*" and  
"*Prisoner of War*"  
he was moved to declare that he had been treated  
kindly in internment

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

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

And as the empty bus approached  
he held out his hand  
in an act of reconciliation and peace

*Reconciliation* was selected by Liverpool's Metropolitan Cathedral for filming and broadcast as part of a series of meditative reflections.

## **Sarajevo**

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

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

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

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

Now there is only sadness in Sarajevo

## **Setting of The Sun**

Sometimes at the setting of the sun  
I am reminded of a far off time of bombs and guns  
and the fallen  
across the water  
in a wilder greener land

## **Siege of Ladybrand**

There was a green hill far away  
that didn't have a name  
defended by just six score men  
within a failing old stockade

Surrounded by three thousand Boars  
the Orange State and Transvaal war  
canon's fire pounding down  
machine guns mowing good men down

Five days to wait for help to come  
the garrison held hanging on  
defying odds the Worcesters won  
the Siege of Ladybrand

## **Skimming Stones off Barricane Beach**

It's mid winter  
and a strange grey calm  
has descended on the cove  
the steel blue sea  
once restless has subsided  
to gentle even ripples

The old man of the sea  
is resting on a flat rock  
with his rusty wiry terrier  
watching and waiting to tell me a tale or two

*"I thought we were being invaded  
in 1944  
at dawn  
the roar of the waves washing in teams and tanks  
gunfire and smoke  
from the bay next door  
all because we looked a bit like Omaha "*

The shells on the beach today are cowries  
ocean spirits  
washed ashore by the gulf steam  
from far away mystical depths of the Indies

The old man of the sea  
in deep thought  
sheds a tiny crystal tear  
or maybe its the slightly icy breeze  
that has fallen upon us  
making his pet shiver among the shale

Out of his waxed jacket pocket  
he takes a brass cartridge found here  
all those years ago  
beneath these sands of time  
and passes it to me  
a small gift  
as an act of immortality

*“Keep it polished”*

is his only request

before challenging me

to a round of skimming stones off Barricane Beach

a battle he knows he will win

## **That Last Lost September of Innocence**

Remembering those last end of summer  
and full autumn days

before the war

a rendezvous in the Broads  
sailing merriment under puffy clouds  
amid the reeds and windmills

The party stalked the common snipe

for fun some say

as the prey strayed into the empty lanes  
only to be blasted away  
but he on his own pointed his gun to the sky  
that day the golden plover would live  
and be free to fly away

in hope of better things to come

when war seemed impossible to some

those last season's of freedom

with love among the heat and hazy scented days  
by the fens and coast ... before the war

Barrels oiled and put away till next year  
the collection of carefree hearts  
boys in raw umber  
girls in pastel shades  
gathered in a Norfolk cottage garden  
where wild jasmine grew  
their perfumed sedate draft pervading the sultry hour

And across the water meadow  
a sudden crackle flash and rumble of thunder  
rolled in over the soft eventide aureolin light

## The Girl From Vietnam

Escaping horror from a distant shore  
by boat and wild waves  
under open ocean skies  
no less terrors of the Viet Cong  
are the nightmares at the mercy of the tides adrift  
carrying you to possibly a greater place of danger  
or eventually a remote village reception centre  
in Hampshire and English lessons

Years later you longed to return home  
to Saigon now gone  
with a new name  
only to you it would always be *Cotton Sticks*

Every time we moved near to talk  
about that other place and life  
I remember you lost  
and staring into a distant far away space

with only diamond tears evaporating on your cheeks in  
the early evening light warm breeze by the shore  
and the silence explained it all

And then one day  
like a bullet from a gun you were gone  
no reply ... no calls ... no post ... no anything  
I hope you found your way home  
to a Peace

## **The Lone Soldier and the Angel**

The lone soldier clammers through the rubble and  
destruction of Naples  
the roads and lanes are hollow craters  
chalky white  
and blinding in the glare and heat coming off the flames  
the liberation would not go smoothly  
after the constant midnight jettison of bombs  
rained down its deathly showers

Amid the rising plumes of smoke and what remained  
the lone soldier sought out a Sunday Mass  
among the devastation  
with a simple handful gathering  
praying for peace among the chaos

Shielding his eyes  
from the haloed glare of an almost midday sun  
a young girl seeking sanctuary with her child  
born during that eventide blitz

appears and appeals for help  
in desperate need  
of the Holy Sacrament of Baptism for her new born

The tiny congregation after dismissal had quickly dispersed to find their own shelter  
leaving the lone soldier without translation  
the only witness and god parent  
as the young parish priest confirmed the sacrament  
before fleeing into the warren of passageways from the  
ever increasing crescendo of gunfire

It's 1960 now  
and the passing years had led to an obsession

That lone soldier  
came back each and every summer with his wife  
seeking to find that holy building from a confused  
dislocated echo of 450 churches that are still standing

One by one the lone soldier sought  
year by year  
and five more summers pass ... they come and go  
and then in that almost midday heat  
and hand shielded glare again  
a familiar arch and doorway from a fading memory

Could it truly be  
the daily noon mass has been dismissed and a priest  
stands in the entrance shade  
there is a slight hesitation but familiarity as the he steps  
into the sun to greet the long lost lone soldier but the  
remembrance is still there  
after all the years still clear

Two decades had vanished and now the bells resonate  
again and the clouds over Pompeii divide and explode in  
the breeze into a rippled display in that azure sky

The dusty baptism books from the war are brought out  
from the safety of the crypt  
and that mother is known  
and the address is hastily scrawled  
and the priest will go on ahead

It may have been just the heat and sweat  
but there were tears to sting the eyes of the old priest and  
the lone soldier

Small and worn the terracotta house  
with a blue and white awning off a local lane  
Maria and her only son stand up to see the approaching  
rushing and emotional commotion heading towards  
them

The lone soldier has no idea of the exited shouts and  
louder explanations  
other than *I'ho trovato! I'ho trovato! I'ho trovato!*  
*I'l soldato solitario*

The tears are real now as Angelo ...  
that angel baby born in a ruined city...  
embraces finally the lone soldier who held him and  
helped his single mother all those years ago

## The Powder Monkey

In the silence of the violet morning  
amid the shadow of the fractured clouds  
broken only by the seagull's squeals  
each day's a chore to fool the foes

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

The boys in bells  
not teens but tens  
the sounds and smells  
of black graphite carbon  
sparks and fire

quell the tempest of the seas  
and enemies

Bang and crash  
fuse and flash  
recoil and rebound  
the Powder Monkey swings  
to canons from gallows beams  
and England's shores still will be  
forever so far away from home

## The Punt Gunner

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

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

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

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

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

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

## The Silent Drum

'Twas the week before Christmas  
as the battle cruiser *Derrflinger* full steamed ahead  
cutting through the midnight high crested waves  
steering a course to Dogger Bank  
to silently watch and wait  
making use of these shortest days  
and the cusp of sunrise

At 8.00 am sharp  
the three ships resting at Rayburn Wake  
did turn south to speed to Scarborough Bay  
on the dark fast incoming tidal flow  
so close they came ... from the beach you could see  
men readying the decks for the devils work

Into the early morning  
a wrath of shells flying from flame spitting guns  
the bombardment had begun

Streams of falling fire  
screams of the innocent child

Scarborough Castle, Lighthouse and Grand Hotel  
would take a tumble and some collapse  
to a heap of stones  
as five hundred blasted shots rained down  
most would fall short destroying the town

Scarborough such a quintessential English seaside  
resort of no harm to anybody  
succumbed to such a reign of death and destruction  
as murderers amid ships attacked an unfortified domain  
with a ruthless hit and run

At the Sandside Seaman's Mission  
their loquacious pet parrot fell of his perch  
at the sounds of the thunder strike onslaught  
to scuttle through the sawdust into the corner  
trapped in his cage ... never to recover or speak again

Salvation Army percussionist Leonard Ellis  
attending to his daily porter duties  
opening the Clare and Hunts Chemist  
at that same 8.00am  
stepped out through the South Street doorway  
to view the hullabaloo on the corner  
never to return

Molten hot shrapnel collided with the smell of oil  
and choking wall plaster dust  
turning the smoky acrid air  
into a mustardy gamboge fog

Leonard was civilian number one  
to be killed in World War I  
to be laid to rest  
in his wife and Child's grave  
sadly gone fourteen years before  
the Salvation Army played on  
and on a pedestal lay  
Leonard's silent drum

## Welcome to Hanoi

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

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

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

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

## **Wild Hearts and Tempests**

Teenagers pelted with stones  
teenagers on patrol  
distant yet so close to home  
to die in a doorway all alone  
all amid the terrible beauty  
strikingly drawn on walls  
and shown to be  
martyrs of wild hearts and tempests

## Ypres

After the dying seconds of war had ebbed

Peace

But news travelled late to the sniper in wait

as the final round tolled from a rifle in haste

to take a young life and cause decades of waste

After searching all day beneath a sombre sky

we found his name

etched within

the Menin Gate

a life so short so sad in vain

## Zephyrs

Going forth are the 83rd and 20th  
rolling out the wires from the sodden soggy drum  
the sulphuric fog hangs over barren wastelands  
undulating mud and mush of Polygon Wood  
and distant sound of guns  
the cruel heart of the Passchendaele slaughter

Arriving by train at Ypres  
we felt forlorn over those fallen  
and lost souls  
bleach white tombstones  
like bones left in the sun  
dazzle us in their descent of rows

Sappers built tracks and laid traps  
to blast and kill the forward foe  
to clear mine paths and lay down some more death  
as both sides caught  
tangled and torn targets

on barbed wire gallowed poles  
hanging over shell hell holes  
a hiding place safe no more  
the fear frozen face of the corpse  
cradled in the crater at Cambrai  
still clutching the impaled broken bayonet blade  
exposed and twisted  
blood drained from the gaping open chest

So many names so many graves  
as the town hall clock chimes three  
in remembrance of another sweeter place  
another country  
and hallowed green pleasant meadows by the Cam

One final push to Mons  
but the night ignites to a thunderflash and crash  
the corral was hit  
and its a dirty job to clear and bury the equine dead  
in an old trench to kill the stench of death  
haunted drawn fizzogs face the dawn

the finality of war is in sight just one more month ...  
maybe

there sitting in the branches of the sole charcoaled oak  
the devil cackles surveying his odorous hades domain  
pointing with sharp dark wizened finger claws  
claiming this as his land  
where once a lush green forest stood  
abandoned to a burnt landscape of dirt, disease, smoke  
and drained men

A child runs up to us with a tin box  
of his treasures and bits found  
in a recent fallowed furrowed field  
*“spent detonators”* he tells us  
as he allows me to make a rummage  
brass shrapnel ... melted ... deformed ... abstract  
a khaki pocket of sorts  
holding what looks like a part of fossilised leather glove  
it was a charred phalanx ... a human relic of a trigger  
finger

It's mid summer and the sun is still high above the  
glistening clouds

and the buglers sound the Last Post from within the  
Menin Gate

eerily resonating off the names resurrected each day to  
eternal remembrance

in foreign fields

the men who fought and fell for peace

Later ... the dusk tide zephyrs

cause me to stir and turn

into the sunsetting afterglow

and facing the remains of the day

take the next departing train away

## *Epilogue*

*Carrying the ghosts of every word spoken  
Unheard messages  
From beyond the fields we know  
Intimate with fern, stems and stone  
Causing sighing trees  
To overlay mosaics of trembling leaves  
And bending in the breeze  
Drawing moisture from rain soaked moss  
And lichen armored wooden cathedrals  
Howling over mountains  
Racing over rivers  
Idling on becalmed seas  
Flickering ripples on rain soaked pools  
Sun dappled glittering vibrations  
Spreading to arcane wisdom  
Forever whirling mysteries  
Causing stems to bend  
Perfumed flowers in the air  
The wind is with us*

*The wind is listening to our conversation*

*The wind travels round and round*

*It listens it hears*

*It breathes it understands*

*You cannot escape*

*From the listening wind in this world*

*The age of innocence is upon us*

*It echoes in the wind*

*(Hawkwind: The Wind)*

## **END NOTES**

**Afterglow:** written exclusively as a brand new opening poem for this totally revised and specially expanded edition of anti war poetry.

**A New Clear Day:** the Cold War lasted almost all of the second half of the twentieth century and especially during the 1950s and 1960s there was a real threat as the world teetered on the brink more than once.

**All For An Empire:** It is hard not to think of those Normandy beaches as todays cross channel ferries safely glide into the harbour at Dieppe.

**All For An Empire Part II:** was written in memoriam of all those soldiers executed for what in reality was shell shock - post traumatic stress disorder. Many teenagers and older soldiers who refused to climb over the trenches to fight or those who tried to flee were in effect scandalously tortured mentally with the pain of being lead to execution at dawn carried out by their own friends without any proper trial, jury or right of appeal on the battlefield. The Government put to death those who refused to fight and called it an "act of cowardice". An insight and good read is the book "*He was*

*no Coward - The Harry Farr Story*" by Janet Booth and James White.

**Ariana:** is the national airline of Afghanistan and the poem was written at the height and almost end of the Soviet - Afghan War (1979 - 1989). I have flown directly over Kabul more than once and the view from the air of the desert sand coloured city sowed the seeds of this poem.

**Arm in Alms:** written during the Gulf War 1990 - 91.

**Before Bill Popped His Clogs:** William (Bill) Grimshaw was my maternal grandfather who had the strange distinction of serving in all three of the armed forces and was also a neighbour and friend of L.S. Lowry.

**Bikini Atoll:** situated in one of the most remotest parts of the North Pacific, between 1946 - 1958 was the USA's Cold War nuclear testing site. On march 1st 1954 the scientists totally miscalculated the megaton value, resulting in a single explosion 1000 times more than the World War II Hiroshima and Nagasaki Atomic Bombs. This was just one of dozens of thermonuclear tests. Today more than 75 years later there is so much caesium in the ground that any food that is growing is still radioactive making the string of islands

independently uninhabitable. *Bikini Atoll* is written and published here for the first time in 2022.

**Chelsea Pensioner in a Chinese Restaurant in Greenwich:** A true poem just as it happened in the 2010's. The "Vietnam Restaurant" in Greenwich, London these days is now a newly renamed "Pho Street" - Vietnamese Kitchen in King William Walk.

**Coup:** the late 1980s saw a lot of revolutions take place across Eastern Europe and "Coup" is a kaleidoscope of several of these woven together as one.

**Damn That Torpedo:** The story of the horrific sinking of the Cunard passenger liner *Lusitania* on May 7th 1915 by a German U-Boat, an event which brought the USA into World War I and a tragedy that will be forever associated with the people of Liverpool. Liverpool's National Maritime Museum in the Royal Albert Dock has the most detailed exhibition collection on the "Lucy" as we in Merseyside affectionately call her.

**Dandelions Around Andy's Grave:** Andy Webster was a school mate and at the age of 19 died during the Northern Ireland Conflict on May 9th 1979. His body was buried in

Moreton, Merseyside and there is also a memorial stone in St. John's Gardens, Liverpool.

**Execution of Duties:** "The Shot at Dawn" memorial by sculptor Andy DeComyn can be found at the National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas, Lichfield, Staffordshire.

**For Gyula Horn ... The Man Who Tore The Curtain Down:**

I spent a week in Budapest when Hungary was still under a strict Iron Curtain regime. I was almost arrested by military guards at the border as the armed patrols took an instant dislike to my still hippy passport picture and looks. The poem was started in the mid 1980s and only completed after the fall of the soviet occupation.

**Ghosts of Culloden:** I was on a photographic assignment for a calendar shoot in the Cairngorms and after picking up the hire car at Inverness Airport I very quickly stumbled on Culloden which is near to Inverness and was instantly struck by its sombre and wild green expanse that proved to be such a turning point in Scottish History.

**Ghosts of The Atlantic:** a chance encounter in a New Brighton seaside cafe with Captain Donal, a whiskery old sea dog and his tales encouraged me to explore the fate of the *SS. City of Benares* more deeply and after sailing from Liverpool its

deplorable sinking by a German U-Boat and the loss of so many innocent children; it was an evacuation liner taking the boys and girls to a safer place.

**Gruelling Grey Skies:** The 40th Anniversary of the loss of the Cunard Merchant “Atlantic Conveyor” ship during the Falklands War was commemorated on the 25th May 2022 on Liverpool’s waterfront. It was a bleakly solemn and grey day with a biting wind cutting into all those gathered.

**Haiku No 13:** Meditate and all will become clear

**Hiroshima:** composed in memory of the nuclear holocaust victims when at 8.15am on August 6th 1945 the USA Air Force Super Fortress B-29 called “*Enola Gay*” dropped an Atom Bomb named “*Little Boy*” on the Japanese city of Hiroshima. Three days later the Americans would drop a Plutonium Bomb called “*Fat Man*” on the city of Nagasaki. Anyone who visits today the Peace Park and Memorial cannot fail to be moved to tears at the tolling of the Peace Bell.

**In Another Landscape:** simply inspired by a letter written from the World War I trenches by young soldier to his sweetheart back home.

**Kamchatka:** the Kuril Islands and the remote Kamchatka Peninsular are strategic Russian outposts containing a vast quantity of nuclear war heads, land and submarine bases that the west knows very little about. They watch and they wait!

**Kenny's Tank:** A brand new 2022 poem dedicated to Kenny Small who single handedly spent over many years uncovering and salvaging a Sherman tank off the South Devon coast at Torcross and also uncovered one of the great scandalous cover ups of World War II. Well worth visiting or making a deliberate detour if you are travelling around Devon. [www.exercisetigermemorial.co.uk/ken-small](http://www.exercisetigermemorial.co.uk/ken-small) will tell you more about this discovery.

**Lament of a Yorkshire Maiden:** sadly this could be any girl in any county during the Great War but this was written whilst visiting Haworth and those Bronte Yorkshire craggy moors.

**Last Post:** Every day when the sun is descending gently in the skies over Ypres, Belgium a lone bugler blows out the “Last Post”

**Lawrence:** is the true and sad tale of my grandmother's brother Lawrence and is an event that my great grandmother never ever recovered from.

**Letter Writer:** apartheid may not at first seem to be a war subject but anything that causes division on such an evil scale resulting in death and the destruction of peoples lives must certainly count as bloodshed. This poem was composed in the early 1980s with Nelson Mandela in his incarceration as inspiration.

**Midsummer in Granchester:** is almost an antidote to the memory of World War 1 but set today in a sleepy, dreamy perfect English village during the long hot balmy days of summer. Granchester was the home to Rupert Brooke one of our great lost war poets and is a place I know well from spending three years in East Anglia.

**Nagasaki:** was the second target of the American B-29 Bombers after Hiroshima. On August 9th 1945 the plane named “Bockscar” dropped the Nuclear Plutonium Bomb called “Fat Man”. The first photographer allowed into the nuclear aftermath was from the USA. Joe O’Donnell captured on film the immense destruction. Many of his images even to this day are deemed too disturbing for publication and those pictures that have unrestricted public access are heartbreaking. This new poem written in 2022 was inspired by his photograph “*The Boy Waiting at The Cremation Pyre*”

**Nan's Wars:** is biographical and completes a quartet of poems following "Nan's Candles" from the book "Rebel Heart", "Nan's Cabinet" from the book of poems "In Violet" and "Nan's Pantry" from the book "Zig Zag Road"

**Nightingale's Lamp:** Written in February 2022. The Crimean War took place between 1853-1856 and included the legendary Charge of the Light Brigade. And almost 170 years later there is still severe conflict taking place in Ukraine's autonomous Republic of Crimea.

**Poppylands:** another poem from my time in Norfolk recalls an event when a First World War body that had been recently recovered from a freshly ploughed field in Northern France is repatriated over 100 years later. But also this poem pays respect to the relatively unknown poet and theatre writer Clement Scott (1841-1904) who coined the term "*poppylands*" in his hauntingly beautiful poem "*The Garden of Sleep*" which can be found here

[www.literarynorfolk.co.uk/poppyland.htm](http://www.literarynorfolk.co.uk/poppyland.htm)

**Remembrance:** written in 2021 whilst sitting quietly in Liverpool city centre's St. Johns Gardens (behind St. Georges Hall). This peaceful city park contains many large, small and subtle war and civilian memorials that blend into a tree

landscape and flower beds and the park was originally a city cemetery housing more than 80,000 bodies.

**Reconciliation:** A very true story that came about when spending the summer of 1983 in Germany's Rhine Valley staying in the riverside town of Konigswinter which is between Remagen and Bonn. "*Reconciliation*" was selected by Liverpool's Metropolitan Cathedral for filming and broadcast as part of a series of meditative reflections.

**Sarajevo:** was written during the height of the Bosnian War and the Siege of Sarajevo 1992-1996.

**Setting of The Sun:** is left to the readers own interpretation and can be seen as a short thoughtful and meditative poem.

**Siege of Ladybrand:** took place between September 1st - 4th 1900. My great grandfather was one of the 130 Worcester Regiments soldiers defending Ladybrand from an intense Boer onslaught. William Kirkham survived and was awarded the DCM (Distinguished Conduct Medal).

**Skimming Stones off Barricane Beach:** Barricane Beach can be found between Woolacombe and Mortehoe in Devon. This is a companion poem to *Kenny's Tank* and when the locals are not remembering and telling you tales of WWII

and the D-Day rehearsals this is a perfect place to find and skim stones.

**That Last Lost September of Innocence:** my grandmother and grand aunt would recall their Edwardian days and the young men and women would very soon after this tale and poem recount those last days of innocence and be forced to face the unknown terror and horror of the Great War and what it would bring.

**The Lone Soldier and The Angel:** This is a true poetic tale. I actually know the son of that lone soldier. The son is now 70 years old and became a priest in Liverpool his name is Fr. Chris McCoy and the angel child Angelo also the same age became a teacher in Naples.

**The Girl From Vietnam:** I once knew a girl from Vietnam who had escaped during the “boat people exodus” in 1978 - 79 and settled in the UK. Her dream was to return one day to her home country. She could never talk about the atrocities that took place and a memory recall would cause clear crystal tears to roll down her face in silence. Suddenly one day after a decade of knowing her very well, when I phoned her there was no reply, no calls no post, she had quietly moved on. I hope if she did return home it was to peace.

Dedicated to Chanh who was and will always be remembered as more than a friend.

**The Powder Monkey:** in 2013 we stayed for a week in Exmouth, Devon, exploring also the rest of the county. We spent a few evenings in Exmouth enjoying the food and drink at the local pub *The Powder Monkey* from which we learned that Powder Monkey's dating back to the 17th Century were very young boys employed by the Royal Navy on warships to carry gunpowder from the magazine to the canons. They were used because their small stature enabled them to navigate and swing through the decks quickly and easily. This poem was also accepted and can be found in the National Museum of The Royal Navy in Portsmouth.

**The Punt Gunner:** an allegorical anti-war poem inspired by a visit to Welney Wetland Centre on the Hundred Foot Bank near Wisbech, East Anglia. A Punt Gun is a very large diameter single barrel shot gun mounted on a punt boat that would set out into the haunting and foggy fenland waters to shoot wildfowl. Used mainly during the Edwardian era, a single shot could kill up to 50 birds.

**The Silent Drum:** Inspired by the true story of Leonard Ellis who was the first World War I British civilian killed on home ground by enemy bombardment.

**Welcome to Hanoi:** A companion poem to *The Girl From Vietnam*.

**Wild Hearts and Tempests:** remembering conflicts closer to home.

**Ypres:** a sad true story. A visit to Ypres in Belgium with friends turned into a kind of pilgrimage searching for the memorial stone of one of their grandfathers. He was killed by a sniper in wait who didn't know that the war had just ended.

**Zephyhrs:** is a sister poem to *Ypres* and again factual. My paternal grandfather John Kirkham was a Royal Engineer in World War I. Shipped off to the Western Front in 1917 as part of the 83rd Field Company (20th Division) he survived action in 42 different locations including major battles at Ypres, Passchendaele, Menin Road, Polygon Wood, Cambrai, Saint Quentin, Rosieres and the pursuit to Mons. After the armistice he stayed well into 1919 to help rebuild the village of Famechon. Throughout the rest of his life he refused to talk about the nightmarish world that he had

seen. He could never again eat bully (corned) beef or baked beans which was standard issue soldier rations. He came back from battlefields a changed man, the war had taken away his faith and as soon as his civilian pay packet came in it burned holes in his pockets so as to live for the moment. It was only on his death bed in the mid 1960s some forty seven years later that he shared with my father the horrors that he had witnessed. And so it is fitting perhaps that this anthology concludes with the shocking and haunting reminder of "*Zephyrs*"

If you enjoyed the poems  
and would like to know more about  
**Where Art & Books Collide**  
Please Visit  
**[www.johnpaulkirkham.com](http://www.johnpaulkirkham.com)**



JOHN PAUL KIRKHAM

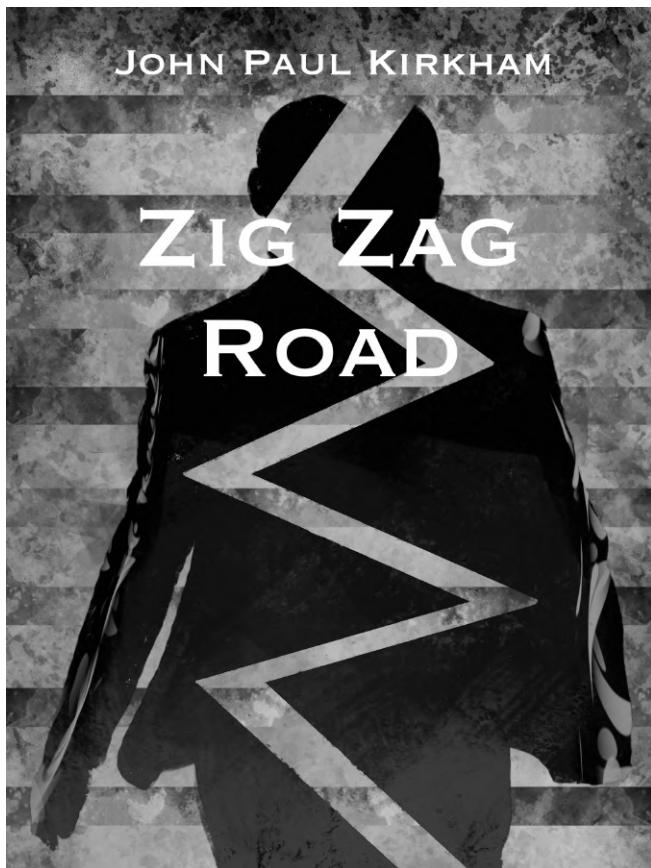
# IN VIOLET



## Also Available

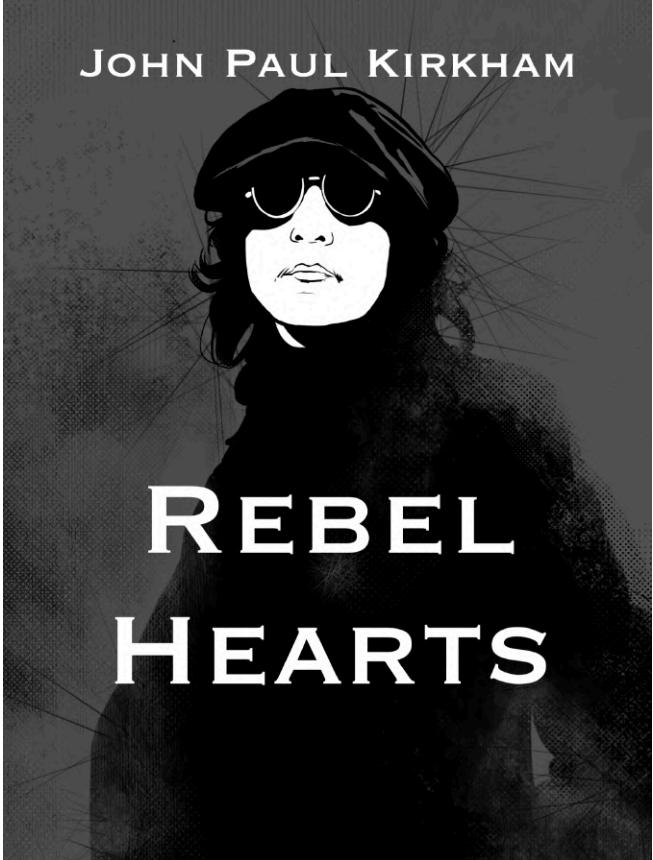
Poetry can be like a gentle breeze that caresses the face and tousles the hair slightly. Sometimes the words create a storm of emotions so intense, that the reader may be angry, weep or smile. And that's what poems are all about. This large collection was first published to rave reviews in 2011 and the tenth anniversary edition includes a prologue and epilogue by Nick Drake used with kind permission of his estate Bryter Layter. The pages reveal an eclectic mix of autobiographical, lyrical, nostalgic and reflective poems and prose, remembering that "Violet" is a colour at the fringes of the spectrum, barely visible but there just the same.

JOHN PAUL KIRKHAM



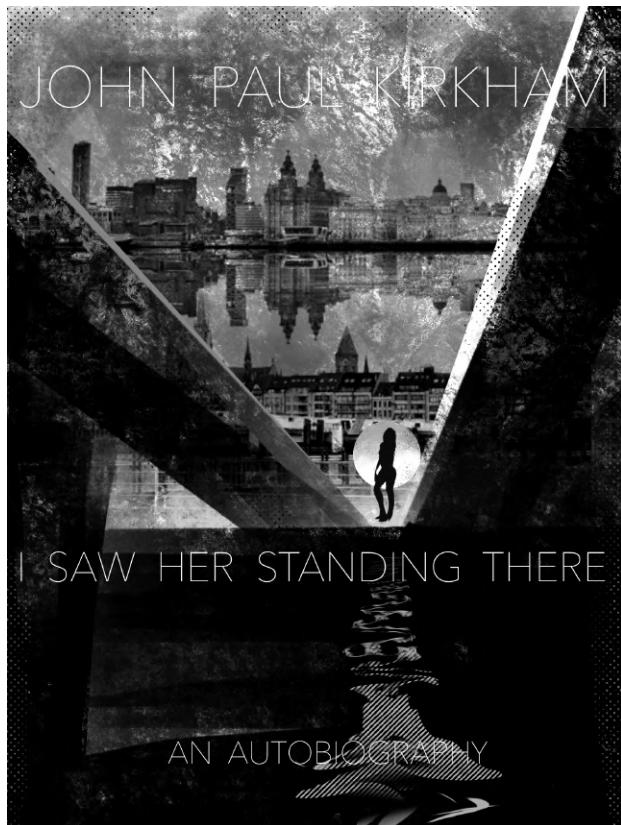
The book of poetry features a prologue and epilogue by the British singer songwriter Judie Tzuke. The poems are thoughtfully provocative, autobiographical and atmospheric plus the book has been accepted to be placed within Liverpool's city archives for posterity to the end of time. Scattered randomly throughout the book are a series of Haiku works inspired and woven by our natural world of sensual humanity always remembering that poetry is often written to stir emotion or passion. And yes in the end you will have meandered down "Zig Zag Road"

JOHN PAUL KIRKHAM



# REBEL HEARTS

Featuring a prologue by Suzanne Vega, an intermission sequence by Supertramp's Rodger Hodgson and an epilogue of lyrics by kind permission of Anaïs Mitchell, this new fourth collection of poetry features many autobiographical tales. There are a several ghosts and storms that appear throughout the book but these chronicles are tempered by other true saga's about our mystical, natural and sensual world.



Everybody has a time and place that means something. For me it was 1979. Led Zeppelin's great epic last gig, I was there at Knebworth. It was a time when the world was young and I fell in love with a girl from a different shore. This is also a snapshot and soundtrack of a time when it was still cool to be children of the revolution and in a quest to fill our lives with peace and freedom there had to be a whole lotta love, other stuff and rock and roll ... and plenty of it there was. A true tale of two rebel hearts.

**The sky is plutonium turquoise**

**The child's eyes and hands  
sense the colours and textures  
of wood ...  
concrete ...  
metal ... turning to dusty rust  
the materials that built our world**

**The child is drawn to the beach  
dips his feet into  
the ocean's infinite waves  
then gazes into the once bright sun  
that is slowly turning charcoal black**

**Supporting Free Reading  
Worldwide**

