

John Paul Kirkham

Afterglow of Zephyrs

Incandescent Extended Edition

**Collected
Anti War Poems**



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Anti War Poems**

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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 runaway 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 settlings 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 too 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 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 hesitance 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 excited 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 sunseting 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 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

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.

Zepyhurs: 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*"

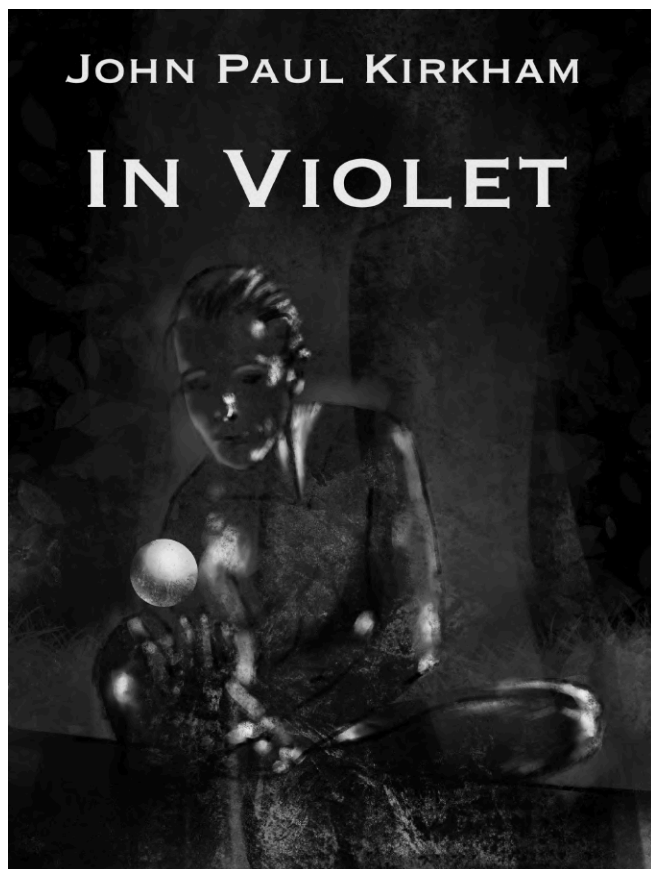
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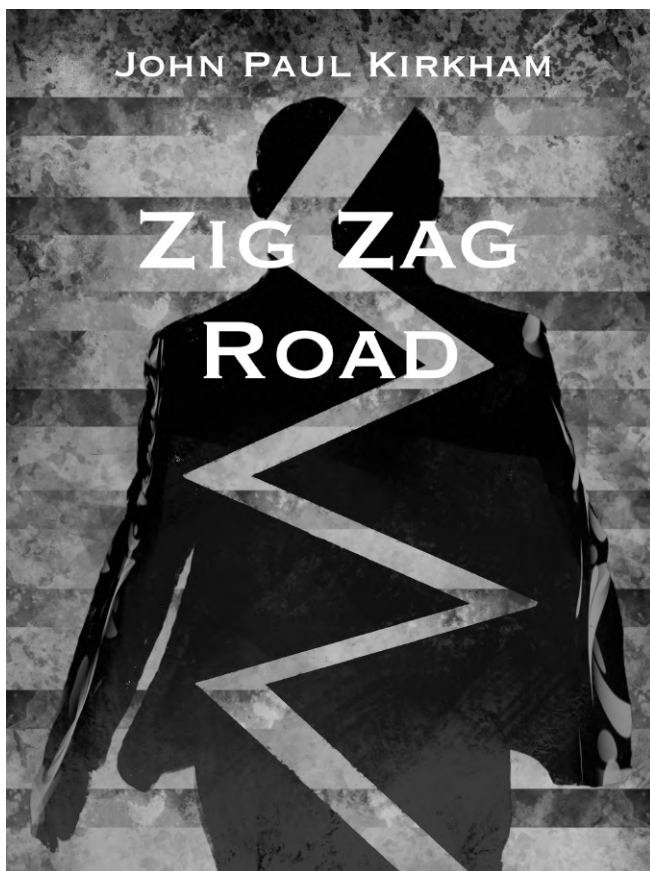
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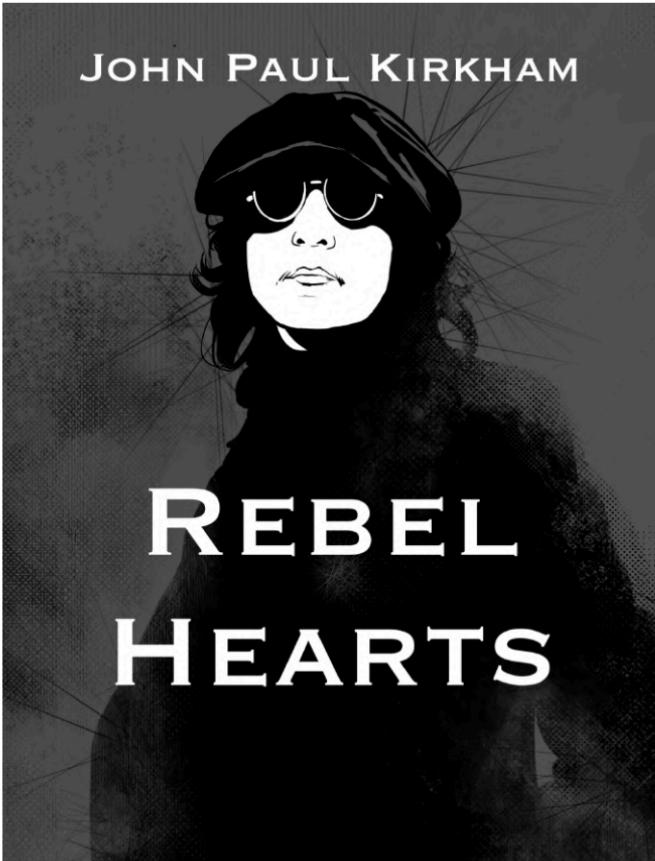
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Poetry can be like a gentle breeze that caresses the face and tousles the hair slightly. Sometimes the words create a storm of emotions so intense, that the reader may be angry, weep or smile. And that's what poems are all about. This large collection 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.



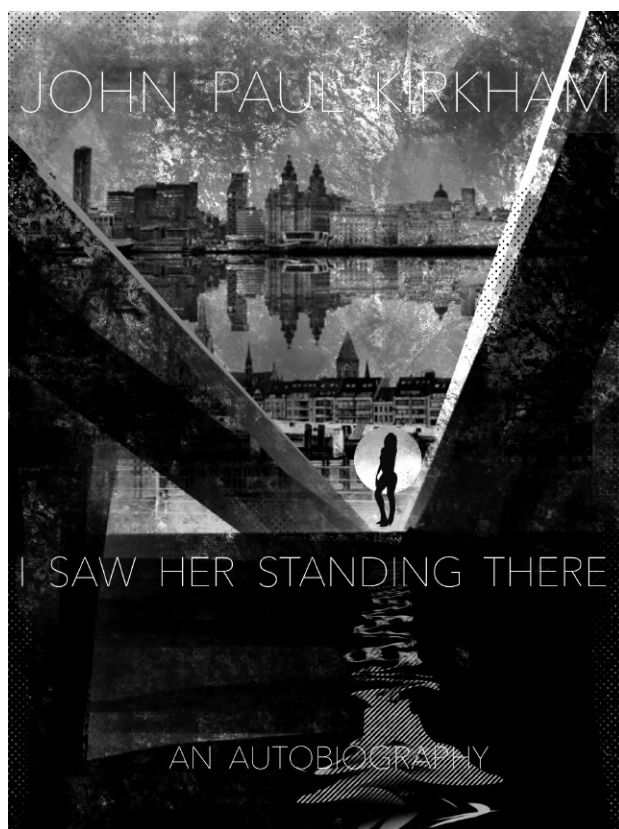
The book of poetry features a prologue and epilogue by the British singer songwriter Judie Tzuke. The poems are thoughtfully provocative, autobiographical and atmospheric plus the book has been accepted to be placed within Liverpool's city archives for posterity to the end of time. Scattered randomly 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**

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