

Connector Media Presents



An Anthology
of Men's
Personal
Thoughts and
Experiences
2009

FOREWORD

The group of men who were involved in compiling this publication were brought together by the involvement of

Age Concern Mid Mersey - Men2Mentor - Fit as a Fiddle Project
Connector Media
St Helens College
St Helens Test the Town Project
The Well Being Project
The Big Lottery Fund

Age Concern Mid Mersey designed and delivered a Men2Mentor Project linked in with the Fit as a Fiddle Project funded through the Big Lottery Fund. The project promotes positive mental well being by encouraging older men to participate in physical exercise, healthy eating and other activities. The programme's aim is to promote a healthier, active and fulfilling life through personal fitness and social networking programmes.

Connector Media CiC is a social enterprise that provides a variety of education and development programmes aimed at enriching people's lives and helping them to achieve their ambitions. They believe in providing fair, equal and accessible opportunities to help people transform their lives with a view to becoming economically independent through new job opportunities and self-employment.

The Well Being Project was set up in St Helens in 2005, initially as a voluntary group and later on went on to become one of the first organisations to adopt the new format of Community Interest Company (CIC). The organisation believes it can play a central role in the provision of innovative and effective social prescribing opportunities by offering community based interventions that bring people together and that focus individual attention outwardly on getting emotional needs met.

It is the ambition of the Well Being Project to become a national leader in the social prescribing arena.

A tutor from **St Helens College** has been involved in the compilation of this anthology. The group of men participated in the Test the Town project (an initiative to encourage people back into learning) and 'brushed up' on their English skills before going on to achieve Certificates in Adult Literacy.

The aim of this publication is to entertain, provoke and give food for thought to the reader.

It represents the first element in a two-part course comprising poetry and prose - in the form of the short story.

The following anthology was produced by a group of 'senior' men (50 plus) and one 25 year old man; never having tackled any such project since school, in response to given topics.

Individual contributions reflect personal experiences; humour, pathos and feelings, as well as the more imaginative and unique.

See how you like it and maybe have a go yourself.

Shakespeare it isn't; but it is meant as an encouragement to self expression and perhaps a growth in confidence.

See what you think!

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

I like pies and I like chips
I like salad and stuff with dips
I like fruit and chocolate but I don't like fish
Of course I'm always partial to a homemade dish

I like ice cream, jelly and those rice crispy bars
And when I'm feeling extravagant I'll splash out for some Hagen Daz
I like steak, chicken, beef and duck
But to me, cooked eggs look like muck

I don't mind omelettes though with a little bit of cheese
And my mum's lasagne does so much more than please
I like grapes, apples and fresh raspberries
But I always leave room for Ben and Jerry's

You name the food and chances are I'll eat it
When a man's starving hungry, with a plate before him, you just can't beat it
But at the end of the day, we are what we eat
So I'll stay in the gym to keep the weight down, so I can see my feet

By Marlon Bonnici

A LAKELAND FOLLY

I used to go running five times a week
And got reasonably fit, so to speak
It was then that I made my biggest mistake
By doing a half-marathon up in the lakes
The course was set up round Derwent water
And up there I went like a lamb to the slaughter
The course I'd describe as quite undulating
And one that I quickly ended up hating
I finished the run and come home all alone
'Cause everyone else had packed up and gone home
I came away tired and quite a bit wiser
And I got my name in the Keswick Advertiser
I have a medal made from slate
For running that race that I came to hate

By Don Whittaker

If Jesus Christ Were Born Today

If Jesus Christ were born today,
would He still be born a Jew?
Would He still be born in Palestine?
Would He try somewhere new?
Would it still be in a stable, in a cave or in a tent?
In a hostel, or a mansion, or a council flat in Brent?
Would Social Services be 'round to check if He's at risk?
If He were born in Harringay, they might not be so brisk!
Would He be wearing "Pampers", instead of swaddling clothes?
For terry nappies, these days, are what every mother loathes.

If Jesus Christ were born today,
would there still be a star,
to guide wise men to find the way,
or "Sat-nav" in their car?
Would their prezzies still be cash,
ointment and precious oil?
Could they across the border dash
and Israel's Army foil?
Would Hamas or Hezbollah act to help them make the trip?
Would they have to dodge the missiles packed inside the Gaza Strip?

If Jesus Christ were born today,
Could He miss Herrod's cull?
To be torn to pieces anyway,
by His bag-head Gran's pit-bull?
Would Joseph be His step-dad,
for the sake of family honour?
Or would He be obliged to be
adopted by Madonna?
Would His life be one of bliss or would He yet be thwarted?
Would He have a life at all or would He be aborted?

If Jesus Christ were born today,
He'd still be our redeemer
and still the "Harrower of Hell",
not just an idle dreamer.
Had our souls learned lasting lessons,
like to save us from the fire,
He would save us from ourselves,
our sins and be our true Messiah.
Would we have the sense to listen? Could we make our way to Heaven?
Can New York (so good they hit it twice), get over Nine-eleven?

If Jesus Christ were born today,
would He have His own web-site?
Would He keep a blog up every day?
Could He have a "Silent Night"?
Are E-mail prayers appropriate?
Is it R.A.M. or C.D. R.O.M?
Does Peter man the Pearly Gate?
HYPERLINK "mailto:Lambofgod@paradise.COM" Lambofgod@paradise.COM?
Is there a password needed to get by the firewall?
Or are we just deluded and there's no-one there at all?

By Leonard Vincent Nicoll

MAN I'VE GOT TO BE

Man I've got to be
Dependable and strong
Always right and never wrong
Upright and not a sinner
The worker, the bread winner

Calm and level headed
Make decisions I've always dreaded
Old 'Mister Reliable'
The model man
That's undeniable

But deep inside my belly shakes
I keep on making the same mistakes
I'm invisible don't look to me, I yearn
They keep coming back to me
Do they never learn?

I'm not the man you think I am
I'm the man without a plan
Shooting the rapids, paddling dangerously
Drowning now ...
I couldn't care less about me

Explosions thundering in my head
Tossing and turning in my bed
Then when the morning comes to me
Again, I'll be the man
I've got to be

By Roger Jones

IN CASE OF

In case of war, what do we do?
In case of do, maybe we don't

Concerning don't, maybe we won't
In case of won't, what do you think?

Concerning think, no lack of thought
In case of thought, what's on your mind?

Concerning 'mined' watch out for the field
If you're in the 'field', take care where you step

In case of step, are you on the ladder?
Concerning ladder, going up, going down?

In case of down, d'you have a good blanket?
And with the blanket, you covering up?

In case of up, keep your eyes on the sky
Whilst watching the sky, look out for the rain

In case of reign, where is Saddam Hussein?
Concerning Hussein, could war be in vain?

When thinking of vein and the spilling of blood
Concerning such blood, is Tony our kin?

If he is our kin, is he phoney or fair?
Concerning the fare, d'you know Mr Blair?

And concerning the truth, just who's being true?
Is it Bush or Saddam, now what do we do?
Anyone heard any good lies recently?

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HOSPITALISED

One day we went into Whiston
Alice, Maud, Sandra, Liz and me
The ladies displayed consternation
To think all together we'd be

Alice, Maud, Sandra, Liz and me
In the ward, hoping to go home
In the ward, waiting for our tea
Patients all with toothbrush, paste and comb

And nothing much else, I fear
We all came in, in a hurry
People say, be of good cheer
No way must we worry

He was I, man solitary
Seeking for places to rest my eye
In the face of all this beauty
Quite out of place, felt I!

Liz had a hat from the Klondyke
She wore it in bed every night
She might have been Biggles the airman
Engaged in some North Polar flight

She had also a standing up shoe-horn
Made of silver that shone through the night
She steered her bed on towards the far morn
Through the dim of the small hours light

Tiny Maud composed utter confusion
Her beloved teeth went astray
They were found by the much-used hand basin
Where they rested for most of the day

Poor Sandra was lost in the land of the deaf
For her hearing aid had disappeared
Switched off, it was still in the side of her head
And not quite the disaster she feared

Then Sandra upset the ward more so
For a bath 'Bonnie Alice' had sped
When she came back she was very perplexed
There was Sandra, asleep in her bed

I was moved from that ward of the female
To a ward occupied by mere men
For my gentle companions I have high regard
Though I may never see them again

By Richard Reynolds

OSCAR

I get a visit every day
From Oscar Ginger Tom
Although he thinks this is his home
He lives next door but one

He started coming to our house
When he was just a kitten
My wife then started feeding him
Because she was quite smitten

He's always been a timid cat
When callers ring the bell
His ears prick up and off he goes
And runs like 'bloody hell'

His owners know he comes to me
And they don't seem to mind
Sometimes I can't get rid of him
And it becomes a bind

And now he's getting very old
And birds no longer chases
In common with myself I think
We're both not at the races

By Don Whittaker

NEVER ENDING WAR

The world is big enough for all of us
We don't need lebensraum
But Hitler wanted otherwise
And this lead to his doom

We let the *Germans* take the 'Czeks'
Then they invaded Poland
They had been warned about this move
As Poland was 'no go' land

And so in nineteen thirty nine
World war two began
And lasted until forty five
With the fall of Japan

A reign of terror had been stopped
But countless lives were lost
Civilians and forces too
Were left to count the cost

And so a few years after this
We all lived without fear
Until it started all again
In North and South Korea

And as I sit with pen in hand
Our men are fighting still
Why can't we humans live in peace?
Instead of wound and kill

by
Don Whittaker

TOGETHER WE LIVED

I walked into his room and looked around
That was when I first saw her
I looked and my heart began to pound
I thought, "That one will do for me"

She must have felt the same
For she came over to me
She sat down beside me
She showed no sign of shame

Soon she moved in and lived with me
Together we went walking
Together we watched TV
She was as happy as can be

No need to tell her I loved her
She hadn't got time for that
A little petting she enjoyed
As she sat on the settee with me, watching TV

As we grew older together
I realised how great, was the love that we shared
Many things we had done together
Many the pleasures we shared

Then one day she died
My emotions were severely tried
Oh! How I cried
On the day, my dog died

By
Jim Rimmer

ST HELENS BORN AND BRED

I have often heard it said
St Helens born, St Helens bred
Strong in the arm
And weak in the head

But consider the people
Who are St Helens bred
Great names spring to mind
Who were not weak in the head

Dick Seddon, an Eccleston lad
First Prime Minister of New Zealand, no less
Thomas Beecham, a musical maestro
And one of the best

Geoff Duke, now there's a name
Riding a motor cycle brought him to fame
Alex Murphy, whose name is well respected
He is in the St Helens Hall of Fame

What of George Groves, John Draper and Jack Mullineux
Well may you ask?
To tell you about them
Is my next task

George Groves, talking movies came out of his head
Jack Mullineux and John Davies from Peasley Cross came
Winning the Victoria Cross
Was their claim to fame

By
Jim Rimmer

WHEN I WAS A LAD

When I was a lad
Things were a bit different
Than they are today
But we did have Christmas in those days

You went to the shops to buy
"We've got none!"
That's what the shopkeepers would say
"Don't you know there's a war on?"

I was lucky in those Christmas' past
My father was a collier and so stayed at 'wom'
Some of my mates had none
For their fathers, to the war had gone

"What's Santa bringing you?"
You were asked by no one
There was no point
For there was a war on

Now when I look back at those hard times
And I look at the bustle of these modern times
Children having to choose from all the amazing things
What they want Santa to bring

Now we are urged to shop and shop
And then to shop some more
So that profits can be made
By the big stores

When I was a lad things were much simpler
On Christmas Eve we hung up a sock
An apple, an orange and a silver coin
That was what you got!

You left Santa a mince pie
And a glass of Hock
Even though
There was a war on

By Jim Rimmer

THE SCIENTISTS SAY

The scientists all say
"We're in danger of global warming"
Yet not many years ago they said
"The second ice age is forming"

Now they say the ice caps are melting
"The ice caps are extending" said our former sages
Now they say "Something must be done"
As they said regarding a new age

When did global warming start?
A question to tax your brain
A study of history reveals
For hundreds of years temperature has waxed and waned

Ice caps have melted, flooding we've had
Disasters so bad, humankind in caves had to hide
One thing through the ages has been proven
Human kind was made to survive

By Jim Rimmer

THE THIRD AGE

When I retired I looked forward to a life of pleasure
I sat in my armchair and planned my life of ease
The things I have always wanted to do
I can now achieve
In my new life of leisure

The next few months passed pleasantly by
Slowly I got used to being a gentleman of leisure
I did this and I did that
I joined this group and I joined that group
All in the interest of pleasure

No when I sit and reflect on the things I have seen
The things I have done, the places I have been
The things I have achieved
The thought in my head, it does lurk
How the hell did I have time for work?

By Jim Rimmer

THE LAST TRAIN

After a night in Liverpool
I took the last train home
People sat all around me
On their mobile phones
"I'm on the train, I'll soon be there
I'm passing Huyton now"
Someone at the other end
Must care
A girl across was texting now
Her fingers going like mad!
I wondered what the message was
I bet it wasn't her dad!
A couple up ahead stood up
And shared a short embrace
And then she turned towards me
And I could see her face
Tall brunette with lovely legs
Walking down the aisle
And as he passed me our eyes met
She gave me a little smile
The male was looking back at her
Until she left the train
Had they just met this evening?
Would they meet again?
The office 'Christmas Do' perhaps
Or were they long time lovers?
There was a difference in their age
And he was so much older
Wonder if she knew his age?
Or if he'd never told her
And as I walked home from the train
I thought of both of them again
I wished them well
This Christmas time
I also wished
That girl was mine

By Don Whittaker

KAROLA

In a pub in a village in Germany
A young British soldier drank lager
Then full of 'Dutch courage' he asked for a dance
With a girl named Karola Fromhage

The soldier had fallen in love with Karola
It was definitely love at first sight
His friends had told him that he had no chance
But he was up for the fight

His German improving quite quickly
He asked her to dance every week
Although she was friendly he wasn't quite sure
His attitude was far too meek

Then one day when sat at a table
A young German friend made his day
Said Karola had told him she liked him
And she'd be here soon if he'd stay

The upshot of this was they went on a date
His colleagues were quite flabbergasted
But in May 1960 his service was up
And that was how long romance lasted

By Don Whittaker

WHAT I LOVE

I love to look at wildlife
I love to watch good sport
I love to hear good music
And girls I used to court

I love to eat a curry
And walk the hills and dales
And finish in a country pub
Where I can drink real ales

I love to travel far and wide
To Europe and the States
But most of all I love to have
My family and good mates

By Don Whittaker

SONG FOR KATIE

There was a girl who was never late
This bright kind lady's name was Kate
She had a boy whose name was Andy
Sweeter to her heart than candy

They'd known each other now, years three
She thought it right, Andy and she
Should dance beneath the Greenwood Tree
Then one to each would married be

No doubt they would know much joy
Lovely girl and stalwart boy
Through the years they'll know together
Tempestuous and pleasant weather

By
Richard Reynolds

SCHOOLDAYS REMEMBERED

My parents were delighted
When I passed the eleven plus
The new school was so far away
But we had a school bus

I had to wear school uniform
A blazer, cap and tie
Complete with satchel on my back
A smart young man was I

I started off in class 1B
With French, maths and Latin
All subjects that were new to me
And to the class, I sat in

The highlight of the year for us
Was the annual cross-country run
To tell the truth I hated it
To me it was no fun

I met a girl named Barbara
Was told she fancied me
This girl was quite attractive
A lovely sight to see

I used to meet her at the gate
And walk her to her bus
The romance didn't last too long
No future there for us

I ended up in class 5A
And left at age sixteen
I could have gone on to sixth form
But didn't like the scene

I still drive past the school sometimes
And pass the self-same gate
And fancy Barbara's waiting there
But no, it's far too late!

By Don Whittaker

TAKING A HIKE

Where poets wandered lonely as a cloud
I used to wander with a crowd
On lakelands, highest fells we trod
I ended up a tired sod

And many times I used to get
Extremely muddy, cold and wet
And after stopping off for grub
We'd hurry back onto the pub

I used to walk the Yorkshire dales
But now prefer to drink real ales
My several Ordnance Survey maps
I'll sell on e-bay now, perhaps

By Don Whittaker

CLIMATE CHANGE

I remember times when winters were hard
And summers hot as hell
With winter snowdrifts ten feet tall
And pea soup smog as well

We used to have an outside loo
And used to dig our way there
Through winter snow up to our knees
In and out in a flash, far too cold to stay there

It's true that winters are warmer now
But summers are getting worse
Flooding caused by too much rain
And river banks that burst

Has all this change been caused by us?
Or is it nature's way
It doesn't worry me too much
I just live day by day

By Don Whittaker

**A Limerick
By
Don Whittaker**

The deputy head of our school
Was certainly nobody's fool
We all lived in terror
Of making an error
And so had to bide by the rules

MY GRANDSON

My grandson George was born last week
On Sunday night at eight
And although three weeks premature
Was quite a decent weight

I went to see him afterwards
My heart was filled with joy
I'd waited seventeen long years
To see that little boy

And as I held him in my arms
This bundle of new life
My joy was tinged with sadness for
My dear departed wife

I'm getting on a bit myself
But hope I get to see
Him grow up and become
A little bit like me

By
Don Whittaker

WILL YOU BUY A POPPY?

Will you buy a poppy today?
And wear it on your chest with pride
To remember those that went away
And fought for you and died

And think of what things might have been
Had they not been so brave
The terrors that we would have seen
Our island home enslaved

Will you buy a poppy today?
To help those still in need
It's such a tiny price to pay
I'm sure you will concede

By
Don Whittaker

DISABILITY

Stand out, don't be beaten down
It's a label
The thoughts of society
A clown

Look away, no respect
Pass by another
Being not of this world
Do you all carry prejudices unfurled?

Disability, do you recognise it?
Should we? What good does it do?
Is it for all of us?
Or a certain few

When men of knowledge and power proclaim
It's all in the mind, overcome the physical
Are they blind?
Is rhetoric so unkind?

Some mother's daughter is suffering
Bullying, a life more pain than fun
But for those who carry the label
They are beautiful people, truly able!

See beyond the limit of the mind's eye
The cover of the book, the cupboard door of life
Ask the question, is disability?
A reflection of your own fragility

By
Leonard Saunders

NOW CLEARLY DO I SEE

My compass does not read true
Does love always see through me and you?
Is confidence a vanity?
Or sand in your face, uncertainty?

Movement ----- taking
The restless pace
Of lies a brazen face
No losers - no winners
Just an endless race
Cupid faking this ageless game
But we all fall in, fit the frame

A loaded deck, a winning hand
Who holds the smoke and mirrors?
Of consequences, a deceit
Or is love always incomplete?

The magic of love
Casts a potent spell
Which ebbs and flows
Sometimes through heaven and hell
A storm that thunders
Through heart and mind
Villainously blind
Can love be so unkind?
When it dies or is lost
You may think you are free
But your heart speaks

Now clearly do I see!

By
Leonard Nicoll and Leonard Saunders

THE ECONOMY

Economic recession
May cause some depression
But how did it get to this state?

The falling stock prices
Are caused by the vices
Of bank managers' practice of late

They did not behave
When they told **us** to save
So please let me now remonstrat!

Jobs down the pan
And the removals van
Is showing up here at our gate!

The bank managers have managed
To leave us all damaged
Then left us to deal with our fate

Economic decline
But you won't hear me whine
To the positive I do equate

NOTE: The money is still there. It hasn't been burned or destroyed - globally. Most of it has been salted away, probably in untouchable offshore bank accounts. Therefore, if it was returned or discovered, the recession would vanish.

by
Frank Leyland

HYPNOS

It's black like oil and burns like acid
It's easily provoked and never placid
It grows like bamboo and is sharp like coral
It's a part of us all, both sick and immoral

The words go around in my subconscious mind
They're strange, lilting, everything and also kind
They speak of a garden, a river and a refuse bin
And they're welcome after the mire and the everyday din

My muscles relax and my lungs begin to breathe
The throb of my heart makes my pulse dive and heave
It's the key I have to the madman's lock in my head
The warmth against the chill when I first ease myself into bed

I inhale peace and exhale shards of pain
It's the blazing sunshine after the rain
My final gambit to bring me back to life
The safety cap on the end of my favoured knife

If it's strong enough to last, then here comes the change
The music that plays to make the monkey dance in its cage
It's white like milk and cool like ice
It's calm and relaxed and so much better than ice

By
Marlon Bonnici

CONSTANCE

1914 to 1918, the years the whole world went to hell
1939 TO 1945, the decades earth once more tolled on death's bell
Tanks, dreadnaughts and mortar fire, the air flecked with blood
Trenches, razor wire and rats, all good men forced to die in mud

Moustachioed Hitler perverting the Hindu Cross
Makes his play on old UK
Macho Mussolini peeling oranges
Always ensconced with his guitar to play

Auschwitz, Dachou and Sobibor
Three names for a most heinous scheme
People smiling at the prospect of showers
Before realisation made the scream

No man's land swept the world
And the wireless brought he news
Chamberlain declares war
Whilst Germany starts hating the Jews

The air aid siren screams two words
And they are simply 'Stand aside'
When the bombs fell, who knew what would happen?
Besides, the fact was that people died

I didn't live through the war
In fact, I wasn't even born
But I see its influence everywhere these days
How many lives destroyed and torn?

What I think of as old men went off
For King and this nation
The precursors of freedom
To stop tyrannical domination

Leaders come and leaders go
But once every so often they'll try

Their vision for the world, self-serving
Everyone else can just die

I sometimes wonder what war today would entail
What new horrors would we see?
Rape, torture and indignation
Is this what POW's would expect from me?

Oil, diamonds and religion
You name it and war was there
It's human nature to fight with one another
And to fight with one another unfair

Hussein, Bin Laden and Mugabe
These are the names of today
But what will tomorrow bring?
Perhaps it is a good idea to pray!

By Marlon Bonnici

MISS PRESCOT

I was hungry and she was my food
I was thirsty and she was my drink
I was in pain and she was my morphine
My beautiful ivory-skinned endorphine

Her eyes are blue and her hair is black
She was the chain that held my demons back
My goddess from the frozen north
My queen, my life, my world in flesh

There were never any arguments
No angry claims or harsh accusations
Ours was an existence of perfect bliss
The only woman I've never felt a thing amiss

She massaged my ego and my aching self-esteem
She lit up the gloom like a cold silver moonbeam
She bruised so easily but it was something she always enjoyed
The prospect of life without her, leaving me destroyed

She made me what I am today
The architectress of my palace of scars
She said "You've been starved for so long but I'm here to provide"
And as I look back on our lives, I see that she never once lied

But nothing is forever and
Our mirror was smashed to pieces
And I'd gladly cut myself on the shards
Just to be near her again

So now I'm all
That is left
Here I stand
All marked, broken and bereft

By Marlon Bonnici

WHITE AS CHALK

He said "Your voice is different but its arrogance is the same"
I said "Hello Ken, I see you're still passing the blame"
Two formal enemies for thirteen years gone by
This is the tale of my nemesis and not one word of it a lie!

He came into my life like a Mancunian flash in the pan
A plain-looking aloof, self-conceited little man
I should thank him in a way, because now I know not what to do
Avoid being two-faced or think that I'm better than you

For so many years I toed the line, for my dear old mum
How many times I felt like saying "Shut it Ken and kiss my bum"
Nothing I did was ever right, but in the end I didn't care anymore
He'd just go on and on - Jesus Christ he was a bore!

Some of it was laughable and some of it cut to the bone
Some of it makes me smile now and some of it makes me hate home
But every dog has its day and my time came at night
My mum brought her new fella home and I thought there would be a fight

In the end there was no showdown, no blazing rows or retribution
Out with the old and in with the new, that's what led to my evolution
I lost track of the '**fountain of knowledge**' only saw him once, perhaps twice
But if I saw him again I think that I know I'd treat him as cold as ice

He can't come back to St Helens, so in the end I think I got the best
My life went on easier, but sometimes I think back on the Mancunian pest
He's still out there somewhere, no doubt lying and scheming all over again
I keep a picture to remind me, of that person I used to know, called Ken!

By Marlon Bonnici

ALMOST

I remember this one day when I was at school
It was during a football game and if I'm honest, I was acting the fool
I'd just started my training, Je et Kune do, behind the Town Hall
Pretending I was something special, repeatedly side- kicking the football

The first pass came and I said "Here we go, I'm ready"
I positioned myself perfectly, my body the picture of steady
With all the grace I could muster, I smacked the umbro out of the sky
I missed the net, but what did I know; my aim was far too high

Pass two came around and I thought "this time it's mine"
I angled myself perfectly and my technique was 'bloody sublime'
I hit the ball again and it took off towards the back of the net
That day I had some skill and any tickets sold would've won the bet

They say third time's a charm but for me this was grossly untrue
A student teacher doing his training, Mr Powell to me and you
I remember disliking him from the start; what happened was a mistake
I mean that sincerely; if you don't believe me, the lie detector I will take

Once more I wanted to knock out the poor football we used
It all happened in slow motion; I should have seen the visual clues
The ball flew past me but my foot stayed tight on course
The student teacher yelling his orders and yelling himself hoarse

Will all the force of my 15 year old self, I booted him on his pimply chin
He spiralled down 'deadly stunned'; my team mates kicked up an awful din
Steve Davies collapsed to the floor, his face red with tears of delight
Jason Smith staring at me saying "Marlon, he's twice your fucking height"

Mr Powell stayed down for maybe a good minute or two
Mr Gardner, PE teacher, roared at me "Bonnici, what the hell did you do?
I got a telling off and a two hour detention later that week
I got self-respect from the incident though, people knew I wasn't weak

By Marlon Bonnici

CLEARLY NOW DO I SEE?

Now you have put me on the spot
As to whether I want you or not
Do I stay or do I get shot
Or am I happy with my lot

Give me a little time

The puzzling pieces are now into place
The beauty I see is not only your face
The air you bring with you is accompanied by grace
I do love your company, not just your embrace

I think I am beginning to see

Okay, I've made my decision
Why do you think I stare at you?
I have no intention to glare at you
Because I'm so aware of you

I think I have fallen in love

I have cleared the sand out of my eyes
And quickly come to realise
That being with you is twice as nice
So let my love for you suffice

Now may I take you home?

By Don Whittaker and Frank Leyland

NOT A SONNET (OWED TO BILL GATES)

What be this I see before mine eyes?
A dagger? Nay, a QUILL, to my surprise
Poor Yorick brings a message from across the ocean wide
America, it beckons, but mine eloquence must hide
"A quill, a quill!" poor Yorick says and master's vain approve
"A message from Bill Gates for thee - is it time that thy should move?"
"Bill Gates?" I asketh: Who be that and when from he doth came?
I'll shut yon gates!" was my reply "until he come Pewter
And troth my plight near't Buzzard's Eye" I said to my disputer
"Avast ye wenchies and brave men, let's storm the Gates, come hither
My, my crow's oft enturned aside, thy'll see yon Bill Gates wither!"

Prithee, I have no need of Bill Gates'Word, as a Wordsmith I am too
A pox be 'pon his gonads lad! (and verily a plague or two)
Now storm the gates of Bill's domain and crush the scoundrel cur
Don't bother me with Pewter talk and how much his hard drives err

I stand alone and proudly gaze over my own Vista
With quill in th'and I'll scrawl my words in spite this damned blister
On me thumb forsooth and in the graveyard we will growl and rage
And Camarra doth cry "Out damned Spot!" as the dog pees on his page

By Frank Leyland © MM7

POSITIVE ENERGY

Eliminate the negative, accentuate the positive
Yes we've heard it all before
But maybe it **DOES** work
Life is hard for everyone at one time or another
In one way or another
So no need to go berserk

Anxiety won't make you grow, will not add an inch or two
So let's try something new
We have nothing to lose
Discriminate the negative and live with what is left
Achieving calm, it can be hard
So let us now peruse

Individuals we are and some like chalk and cheese
The struggle may be greater
For one woman or one man
We need to bite the bullet, determine to sustain
And when we make the effort
We will get there if we can

Do not work against yourself - that will make life much harder
Live or die, we are here to the very end
Why carry more weight than you need to at all?
Positive energy
Try to get some, my friend

Contemplate the time when a problem once was solved
Recall the emotions
The pleasure that day
Relive the events; see them in your mind's eye
What has happened before
Can chase today's blues away!

By Frank Leyland ©

THE TINNITUS BLUES

In my every waking hour
I have this ringing in my ears
Like a dentist's high pitched drill
It makes a minute seem like years
Don't ask me what's the cause of it
If I knew it would be news
But right now I've got to suffer
With the Tinnitus Blues

No telephones are ringing
But there's a ringing in my head
I'm tired of being awake
But too awake to go to bed
And I can't turn this thing off
I've got no choice to choose
Guess I'll just have to live with it
The Tinnitus Blues

Some say you can get rid of it
Some say that you cannot
I just know that I get sick of it
It makes my blood run hot
You never are alone with it
This soul-mate you can't lose
And tonight I must go home with it
The Tinnitus Blues

By Frank Leyland ©

A GOLFER'S DELIGHT

It was the eighth at Swinton Park
A moderate par three
He wasn't feeling confident
As he stood there on the tee

He placed his ball upon the peg
Took out his seven wood
Although he'd played for several years
He wasn't very good

As he prepared to take his swing
His partner shouted "Don
There's someone walking near the green
I think you'd best hang on

He hit the ball with a firm stroke
It sped towards the green
It travelled fast and true and straight
The best he'd ever seen

It landed on the green at left
And spun towards the pin
His partner shouted "Bloody Hell
I think it's going in"

And as he walked up to the green
He heard a shout "Well Done"
The ball was nestling in the cup
He'd got a hole in one

Then someone shouted "Drinks all round"
The thought made him feel ill
Till later on the treasurer said
"The club will foot the bill"

By Don Whittaker

THE BISHOP'S VISIT

The new bishop came to visit our local school
All the way from Liverpool
The headmaster decided his best class to pick
The dunces could be away sick

The bishop spoke to the class
Then he listened to what they had to say
Out of the class he came looking a bit grey
I know, thought the headmaster quick as a flash

I'll take him for a stiff drink
I mean, who ever heard of a bishop saying no
Then we'll have a natter and I'll be in the know
Certainly the bishop will be in the pink

They made me feel such a fool
The disciples all had surnames
It was a surprise to me
We didn't know in Liverpool

St Paul Wellens was a shock
And St James Roby to mention but two
The list went on and on
Eh! But I could do with a glass of hock

I always though each Saint had a shrine
The children all say not so
To worship the Saints
To Knowsley Road, you must go

By Jim Rimmer

THE PEARLY GATES

One night as I lay in bed
Suddenly a thought came into my head
I had died, it came to me in a flash
And I hadn't had time for a quick slash

St Peter stood at the Pearly Gates
On his face was a look of surprise
"Oh! It's you lad is it?
Well, come on inside"

I entered the gates and looked around
There were thieves, liars, sinners and other trash
"How've they got to heaven?" I asked
Certainly it was something I couldn't grasp

"Yon chap over there" I said
For many years he held first place
He was the dirtiest prop in the St Helens League
Mind you after he met me, he dropped to second place

I turned to St Peter and I asked
"What are all these sinners doing up here
Certainly someone has made a mistake
And why does everyone look so shocked?"

"Well" he said "What you said is true
Everyone has had a shock
The thing you see, nobody thought
That they would be seeing you"

By Jim Rimmer

THE GOOD OLD DAYS

I were nor' but a lad when the old Queen died,
Eleven or twelve years of age.
By fourteen I worked on the cotton mill floor,
Twelve long hours for not much of a wage.

Neither sick pay nor pension, but swallow your pride,
To the workhouse for them as was poor -
undeserving and grateful 'til the day that you died,
and troubled the Parish no more.

But these were "The Good Old Days" or so I'm told,
by folks as knows better 'an me.
When life was so simple an Brittannia ruled
the waves of the Azure sea.

Let's raise a glass to the "Good Old Days",
through specs with a rose-coloured tint.
To home, hearth and plenty through a sepia haze.
If only we hadn't been skint!

I learnt woodwork at night school to pay my rent.
To the timber yard went I, keen and willing,
Some happy years there, I spent quite content,
afore 'ere I took the King's shilling.

"We'll be home for Christmas, boys!" was the cry,
But Christmas what year? They'd not say.
We were fighting the "Bosche" for five of 'um nigh,
For 'homes fit for heroes' - Hurray!

So, here's to the boys of the old brigade!
For 'The Good Old Days', let's give a cheer!
From our dead pals as can no longer parade,
we'll remember wi' poppies each year.

I worked hard all me life, I've seen two World Wars,
A depression, recessions and more.

I looked after my wife and my kids are grown up,
And my grandchildren play by the door.

They mun talk abart 'Good Old Days, them as wants.
Tha' maun't say ewt to me 'bart a row!
How can they crow over times long ago.
When these are the 'The Good Old Days', now?

We've pensions and sick pay, Health Service and dole,
and old folks stay together for life.
There's no separation at the' work'ouse door,
like there was in those days full of strife.

I've travelled and seen the world, now I've retired.
I'm finished with all that malarkey.
I've seen France and India, Africa too!
It's a shame I'd to do it in khaki!

We were hungry and tired, ragged and cold
in them long ago days of yore.
As I go to the 'bone yard' when my 'bell is tolled',
I'll be glad to see th' old days no more.

Good riddance!

By Leonard Vincent Nicoll

POSITIVE ENERGY

When Einstein said E is MC squared,
he would have thought it quite absurd
to endow 'E' minus or plus,
irrelevant and redundant fuss.
It can be changed but not destroyed.
Light and heat can cross the void.
For good or ill, which 'ere it be,
does not concern 'lectricity.
The force contained in wind or wave
no morals teach how to behave.
When nuclear fission stopped the war
and left Japan in shock and awe,
a positive outcome for our side
was hailed a feat of allied pride.
We negatively took the view
when Soviet Russia got theirs too!
Now energy we must conserve
to save our fossil fuel reserve.
We're getting through it far too fast.
We've got to make our planet last.
So saving energy is right and fine.
As is my wont then, I'll save mine.
A course I'd richly recommend
to those whose energies extend
to fixing things that just ain't broke.
Thus wasting theirs upbraiding folk!
I pledge myself then, for a starter
to not work harder but work smarter:

Not dissipate my might in vain,
but burn my calories with my brain.
To emulate the stately swan;
the mirrored surface glide upon.
Whilst peddling beneath, unseen
and effortless appear; serene.
I further promise life to live,
although relaxed be positive
in attitude but not to fret.
Be cool! Don't be an enerjet.

By Leonard Vincent Nicoll

BEAUFIGHTER

We'd wind him up in English and take him off his tail,
if he wasn't going to read or tell a story.
Of Shakespeare's plays and Pendlebury we soon would find both stale,
then we'd con him into telling of past glory.
He'd grin and grimace as if to say
"I know you're leading me astray!"

Not that he was boastful, quite the opposite in fact.
He was modest with an admirable reserve.
His reticence of exploit but for us would be in tact
in his memory; his privacy preserved.
But history passed by word of mouth
beats book-learned yarns to tell the truth.

His youthful care spent sweeping free his country's skies of Huns,
navigating his Beaufighter through the night
with bright Diana's beauty glinting moonbeams off his guns,
he would guide his pilot on into the fight.
To break the black-crossed bombers will
the hunter's cannon aim and kill.

His later years illuminated England's errant sons,
shooting down our ignorance with knowledge.
With pride in majesty of our nation's mother tongue,
encourages his students on to college.
Some - (there is no scarcity)-
go on to University.

His country owes him, as do we, much more than we can pay.
I thank him from the bottom of my heart.
His life made him a warrior for the working day
and I'm blessed he made the effort on my part.
In the junior library or in his aeroplane,
Such constancy and valour I fear I'll not see again.

By Leonard Vincent Nicoll

Valentine's Day

I wish you'd be my Valentine.
I hope you're waiting just for me.
I cannot wait to make you mine,
but who you are is a mystery.
Please help me find you, if you can
and say you'll let me be your man.

If you say yes, though you're unknown,
My shoulder and my ear I'll lend.
I'll rub your feet and let you moan
About your day; I'll be your friend.
When you're relaxed on the settee,
I'll make us both a cup of tea.

If you're out there, please, let me know
If this idea appeals to you?
Don't get me wrong love, I will show
that I can be quite sexy too!
Although I'd snog you in the street,
I much prefer to be discreet.

I don't know if you're dark or fair,
Can't get your image in my mind.
My heart has lots of love to share.
Does it matter? Love is blind...
But if you're quiet or a razzler,
I hope you'll be a bobby dazzler!

How can I discover you?
How can our paths collide?
How do I get to meet you,
or get you by my side?
I'm begging you on bended knees!
Answers on a postcard please

by

Leonard Vincent Nicoll

THE TWO MILLION POUND DREAM

Come and see the dream in stone
Marvel at all the money blown
Come for the view but stay for the cynicism
Check your opinion at the door
But the 'pretentious art bastards' are already pining for more

A white face above black gold, no more canaries in cages
Such a skilled set of hands; they say 'fun for all ages'
There's Zephon in the north and a tower in the ebony pool
This decapitated shrine so close to home
Turn on your television set folks, chances are you'll see it shown

We've had a shack, a diamond encrusted skull and a transient bed
And I think I've already got an idea what the elitist sheep can be fed
A monkey on the cross and a cockroach on the swastika
Me with a scowl on my face, suggesting an oil-based massacre
Would they pay me for such an outpouring?

I'm no artist; I paint with the written word
But is art today really something that looks like spilled lemon curd?
A head is a head, not a statue of a child
And I've had enough of this topic now, best not to say anything else
Before my frustration turns wild

Two cents very much paid full

By Marlon Bonnici

MEN'S RELATIONSHIP WITH FOOD

In fourteen hundred and ninety two,
driven by generous prices,
Columbus sailed the ocean blue,
in search of the islands of spices.
Breadfruit led the Bounty bold,
the southern seas to ply,
to feed the Empire's increasing fold,
our colonies to supply.

When Armstrong invaded Tranquility's Seas,
treading the moon with his boots on,
he secretly wanted to find green cheese
to the joy of Mission Control - Houston.
The finest thing for relationships
is a regular ration of fish, peas and chips.

by
Leonard Vincent Nicoll

CIVILIZATION IN A NUTSHELL

In Lascaux's caves, in southern France,
Ancient prey and hunters dance;
Making plain the need to be fed,
Long before coin raised its head.
They stalk the Earth in search of game,
Make fields, plant crops, the wild beasts tame;
Build farms and villages of stone.
a town, a city, nation, throne;
Lords of all before the flood,
All carried forth by captive food.

By
Leonard Vincent Nicholl

T. C. O. G. A. E.

From the heights of heaven to the depths of hell
This is my tale and have I got a story to tell
Angel, demon, hybrid, god, alien vampire, werewolf and death
It's all in there and hopefully it'll steal your breath

Men, women and creatures in between
OH! And many beings I know you've never seen
The prophecies of divinities inter wound with the history of man
This tale about gods who have formed a secret plan

Romance, fear, anger and pain; these emotions I've tried to evoke
Hopefully you'll read my work and think the things I've tried to provoke
But yes I have big plans for my collection of tales
Harry Potter, Eragon and Lemony Snicketts, all fiction to me that fails

From the Hanging Gardens of Babylon to the lost city of Atlantis
Modern mythology and my imagination, this is how I have planned this
No teenage wizards, talking lions or hobbits
This is my pleasure and I'm planning to hog it

It's the secret that keeps a smile on my face
And why should I share it, I don't have to in this case
I'm radically defendant of my little pastime
But at over a thousand pages, I think I've crossed a line

So when all is said and done and I'm ready for the reveal
Keep an eye open and have a look. I may even have a publicity deal
But I write for me, not client, relative or friend
But if you want to give me some money, then that is a rule I can surely bend

By Marlon Bonnici

THE UNPROTECTED

Prostitution, in dramatic form a play
Letting women have a say
The violence, the threats, poverty, little choice
No rights, no voice
The pimps, the drugs, enforcing the thugs
A circle so hard to break
Government's new laws, more heartache
Drive the problem out of a city, is it sound?
Sending mixed messages
Talking of a safe zone
Does that mean women frightened?
Abandoned alone
They are anti-social!
We have no tolerance!
But can society ignore?
Give the abused, uneducated a chance
Oldest profession, prostitution someway
But humanity understanding a
Way out. The women must have their say!

By Len Saunders (aka Len Banana)

MARCO POLO

When Marco Polo, from far Cathay,
brought the world's first Chinese take-away,
he introduced, despite all menace,
spaghetti to the folk of Venice.
Though his adventure left him skint,
from making holes, he made a mint.

**By
Leonard Vincent Nicoll**

P IS FOR PENSIONER

I like to be a pensioner, it does me very good
To stay away from work each day, can you see how it would?
There isn't any bus to catch, no bike I have to ride
The car is in the garage stood, sleeping there inside.

And I may clean the windows, or maybe cut the grass
And if it's at the house front, I may chat as neighbours pass.
Some other jobs I do as well, whatever Mary says
She keeps me most times busy, in many different ways.

But work as an activity, does not hold my interest long
I'd sooner write a bit of verse, or maybe sing a song.
Perhaps I'll paint a picture, a picture of a flower
It's such a lovely, gently way to pass a precious hour.

For every hour is precious; and every day as well
Dearer is than diamonds as I'm sure you all can tell.
For it's good to be a pensioner in a peaceful, pleasant house
Not a lot to do all day, if one can dodge the spouse.

By Richard Reynolds

P IS FOR PEDANGO

P is for Pedango
You'll know him by his nose
It's always to the front of him
No matter where he goes
He has two well made shoulders
With an arm attached to each
Two hands with fingers at the end
To hold things he can reach
Set firmly on his shoulders
Is a neck and then a head
With two bright eyes above a mouth
With which he eats his bread
So if you go out walking
Down almost any street
Bold Pedango might well be
The next one that you meet

By Richard Reynolds

SKIPPING

Beating time upon the street the rope is turning round;
The girls run in but can't get out until they touch the ground.

Along the house rows the skipping girls are chanting
On and on the music sounds 'til evening shades are slanting.

"When I was in the kitchen" (but only in bad weather)
It's "Pitch patch, all out"; then all back in together.

In every street in every town, all across the land,
As evening light holds longer and summer is at hand,

Shoes and clogs on cobble stones; their constant rhythm drums
And to the blue, wide ether, the constant music hums.

There were squabbles over who'll turn up, "She's not yet had a go!"
"The rope to fast is turning", but, some say it's too slow.

One might say, "I'm off telling" and then her ears would burn;
That this or that might not be fair; here was a place to learn.

Here is a place for active joy, for learning how to live,
It fosters sharpness of the tongue, it shows girls how to give.

For some may be less able, they might not be so fit,
Their rhythm out of kilter; not so keen their wit.

But the skipping now is ended, the songs are not now sung
And all along the street kerbs, the motor cars are strung.

The chanting, leaping schoolgirls will never be heard again,
The man in the moon (who loves a good tune) will harken all in vain.

By Richard Reynolds.

Environment

Two fleas were arguing one day
As to "were or were they not
All alone in the Poochiverse?
Or was there life on Spot?"
Just then the dog sat by the fire,
the result was quite alarming.
As steam arose from off his back,
The fleas blamed "Doggal warming".
"It's all our fault" the fleas agreed,
"We're bound for the abyss!"
The dog then left the fire
for the yard to take a piss.
"Has it gone cold or is it me?"
Said one flea to another.
"That climate-change was bloody quick!
By gum, we're in some bother!"
Around the park the old dog went
to aid his constitution
and all the time the fleas complained
about the fur pollution.
Some fleas then moved further up,
but soon began to holler,
when to their shock they found that
they were hot under the collar.
The dog jumped in the duck pond.
Once again the fleas went barmy,
"Good Dog Almighty!" cried the fleas
"We're 'aving a soon-army!"
When the dog jumped out again and gave himself a shake,
the fleas hung on with all their might,
through a 7.8 dog quake!
Some thought they'd got away with it

and threw their chests out proud
They'd found that place the sun don't shine,
They'd soon be disavowed!
They all decided they must leave.
They all were of one mind.
"A small step for a flea;
A giant leap for all flea-kind!"
They left on a pillow 11
for the nearest satellite
They were really doing quite well,
'til some bastard set the cat alight!

By
Leonard Vincent Nicoll

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Taking action - a good reaction
One hundred crunches to help beat the munchies
Every other day, send some calories away
Walk for one hour twenty, I think that is plenty
Dopamine, serotonin, fell good in the mornin'
Utilising shoes, de"feet"ing the blues
Invigoration with the wind in your face 'n
Your blood pulsing round with your feet on the ground
Don't look back - live for today
Don't worry the rest of your life away
We all need money, don't need great wealth
It's better to care for your physical health
As a dentist looks after everything dental
Exercise helps with your mental
Condition:
Get on the treadmill, don't mess up your head Bill
Gird up your loins, away with self-pity
Head for Des Moines, right out of the city
Metaphysical, quizzical:
Get down the gym, Jim - keep yourself slim
The stakes have been raised, the standards lowered
The steaks have been braised (bullfighter gored)
Vibrance, guidance, no co-in-cidence

By Frank Leyland ©MM9

Night is ...

Night is when some feel alone
Night is when some get together
The knight came in shining armour
Beverley Knight's alright
"Where is the sun?"
Asked my son
"The sun is still there, but night has come"
I said
"She said, she said"
Said John Lennon
A cup of tea please
With just a slice of lemon
Night is good
Good night
(And, thank you)

By
Frank Leyland

AN ODE TO SILENT HILL

There is a place where the old gods fear to tread
A town of fog, rust and dread
A place for the silent spirits to repent their sins
A place where angels ignite their divine engines

The order oversees the opening and closing of the door
If there's guilt within you then you're gone forever more
The streets are empty, devoid of life
Judgement walks the shadows, dragging behind him a great knife

Abominations stalk the far flung corners
Following visitors like mutilated funeral mourners
The air raid siren signals the coming of the darkness
A hot thick impenetrable night that brings with it such harshness

What do you fear? For you'll see it become flesh in that place
Running from what you see is no good, for this is an eternal chase
You'll watch the walls turn to fencing, the floors bloody rusted plates
But nevertheless this deters no one, those foolish enough to challenge their fates

Dombrowski, Ocosco, Shephard and Townshend, the names of the
unfortunate lost
They come in search of answers and the red pyramid made them pay the
cost
But redemption comes to those who persevere
Those who come to this place looking for answers, or those they hold dear

The name of this town with fire beneath its road and demons on the
streets
It is named Silent Hill, the point where personal hell and purgatory meets
You'll pay for your crimes, receive punishment for your wrongs
Don't ask for mercy by those twisted few who come in their throng

This is the world you don't want to know
A trip on which you don't want to go
Welcome back, the sign says
A letter from a dead wife from the lost days

By Marlon Bonnici

STAND UP

Guns fired to the thirst of revenge
What poisoned messages
Does all this killing send?
Young and old brought to an end

A city in a bloody turf war
Pain, sorrow, hate
What is this all for?

Bullets, an eternal solution
Just cold blooded
Judge, jury
And barbaric execution

Mothers weep devastated
By such a savage loss
Everyday to suffer such pain
To carry a heavy cross

Underworld, ravenous for control
Violence spirals
A snake choking
A city's soul

Guns, the drugs
Are they so cool, neat!
Stand up, stand up, stand up
Get them off the street!

By Len Saunders (aka Len Banana)

UNBROKEN MEN

Forty pieces of silver
Forty horses charge
On high grey hill
From Whitechapel ramparts
Uncrowned victors plot run
While vultures as black shadows
Wait to pick the bones
Of a strike
Broken, smashed by hammers
Forged in blood's rhetoric ringing tones
Family torn asunder to time
Stormed, as fallen tress
Never to stand against the maelstrom

"No such thing as society"

Division, hunger, pain pride
Surrendered to the rattle call
Of soup kitchen's comfort
As conflict rives in a last death throw
Voices that once spoke as one
Are lost to the victor's will
As defeat is played out to
The footsteps of unbroken men
As still the Judas coat hangs heavy
On those who could not stand with
Their brothers and bear the cost

Government or mob rule?

But the coal winner, the coal hole
Cavalry, ride on against the ebb
Of a moving social economic tide
They can walk tall with price
Unbroken

By Len Saunders (aka Len Banana)

SEVENTEEN MONTHS

Seventeen months not so long

Seventeen months a new beginning
So well meant

Seventeen months of pain and torment

Seventeen months, a broken back
A body hidden
Beaten blue and black

Seventeen months visited so many times
Society, family, health visitor, doctor
Whose crimes?

Seventeen months of people not
Listening, not wanting to see

Seventeen months to abuse
And kill me
Baby P

By Len Saunders (aka Len Banana)

SUNDAY BLUES

I remember Sunday as a boy
They weren't exactly full of joy
I recall the mornings as quite boring
Father sleeping late and snoring

And later going to Sunday School
Bible classes were the rule
I had to go and spend some time
So I could be in pantomime

I always liked to be outdoors
In the park or on the moors
Nothing else to do on Sunday
Everything was closed till Monday

But I miss those days of yore
People I will see no more
Aunts and uncles, mums and dads
All the other friends I had

Sundays now are car boot sales
Then the local, drink some ales
Sunday dinner, two for one
Sundays now are much more fun

By Don Whittaker

BODDINGTON BILL

Boddinton Bill
Is a man who can swill
Pints of *Guinness* and mild.
He is fond of the drink,
He's been at it, folks think
Ever since he was only a child.

On the stroke of
Half hour of twelve every day
To the ale-house Bill Boddington goes,
He has never been late,
So folks always wait
For the sound of those ale-house bound toes.

Then the time they can tell
Though they've hardly the need
For most have a clock on the wall;
They have wireless as well
Which pip pips if they heed
But they like to sound of Billy's footfall.

At seven each night
Be the eve dark or bright
Be the air cold or be the air warm,
Bold Billy Boddington's
Off to the pub
In weather, that's fine or in storm.

When Billy of Boddington's
Had a few drinks,
He whistles quite like a canary
He taps with his clogs
On the floor where he stands
He'd never be mistook for a fairy.

Sings Bill, Hi-dee-dee
Sings Bill, Ho-dee-do
One more will I take for the pleasure;
Then Bold Billy Boddington
Happy the man
His feet, the way home they will measure.

Boddington Bill surely
One day will go
To the ale-house that's high in the sky
Where St Peter will say
"Now lad, have one with me
Then straight on, another we'll try".

By Richard Reynolds

HOME

Home is where the hearth is
I wear my hearth on my sleeve
Got stuck in a crowd with *George Melee'*
He's been drinkin' too much, look at his belly!
Is it half empty, is it half full?
It's got bells on, give it a pull
She knows me from Knowsley
A girl called *Rosem'ry*
She arrived *Justin Thyme*
But Justin was a cad
Just like his dad
When he was a lad
Now isn't that sad?
No, it ain't that bad
Oh look, there's *Glad-ys*

**By
Frank Leyland**

VALENTINE

Promises, like zips, can sometimes get broken
Words can be thoughts, yet to be spoken
"Love is the answer" I head someone say
Will you be my Valentine, today?

Your lips taste like wine from a fabulous brew
Now give me your heart and I will love you
We can travel together, it will be so fine
Forever and ever, my sweet Valentine

By
Frank Leyland

DEAR VALENTINE

Tarry not long, my heart yearns for love
My thanks are for you, to the One high above
You see me quite clearly, I am here at your gate
Let's go on our way, please do not hesitate

I am your living card, now you can be mine too
Elope with me then, our lives start anew
I will be yours, you will be mine
Come with me now, my dear Valentine

By
Frank Leyland

A BIT OF A LAD

When I was a bit of a lad
I spent most of my time with my Granddad
A real Lancashire lad was he, with a rich vocabulary.
He taught me to speak and by the time I was five
Or, so I am told I used many an adjective
The kind I shouldn't have known
One day he said to me
"Tha'l not be coming tomorrow
Tha mam ses tha mon start school".
Now the school stood at the bottom of our street
I had often seen the kids go in but
I had never seen them come out.
The next morning mi mam got me up early
Right lad it's off to school you go
It's no use you looking so surly.
We arrived at school; parents and kids were milling around.
The teachers collected us and took us inside.
I turned to my mam and said my good byes.
"Hey lad' she said 'There's no need for that,
I'll collect you when school lets out"
That was a weight off my mind.
The next morning she woke me early
"Up Lad" she said "it'll soon be time for school
Nay lad don't look so surly"
"Eh up mam" I said. "I went there yesterday"
"Aye lad and you'll go there every day
And if you don't, there be hell to pay"
So off to school I went and thought "It's not so bad"
I've got plenty of kids to play with
And we get a glass of milk
(Of course no body had heard of Margaret Thatcher then)
In afternoons we get to have a sleep
Eh lad, when you think about it it's no so bad.
That afternoon after thinking hard
I put up my hand then said

"Please miss I want to go down the yard"
"You mean you wish to go to the toilet", Teacher enquired
"Toilet. What's a toilet?" I had never heard of one of them
"No Miss" I replied. "A bog is what I require."
One of the posh boys said
(I knew he was posh for he wore clean clothes and shoes)
"He means the toilet; bog is the rude name for it.
That's what it is called by the Plebs."
And now when sale people phone me
I reply using the language I learned at my Grandfathers knee.
When they ask for Mr Rimmer, I ask them
'Which dost want, our Jem, Judder or 'Stie"
A repeat request for Mr Rimmer brings forth
"Nay what's up, doesn't tha speak English."
When they ring off and often they do
I feel I have achieved at victory

By Jim Rimmer

OLD ALBERT

A picture of old Albert Smith
He's smiling, you can see
Reminds me of another man
Who used to live near me

Now Albert was a bricklayer
I'm told, one of the best
He plied his trade for many years
Throughout the whole North West

He's lived in Rochdale all his life
And brought up four offspring
The family was musical
And he still likes to sing

His parents both worked in the mill
Were slaves to 'Old King Cotton'
Compared to how it is today
Their lives were pretty rotten

He had three siblings, two were girls
And one a little lad
Who sadly passed away when young
This made them all feel bad

Now Albert Smith is seventy eight
His wife is seventy five
With seven grandkids now to love
He's had a decent life

By
Don Whittaker

GIRL NEXT DOOR

Tracy, not a girl next door
A Brit Art Star
But an animated film of female masturbation
Is that an installation too far?
A journey of life with tribulation and strife
Emin, a soul of troubled youth
Who are we to judge? Call her uncouth
See the reflection, the path, her vision of
Modern exploration, monogram of black ink
Pictures of a thousand finders of time
She's geeky, fascinating, so sublime
A pole with a bird on top sat in Liverpool square
Some cannot perceive its meaning but for Tracy it shows a care
A new exhibition it gets in your face, in the mind
That gives the knockers and doubters a chance to be so unkind
Suffer for your art
But she steers her course that's true
This iconic heroine is of now, the new
See the work through a clear mirror of the unknown eye
For only you see through art, a truth, a why?

Not a girl next door
Never a bore
A vision that sets her way
Provokes, shocks controversy
A journalist's cutting says
Before you judge
Maybe act the burk
Go and see Tracey's work

By Len Saunders

THE LOST BACK YARD

The glistening trail of fat, slow slugs
The smell of drains that filled the air
The flagging, left uneven by the years
A broken, rocker-less rocking chair

A child who walked along the wall
Shouted "Now are you coming out to play?"
The cats that lay upon the 'lean to' shed
To enjoy the warmth of a summer day

A rusty bike, a rude made truck
Long handled, built on carriage wheels
The squeaky mangle, lacking oil;
The light that evening shadow steals

To leave us with the sounds of dark
The howl of cats, the crashed bin lid
The browsing on the things of day
Of what we said and what we did

And making plans for morrow's morn
Which never more will be fulfilled
For now the time of dreaming gone
The heartbeat of the street is stilled

No trace of wall or stone is left
And passing folk, though they look hard
See not the hovering spirits here
That rest about the lost backyard

By
Richard Reynolds

KNOW IT'S WRONG

Was it my fault?
Did I do wrong?
Don't want to live
Know it's wrong

Throw myself from
A moving car
Can't tell my parents
A fairy tale too far

In a place of trust
To nurture, to protect
But with perversion
They infect

To take the cloth
To be a shepherd of man
To be part of a weakness and curse
A devilish horror of Satan's master plan

A church of Rome
From belief and prayer
To minister
A truth of care

The death of this beast
To rejoice, to feast, my life
Destroyed, lost to a path
This appetite's broken pity

A nightmare that never loses
Its haunting fire
For still a church
Portrays **ME** a **LIAR**

By **Leornard Saunders**

BRIAN THE SNAIL

When I was just a little boy so many years ago
My parents would berate me for always going slow

Washing, dressing, doing chores, I always took my time
When grown ups tried to speed me up, I said I'm doing fine

Two hours to write a letter, ten minutes to run a mile
My slow and ponderous efforts made my teachers smile

Later on when courting, I kept a steady pace
No sudden surge of passions on which romance is based

And now that I am old and grey, I maintain a steady plod
While friends who used to rush around lie cold beneath the sod

By Brian Hart

BACK PAGE



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COLLEGE

TEST THE
TOWN

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