

I WISH I COULD SING LIKE NODDY HOLDER



**FRANK
MCMAHON**

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Contents

Page 4	Ode to Slade; Earthquake Snoring
Page 5	Merseybeat; Nick Drake
Page 6	I Thought I Walked Past Miles Hunt; Arrogance
Page 7	Rock N Roll Lifestyle; A Hard Day's Night
Page 8	Judas; Sport and Music at School
Page 9	Punk; Highbrow
Page 10	Needle On Vinyl; Naked
Page 11	Design for Life; What Became of the Likely Lads?
Page 12	The Madcap Might Have Been Laughing But Who Would Have Known
Page 13	Maths Teacher (Mr MacDiarmid); Steve Davis
Page 14	Jimmy White; Wolverhampton Half Marathon
Page 15	Wolverhampton Queens Square Fountains; Sunbeamland
Page 16	Satellite Town; City Status
Page 17	Up and Down; Spring In His Heels
Page 18	This Is A Low; Pharmacological Seamstress
Page 19	Lifted; 24 Carrot Vegan
Page 20	Chained Together; Alone
Page 21	Self Pity; Piano Forte
Page 22	Marie Antoinette; Wrong End of the Telescope
Page 23	Sniper; Don't Touch
Page 24	Beer Duck; Maginot Line
Page 25	Sherlock; Christmas
Page 26	Poetry and Song Lyrics; Cleaned Glass
Page 27	Loneliness Of A Long Distance Runner: Minotaur's Maze
Page 28	Atypical Male Friendships; Kids
Page 29	Rambling; Break in Whitby
Page 30	ID; Charm
Page 31	Stumped; Take It Slow
Page 32	Almost Dry; Pop Up On Your Screen
Page 33	Chemistry; First Overnight Babysitting Of An Eleven Month Old
Page 34	Cyrano and Roxanne
Page 35	Footballer's Today; Easter Football
Page 36	Premier Inn; Holding Down A Job
Page 37	Retirement: One Solution
Page 38	Elections May 2015; Student Grants Gone
Page 39	Cherry Red DMs; Verses Matter Too
Page 40	Craft; Seamus Heaney
Page 41	No Borders; Snakes and Ladders
Page 42	A Month In the Country (Birkin)
Page 43	How Football Used to Be; Green

Ode to Slade

I wish I could sing like Noddy Holder,
Like Lennon but bolder,
With sandpaper vocals.

Those Black Country Bovril boys made big noize.
Glam but not glamorous.
No mirror balls just mirrored hats.

They made the mistake of trying to break America,
Went deep into its bowels,
But they couldn't understand their West Midlands vowels.

Whatever Happened to Slade?
But they came back strong at Monsters of Rock
Where they smashed the clock
That said their day had come and gone.

Amps always turned up to twelve.
No twenty minute songs about elves.
(Which were strangely popular at the time).
Drums clattering like a Wolverhampton factory.

Earthquake Snoring

In Liverpool, three of us sharing a room;
There was no ignoring the earthquake snoring,
A rumbling reggae bassline.
After each snore I stared at the door,
Thought about crawling out
To sleep in the bath,
Like John in Norwegian Wood,
Isn't it good
A full night's sleep?

Merseybeat

The three Graces, their faces to the Atlantic.
The Liver Birds were the first
To hear the frantic
Sounds of rock n roll.
Merchant seaman brought back the black gold
Of Presley, Chuck Berry, Little Richard.
Replacing the self-effacing singers of old.

Nick Drake

I first heard you at seventeen,
Heaven in a Wild Flower,
It brightened my Midlands sky.

Without a guitar, you'd cower
Against the tyranny of life,
But with your Guild
You'd stand tall.

I Thought I Walked Past Miles Hunt

I'm almost sure I walked past Miles Hunt,
(Singer of the Wonder Stuff
For any younger readers)
In Wolves. They were playing that night.
But my curiosity wasn't enough
To overcome my reticence,
And to ask for his autograph,
Or to verify that it was him.
I wasn't Dizzy with excitement,
Just curious.
Would he have asked me
If I was going to the gig?
I'd have had to say I wasn't
But loved them at 19, when they were big.

Arrogance

Sometimes arrogance is justified.
The Stone Roses thought they were the resurrection,
But Ian Brown couldn't rise to the right notes,
High windows out of reach,
And the Second Coming was bathetic,
Crucified by faint praise.

Still, I can't tire of John Squire's guitar
And the rhythm section on Fool's Gold
Is the real thing.

Rock N Roll Lifestyle

You said I lived more of a rock n roll lifestyle,
But mine was more Shakin Stevens than Jerry Lee Lewis
And yours was very Val Doonican
A crooning way of life,
Complete with rocking chair.
No sex drugs or rock n roll,
No cigarettes and alcohol.
You had your religion too.
This and your sobriety made you feel
Much improved.
I was far from smashing up hotel rooms
Yet you still disapproved.
Sex, you'd not had any
Since the last millennium
You proudly declared
But I no longer cared.

A Hard Day's Night

The musicianship was tight,
Melodies Olympian,
Musical athletes, knew the rhythm
Of the race,
Toned in Hamburg,
Although George's solos needed to pump some iron,
Seven stone weakling sounding.

They still sang about holding hands,
Dancing with their girls all night.
The Stones wanted more,
Sexual athletes,
Wanted to spend the night together.
But I like the Beatles more.
They sang rock n roll
in their own accents,
Jagger didn't do that.
Northern and did not try to sound
As if they were from the Deep South
Of another country.

Judas

You were there when Dylan went electric,
When he became Judas
When he betrayed us.
The current shocked you.
Dylan wanted to rock you
And in a way he did.
He performed with his electric Band.
You couldn't stand the feedback
And you gave back some of your own,
When you cried 'Judas'
*How dare you intrude upon us,
Upon the sacred acoustic ideal.*
You wanted him to keep it real.

But by Dylan going electric
Wasn't he just being eclectic?
But you put your fingers in both ears,
And by doing so could not wipe away your tears.
You shouted 'Judas'

But I'm not sure who was crucified,
And who was Jesus?
Was it Ewan MacColl?
Ready to save your folk soul.
I don't think Dylan got any extra silver
For going electric.

Acoustic guitars are not a necessary
Nor a sufficient condition for making folk music
Or the protest song.
If you think I'm wrong,
Listen to Billy Bragg performing
Which Side Are You On?

Sport and Music at School

I now love running, but at school
It was saved for a rainy day,
When it was too wet for football
Pissing it down: it must be cross country.
So, we'd run through the mud and skies grey.
Today, I run,
Even when it's not pissing it down.

I now love music, but at school,
In the first year we sang hymns with tambourines,
Every young kid's dream.
Second year: we were given Casio's,
Hordes of kids sharing cheap keyboards.
Left to our devices.
Today, I play guitar and read music.
I've taught myself.

Punk

You said *up yours*
To complex time signatures.

Highbrow

You dismiss her choice of music,
Her primary coloured tastes,
As not serious music. A waste of time.
You prefer music as art,
Rachmaninov or Mozart.
Everything else, apart from maybe jazz
Is just pop music.

You prefer more subtle shades,
A broader palette.

Needle On Vinyl

His time with her was short,
As if she was a DJ,
Who had spun his song.
Most of the time they did not have
What he wanted,
But she had,
She spun his song.
As needle and vinyl conjoined,
Nothing felt wrong.
Then it was over, all too soon.
The needle lifted off the vinyl.
Their music was over. It was final.

Naked

I wanted to be as naked
With my words as Lennon in Help or Mother,
But I'm still guardedly other
Than how I'd like to be.
Not able to abandon the fig leaf of distance.

To be more like Lennon,
Is something to be,
But maybe McCartney
That's more like me,
Lyrically not even bare chested .

Design for Life

The Manics said libraries gave us power
But they're being shut down,
The arts seen as unwanted spare parts,
Appendixes, wisdom teeth,
Evolutionary cul de sacs, superseded,
Not needed,
Especially for the swinish multitude
Who have not shown gratitude
For all they have.

Culture is nourishment
But the Tories want us all
To eat gruel and be grateful like Oliver Twist,
Their fat bellies full.

What Became of the Likely Lads?

What became of the likely lads
Who performed guerrilla gigs
Where you could see the pin pricks
Of Pete's pupils, not just distant indie sticks?

Today they play arenas
With Pete newly cleanish.
We won't be able to see
His now normal sized pupils.

The Madcap might have been laughing but who would have known.

I was going to write about the sixties casualties,
Jim, Jimi, Janis
Who could only keep time in song,
And what they'd be doing if alive today.
Would they be grounded and grey?
And then I thought of you, Syd
And what you did.
But you did not die Chatterton style,
You were only a recluse,
Not seen for a while
Not of any poetic use,
Or so I thought.

Became fat and bald
And your former bandmates
Were only slightly appalled
Once they recognised you.

You became grey but never grounded.
Hounded by black dogs,
Never seen in suburban Cambridge.
Roger reality dodger,
The drugs only made the latent blatant.
The madcap never laughed anymore
But nobody could be sure
As you weren't there anymore.

There were small victories;
When Gilmour, your back up and then replacement
Showed rare band loyalty
And ensured you got your million plus royalties
And could paint and garden,
Helped to soften things a little,
As your illness hardened.

Maths Teacher (Mr MacDiarmid)

*Because I'm evil, my middle name is misery
Well I'm evil, so don't you mess around with me*

My maths teacher was also a sports teacher
Which became apparent
When he bullied.

I had braces
Which he parodied by putting two
Metre rulers
In front of his teeth
In front of the class
I braced myself for such things.

In between bullying he sang:
TROUBLE by Elvis,
I'd come to the right place.
His first name was Ian,
But was his middle name really Misery?

In between taking the piss out of eleven year olds
And bad singing
He was a good teacher.

Steve Davis

Serious and imperious,
Seemingly impervious to pressure,
Never feeling the heat at the Crucible.
A ZX Spectrum of the green baize,
Mopping up the colours
That other players had spilled.
A Tory, enjoyed dispatching all the reds.
A model of sobriety,
'Interesting' had no nickname or notoriety.
Ginger but not fiery,
Sipping water before the slaughter
Of world champions past.

I never liked him at the time.

Jimmy White

Child prodigy,
You were able to beat grown ups
When barely able
To see over the table.
The Mozart of the green baize,
Most of the others were Salieris,
Court composers, competent losers.
You played the game as fast and fluently
As Mozart wrote music,
Centuries constructed as quickly
As Amadeus wrote symphonies.

Nobody more fluent around the reds and blacks
On the table, but off it:
The red of gambling and cocaine meant debt
And the black of the six world final failures;
The Championship you've not won yet,
And never will.
The older you get the harder it gets.
But you chose your path, no regrets.

Wolverhampton Half Marathon

I achieved my personal best in my home town,
The city with the first ever automated traffic lights,
But its regeneration seems stuck on red.

Wolverhampton Queens Square Fountains

The fountains were meant to rival
Anything Brum has to offer
But their arrival
Defined bathetic.
The locals say "*pathetic*."
They reminded me of Stonehenge
But the Spinal Tap stage show version,
Twelve inches instead of twelve feet.
The amps turned up to two.

Sunbeamland

Derelict for sixteen years, Sunbeamland,
Regeneration did not go ahead as planned.
Sunbeam made bicycles and the fastest cars on the planet.
Motorbikes; Che Guevara rode a Norton around South America,
Helped bring him to socialism,
But there's no revolutionary spirit
Bringing this building back to life.
They're not going to beat any records
For speed of reconstruction.

Satellite Town

My home town (officially now a city) has become
A satellite town,
With little gravitational pull,
(No temporary lull)
Rocky, lifeless, inhospitable,
A moon whose fortunes are not going to change
Anytime soon.

The big city is the planet
And my home town is just space hardware.
When asked where I'm from, by someone from abroad,

City Status

To call it a city
Is like calling a boy 'young man',
When he's only half grown.
Recession and council cuts
Mean nourishment and growth
Is denied and 'city'
Seems like oversized clothes,
That better fit big brother,
Twelve miles down the road.

Up and Down

Sometimes,
She didn't care about the waves
Already to her waist,
No sense of haste,
She was King Canute,
She would drive them back,
Bring them to a halt,
Though soon she tasted
Sea salt.

Sometimes,
She felt like a scabby, tabby cat,
Scared of water,
Just a little would bring slaughter,
As if she were the Wicked Witch of the West
And there were Dorothys with buckets
Everywhere,
And she would surely melt.

Spring in His Heels

It was not automatic that he'd feel better.
He had felt only January in his heart.
Spring had not yet sprung.
Winter clung icily to him.
It would be facile to say to him:
If winter comes can spring be far behind?
But spring did come,
With the support of friends and family.
He began to think of ice cream vans.
Seemingly suddenly, it was April for him,
With its light and its showers.
It wasn't yet summer
But he was recovering his powers.

This is a Low

All the things I'm usually
Interested in,
A sun to warm me,
Sure azure mornings,
Providing blue skies to my days
Become stars, night sky distant.

Objectively they are still the same,
But the light is diminished,
Warmth gone.
Pleasure seems finished.

Pharmacological Seamstress

I took Citalopram
When I felt I was falling apart
At the seams.
It helped to stitch me back together
And gave me vivid dreams.
I was in a mess.
It was a magical pharmacological seamstress
But it didn't repair me all by itself.
Today, it's unused on the shelf.

Lifted

He started wearing shoe lifts
To give his confidence a lift,
A smallish guy wanting to be tallish.
He wanted to stand toe to toe
With tall women,
Women in stilettos.
He'd seen Tom Cruise use them.
The adverts promised they'd not be detectable.
He'd stand taller around ladies delectable.

But when he meets someone:
When she sees him in his bare feet,
Suddenly smaller,
No longer the booming Wizard
But a little man clutching at levers.
What will Dorothy think then?
Will she doubt his age and much more?

24 Carrot Vegan

You sure you're pure,
Twenty four Carat gold in your ideological correctness,
No base metal imperfection/ compromise.
You wear your correctness
Ostentatious as jewellery,
Vegan bling.
But most of us
In the wear and tear of life
Have nickel and silver imperfections.

Chained Together

I had to share a bike d stand
With another bicycle,
And being slightly hung over
Almost chained mine to the other.
It made me think how people
Get chained together,
By accident,
When they really want the freedom
To ride away alone.

Alone

Recently, the time I have felt most alone
Is when I was without my smartphone.
The screen was broken, felt forsaken.
Four days without it.

No friends to call or text,
Did not know what to do next.
Couldn't arrange where and when to meet.
Didn't feel complete.

Maybe my friends felt small
As they couldn't understand
Why I didn't return their call.

Couldn't look at Facebook
(I have no pc or laptop)
So decided to finish
a paper book/paperback instead.

Self-Pity

You were always the last to be picked
For the team, even though had you a dream
About being Roy of the Rovers.
You even provided the jumpers for goalposts.

All this was twenty years ago,
And not a metaphor for your life.
This little ditty
Says no more self-pity.

Pianoforte

The pianoforte is your forte
You're very good
But not as good as you'd like to be,
Never going to be the Messi of classical melody.
Excellent technique,
But sadly not unique.

We were close once,
Keys next to each other,
But now we're keys pitched
At opposite ends of the keyboard.

Marie Antoinette

If you were alive today
You'd think the earthquake in Nepal,
Appalling of course,
Then you'd go back to eating cake.

Wrong End Of the Telescope

When I needed you to listen
I was just a faint star in your sky,
Smoggy with your own preoccupation.
I was far from you
And you looked through the telescope
Through the wrong end.
Maybe you could only cope
With your own issues.
In your insomniac life
You could only see your own night sky.

Sniper

You're a sniper.
You snipe from the tall building
Of your superiority,
As if you have telescopic sight.
You are sometimes accurate
But you only destroy,
A sniper with a viper tongue,
Complaining how it was all done wrong.
You felt they did not hit the mark.
You come out of your place of concealment,
Envy and bitterness revealed.

Don't Touch

It was surely okay to look at the flowers
But not to pick them.
It was surely okay to go window shopping
But not to buy,
The kid's scooters and bikes,
Shiny and new.
He had never acted on his desires.
He had only ever looked,
Unlike a lot of the priests.
This really was the love
That dare not speak its name.
He knew to act on it was wrong
And kept his secret from the threatening throng.
But it returned to him often,
An awful but catchy song
That he would find himself humming

Beer Duck

The craft beer place is called Beer Dock,
But as it's in Nottingham
It should be called Beer Duck.

Dock seems wrong.
As we're at least a hundred miles inland,
Almost as far from sea sand
As it's possible to be.

Maginot Line

Your thoughts of self-doubt
were a thousand invading armies,
That you thought you could keep at bay
With procrastination and wine,
But these did not protect you.
They just formed a Maginot Line.

Sherlock

Although Sherlock was great at deduction
He was not so good at seduction.
Fantastic at crosswords,
But not at mending wrong words.

Usually super observant,
But he's missed the obvious
Way she looked at him, oblivious.

Christmas

Christmas, I want to avoid it
As if it's an asteroid
Hurtling towards me.

I want to hibernate
Before it's too late.
I don't want to remember December.

Poetry and Song Lyrics

Sometimes we need to be alone,
As self-sufficient as poetry,
needing no musical backing.

But sometimes we need special company,
And we are song lyrics,
And only really come to life
With the melody of company

Cleaned Glass

Counselling has allowed me
To take a proper look at myself
In the mirror,
Wiped clean of dust and dirt,
Curtains open, a light turned on.

Counselling has cleaned my glasses,
So I can see friends more clearly,
Who is supportive, who is not,
Those who hold me dearly
And those I go to parties with.

Loneliness of a Long distance Runner (Leeds Half Marathon)

Running in a city I'd not been to before:
I tried to talk to the bloke
From the Idle Runners Club,
Said I liked his T Shirt
But he did not see the funny side
And said it was the name of the village,
But media commentators had made the same mistake.
So I moved on.

Most of the other runners
Had their heads clamped by headphones,
Motivational music.
Others were grabbed by Garmins.
I heard the hour chime of a city clock
But I did not know where it came from.
Most had heads down
Like Blake's Newton staring at the prism
Not noticing the rainbow in the sky,
As they pounded the floor.

Running in a city I'd not been too before,
I wanted to talk, but they were taciturn

Minotaur's Maze

When I feel low
I'm in the Minotaur's deep dark Maze,
With nobody to show me the way out,
Nobody to hear my shout.
But there's always a thread, a line,
Unfurled by Ariadne to save me,
To bring me slowly back to safety and daylight.

Atypical male Friendships

I'm glad I don't have those male friendships,
Where if you feel as though you want to die,
you don't talk about it,
You talk about DIY.

Kids

You've got into such conversational bother
For saying you don't want to be a mother.
Your partner would rather not be a father
But he gets off more lightly.
They say it's selfish for you to think about work and lifestyle.
You've enjoyed that for far too long a while.
Perhaps they're just pushy parents resentful
Lamenting times past. You want to be unencumbered.
You don't want your best years numbered.

For some, kids may be water for their family tree to grow,
And they don't want a desert of regret,
But for you it would be diluting your wine.
You are not interested in propagating your genes.
They say a person can't be complete
Without the pitter patter of tiny feet.
You think otherwise.

Rambling

Trudging back through the moors,
Distance barely budging.
The pylon, marking my destination
Seemed to get no nearer,
As if it was mortgage debt.
"Why aren't we there yet?"

Break in Whitby

Needing a break
You went to Bram Stoker's Whitby.
The funeral was hard
But it was not quite
A stake through your heart.
Talking it through with a friend
Was the garlic
To stop negativity's bite.

ID

I haven't been asked for ID
Since I was twenty three
Back in 1993.

I'm on a date with a twenty seven year old
Who always carries a passport with her
(an old one in case she loses it,
More likely under the influence)
As she gets asked for ID all the time.

She didn't ask me my age
But if she did it may be a sage move/ it may be sage
To knock five years off,
Or as much as I could get away with.
Would she ask me for ID
To prove I was a certain age?

The plan was that she'd go for an older man,
With more of an attention span
When it came to talk not about himself.
But maybe I was seen to be too old
And I could not get through her passport control.

Charm

His charm, *it's not real*

It's moonlight
Romancing the night,
Stealing light from the sun
Once day is done.
It's the magic

Of the Wizard of Oz,
Before Toto stumbles on
The little old man
Behind the curtain.

The deception leads you to doubt
Who you can be certain of.

Stumped

He was stumped
As to why he was dumped.
He pretended to be cricket white innocent,
But he was caught
Trying to catch the eye
Of another woman.
He had had his innings
But felt he was unfairly dismissed.
He appealed against the decision
But it was withheld.

He spent too much time
Playing sport, on the pitch
And off it.

Take It Slow

I thought I'd take it slow
Maybe, wait, until the next time
I see a rainbow,
Or wait until the Second Coming,
Or at least the gap
Between Stone Roses albums.
I thought I'd not make a move
Until I could indubitably prove
She was interested,
Or I could follow my instinct.

Almost Dry

You slept with your ex
Something he wanted
But you said you'd never do.
Before this he'd almost got the message
That you could only ever be friends.
All at once, washing that was almost dry,
Is now soaking wet again.

Pop Up On Your Screen

Your ex who has admitted
To being your stalker,
Is not a listener but a talker
And goes wherever you go.
He's a pop up on your screen
An unwanted advert,
Where you've been, he's been.

He thinks he needs you to feel complete,
And somehow thinks you feel the same way.
I know it's not easy to press delete.

Chemistry

Don't know much about chemistry,
But there wasn't enough
Between you and me.
Separate elements,
We needed something else to start a fire.
We were separate metals.
Each useful in its own way.
But did not make an alloy.
My tin and your copper did not become
bronze.

Had a second date,
There wasn't a vacuum of conversation,
But trying to create 'it'
Was like turning base metal into gold.
I'm no alchemist.

First Overnight Babysitting Of An Eleventh Month Old

Earlier in the evening I showed you
My toy dinosaurs
From my childhood,
But made sure you didn't put them in your mouth.

In the morning I had to get you up early
And you cried as loud
As I'd imagine a tyrannosaur to roar
Or Godzilla, a silence killer.
But by the time we got to my front door
Twenty minutes later,
You were in your pram, asleep.

Cyrano and Roxanne

Cyrano was envious of those,
Less talented,
But with a normal sized nose.
he had little exuberance
For his protuberance.

He had one he loved from afar,
Roxanne, he was her biggest fan,
But a man with such a hooter,
Could not be her suitor.
He made such constant jokes
But he was a most melancholy man/ bloke.

There was another who wanted to woo her,
A hollow headed handsome small nosed
Soldier, junior to Cyrano.
His only charm was his looks,
But not having Cyrano's hooter
He was visually much cuter.

Cyrano came to the handsome small nosed soldier's aid.
The soldier then went to her bower after dark,
A ventriloquist's dummy mouthing
Cyrano's own words of love.
There were tears from the one above
As the letters of love mouthed
By the handsome small nosed soldier,
Written by Cyrano
But she did not know.
The content of these letters
Started to get better and bolder
But Cyrano's heart remained timid
As he grew older.

Only when he lay dying
And Cyrano reread Roxanne the letters,
At her request,
(She still thought them
To be from the handsome small nosed soldier,
Who bravely died in battle),
Did he let slip his secret,
For he continued to read out loud
After the evening had gone as dark
As Cyrano's heart.
How could he read in the dark?
Roxanne knew at once
And forgot all about the handsome small nosed soldier.
Now, too late, she thought only about Cyrano.

Footballers Today

The fans that used to stand in the terraces;
Many of them still live in terraces,
Gardens little bigger than Subbuteo pitches,
Rooms barely big enough to hold
Table top football,
At best the size of the six yard box.

Their idols live idly,
In mansions with pitch sized gardens
And driveways the distance
From goal to goal, end to end.
It's a short career they say,
But at twenty, already,
They no longer have to worry
About their pension.

Easter Football

All of my poems about the Wolves have been downbeat,
Usually about us facing defeat,
But recently we've had a resurrection.
I saw it on Easter Friday away against Forest.
This time we weren't second best.
The players in black and gold were bold.
Out of darkness came light.
On the pitch they've shown fight.
They've more than put a shift in,
(But industry's important,
The fans see little in the city)
They've put a show on.
The ball passed on the floor,
Not hooped up to the heavens,
Expecting a divine return of the ball.

We were crucified at the home game,
But resurrected away.

Premier Inn

There's no nocturnal din
At a Premier Inn.
Numerous in number,
They facilitate slumber
From Hereford to the Humber,
Unlike the previous hotel I stayed in.

I couldn't hear and feel
Bumblin' bass and drilling drums
From some awful 90's chart hits.

Does Lenny Henry stay at a Premier Inn?
I doubt it.
He's on more of a Premier income.

Holding Down a Job

We talk of holding down a job
As if it were possessed,
In need of exorcism,
Or a criminal being restrained
And then handcuffed,
Or a hot air balloon
Untied and someone's not let go
In time.

Retirement

Few want to think about pension plans
Unless you're a mover and shaker with big acres.

By the time retirement arrives
You'll be at least seventy five.
Will you have the energy
To spend time gardening,
As your arteries are hardening?
You've finished paying the death pledge.
Just enough energy to trim the hedge.
In the autumn of your years
All of your leaves will have shed
By the time you cease being a wage slave.

Worse, some might be skeleton trees,
Soon to be dead at their desk.

A few, those with their dominions
And big lawns,

Will get to enjoy their retirement.
The rest of us, minions awake at dawn,
Sleepless.

One Solution

I used to believe:
One solution revolution,
Scientific socialism.

Since then, I've realised
That forces of social change,
When dropped in the global goblet, cup,
Is only a pipette drop
Into a massive pot,
But no boiling cauldron
Diluting in the solution.

Elections May 2015

Some may think I'm green
For voting Green,
But I'd prefer to be callow
Than yellow,
Like those faded roses
And withered rosettes,
Who haven't said what they stand for yet.

Student Grants Gone

I could write a justified rant
Against the Tories' axing
Of the student maintenance grant
And their taxing the poor.
Educated at Eton and Harrow,
Interests selfish and narrow,
But I'm going to make it less polemical
And more personal.

At eighteen I was given two grand a year
For three years,
Which granted me release and escape
From grey blue collar Wolverhampton.
I ended up in Nottingham.
Without the grant I would have stayed at home,
My mind, heart and body wouldn't have been able to roam.
Different people would be reading this.
Fewer people would be reading this.

Cherry Red DM's

I prefer to call them Cherry Red
Than Ox Blood
As the latter brings to mind the animal dead.
I eat no meat
But I must confess
To wearing leather on my feet.
The alternatives are few
And they'd make my feet smell.

At least I don't wear leather jackets.

Verses Matter Too

Verse, chorus, verse,
What could be worse?
As predictable as sleep, work, sleep.

The verse is something to drift through,
Until the chorus,
A National Express coach,
Taking us to our destination.

The hook is worth a longer look,
A Turner or a Monet.
Every element of the chorus
Is shouting "adore us."

The verse should be a limousine at least,
On the open road,
We enjoy the destination
But we can also enjoy the ride.

Craft

Poetry has to have craft
Pretend otherwise and you're daft.
Without craft, people can always tell
If the metaphors don't ring true,
They can smell them as false.
Just because there's no chords or scales,
Don't have to learn to use a bow,
Does not mean you don't have to grow
And that involves craft
Which involves graft.
Don't let your first draft
Be your final words.

Poetry has to have craft,
Otherwise you're just a raft
That won't survive
On the ocean of scrutiny.
Do you think constructive criticism
Is some sort of mutiny?

Seamus Heaney

He could be dismissed as just Famous Seamus.
It's true it's hard to think of signature lines
Such as "they f### you up your mum and dad"
But that doesn't mean his verse is bad.
For me Heaney did not write anything
As starkly visual as *Mr Bleaney*,
But like Larkin, lots of people read him.
He didn't just write poems about ploughs.
He wrote about now.
His writing has got through passport control,
Where poetry is usually denied entry.
He has given poetry a role.

No Borders

People, fleeing persecution,
Over 700 dead in water, slaughter.
Somebody's son, somebody's daughter.
Did not want to be drowning in blood,
So they risked drowning at sea.
Our government does not care
What happens over Dover.
Does not provide a single life boat,
Not even a rubber ring.
Spouting the Good Book
At every opportunity
But there's no Ark.
Countries close their borders.

People, fleeing persecution,
It's old news,
The Jews fled.
Our government call them bad news.
The Jews dead.
Countries closed their borders.

People fleeing persecution,
They are looking for a country
Called Empathy,
Not on any map
But its citizens are around the globe
And they do not close their borders.

Snakes and Ladders

The asylum seeker learns to play
Snakes and ladders.
At the whim of the dice
He can climb the rickety ladders
Or slide down the snakes
To detention without trial
Or deported back to square one,
With the serpents ready with their venom.
Will he ever get to square one hundred?

A Month in the Country (Birkin)

The film starts in the rain,
A stuttering man, scurrying
Towards a church,
To check the guttering.

Yorkshire, August 1919:
Tom Birkin tries to forget
All he's smelt, touched, heard and seen.
A Londoner, he never saw so much green,
Except in the eyes of Mrs Geach,
The vicar's wife.
Tom's wife's left again,
Found another lover,
Done it before. She'll do it again.

Tom's job is to uncover
A medieval wall painting, a Judgement.
Over that August, he uncovers the image
A man with a crescent moon on his head,
Shoved into hell
Five hundred years dead,
A Muslim, made in the Christian Crusade,
Buried outside church grounds.

Tom sleeps under the church bell,
Hell when it rings each morning.
The Reverend JP Geach,
Has a large, empty house,
On the other side of the wood,
Preaches the Good Samaritan.

Mrs Geach made herself within reach.
Loved her apples, gave him one.
Tempted, in this Yorkshire Garden
Still, he left alone,
Recipient of only an apple and a flower,
But each from her.
His stammer has gone,
His longing has not.

How Football Used to Be

On the terraces they watched players
Who used to electrify the crowd
And shock opposing defences,
But were only paid a sparky's wage
And served apprenticeships
If things did not last.

The players that use to plug the leaks
In defence,
Were only paid a plumbers wage.
It seems a different age.

Green

Green is my favourite colour,
The colour of Hulk's rage,
Othello's god of envy,
Oz's Wicked Witch,
The colour of naivety
But never of flowers.

It is also the colour
Of Ireland's forty shades
And Blake's pleasant land.
Of Cloughie's jersey.
And of traffic lights saying: go.

About the author

I've been writing poems for seventeen years. This is my fifth volume of poetry.

This booklet contains seventy six poems (a few of which are set in the 80's but don't worry there's no space hoppers or Rubik's Cubes). The booklet costs £3 so that's just under 4 pence per poem, a lot cheaper than Faber and Faber (I don't have the right connections). Nearly all of the poems are short. If they were a person they'd be Ronnie Corbett or maybe Napoleon or possibly Prince.

There should not be too many obscure, esoteric references (It's not the Waste Land), but the internet is there to help if needed.

I'm a founder member of DIY Poets, a Nottingham based poetry collective the aims of which are to encourage more people to perform their poetry and get their words into print. It also wants to make poetry less of a minority sport. At the moment it's the croquet of the arts. DIY Poets want it be cricket at the very least. (There's more about DIY Poets in the advert below).

DIY POETS

A Nottingham based poetry collective trying to rescue poetry from elitism and being ignored.

DIY Poets have monthly meetings upstairs at the Broadway bar, Broad Street, Nottingham city centre, 8pm on the first Wednesday of each month.

DIY Poets produce a free poetry magazine based in shops, bars and cafes throughout Nottingham city centre.

DIY Poets produce a quarterly night of spoken word and music at the Maze on 257 Mansfield Road, Nottingham NG1 3FT

For more information phone 07889 765917 or email: diypoets@yahoo.co.uk

Join us on Facebook

VISIT OUR WEBSITE @: www.diypoets.com

Review of Difficult Second Volume:

"What appears to be a flat back four of everyday prose is illuminated by bursts of free verse magic, placed all over the pages with pinpoint precision by a playmaker of modern poetry. Thatcher, racist humour and narcissism are tackled and exposed for what they are." *Left Lion magazine*