

Poetry Series

**Res John Burman**  
**- poems -**

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## Res John Burman(27th October 1942 to 'Not Yet!')

Old Soldier, Traveller, Herdsman, Cow-lifter, Builder, Forester, Carpenter, Cabinetmaker, Woodturner, War Pensioner, Father, Taoist, Photographer, Poet, Lover.

# A Hill Of Chamomile

My Lady often teases me, about her wild hair style  
Something she often likens, to a hill of chamomile.  
But I always tell her, she can tease and tease and tease  
But she is right up there, with cows and dogs and trees.

I'm very fond of cattle, I love their bovine grace,  
Their slow deep wisdom and their relaxed and easy pace,  
And dogs, oh don't you love `em, they are so pleasurable to please  
Why, they are right up there, with my girl and cows and trees!

And trees are oh so special, slow growing but oh so giving,  
Among the very oldest things that are on this planet living.  
Without them we would be in caves, no building without logs  
Why, they are right up there, with my girl and cows and dogs!

So my Lady do not feel, that I would take you lightly,  
My love for you is warm and strong, you make me feel quite sprightly,  
You do not need to worry about the where's and why's and how's,  
Why you're right up there in my heart, with trees and dogs and cows.

(29th March 2008)

Res John Burman

# 'A Postcard From Kuching'

A postcard arrived here today  
From a land that James Brooke cried for  
That took me back to the rifles crack,  
And the land I almost died for!  
To the rivers and seas, the jungle trees,  
On the island of Borneo,  
And a dirty little war and so much more  
Forty-nine long years ago!

I was twenty-one and just one day,  
'Twas time I earned my shilling! \*  
A silver 'plane carried me away  
Judged old enough for killing!  
Little I knew, as away we flew  
They'd sent me to Sarawak.  
And over the years, through smiles and tears  
That land still calls me back!

James Brooke had been the Rajah there,  
His rule was fair but stern.  
You could feel his hand upon that land  
At almost every turn.  
The people loved him dearly  
And his rule had stood the test  
And now even many years later  
The land was different to the rest!

Bung 'Karno\* sent his troops a-raiding  
Far and wide across the border.  
Attacking defenceless people  
So we went to bring back order!  
We went because we had to,  
But what was unexpected,  
Was how much we came to love,  
Those dear people we protected.

Jungle longhouse, kampong, town,  
Back at Police HQ  
From the people of that blessed land  
Kindness was all we knew!  
Though force of arms protected  
The friendly people on our side  
In the end what really mattered,  
'Twas "Hearts and Minds" that turned the tide.

Now as this postcard reaches me,  
Over time and distance calls me back,  
Is it to sweat and blood, the bloody mud,  
Or the whip-lash rifles crack?  
No, it's laughing eyes so deep you'd drown,  
And voices that would say  
"We love you, love you, love you here,  
Oh won't you, won't you stay? "

We were always welcomed back,  
People hugged us and they kissed us  
From jungle swamp or mountain track.  
They told us they had missed us,  
Long-house base or back in town  
Gave us fruit and sat us down.

Then we'd eat and drink so hearty  
Every meeting was a party!  
Be it song or poem to entertain  
Christian Hindu Taoist Jain  
Everyone would do their party pieces!  
For there we had brothers uncles nieces!

Never a thought of racial strife  
Would mar these peaceful peoples life.  
Whether we slept 'neath trophy heads,  
Or cool on silk on Chinese Beds,  
We'd friends in the market, thick as thieves,  
We ate fried rice off banana leaves.

I remember well the wind in palms,  
The friendly market places,  
The clasp of silky dusky arms,

The beauty in their faces.  
I remember all the kindnesses,  
The words and touch of love,  
And oh! Those magic tropic skies,  
And the dawns that bloomed above.

Only a simple postcard, fifty cents or so  
And satu ringgit\* postage to days so long ago  
And there it sat on my mat as if 'twas yesterday,  
When kit and gun, me so young, once again away!  
But that is just a fancy of an old man's mind,  
But how I yearn once more to turn to those people kind.

I still sometimes smell the markets there,  
But no Mee Hoon Soup for many a year.  
But it's little things that call my heart a-while,  
The loving words that taught me how to smile.

Even today, people say, Sarawak is different, through and through,  
And those of us whom Sarawak touched, we are all different too!

\*Earned my shilling = Taking the Kings (or Queens) Shilling = Joining the Army or Navy and possibly Air Force, (though they'd have wanted more than a shilling!)

\*Bung 'Karno = Brother 'Karno = President Soekarno of Indonesia.

\*Satu ringgit = One Malaysian Dollar.

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With thanks for the Postcard to my dear friend Michelle Sim, a lovely lady from Bau, Sarawak, Malaysia.

Res John Burman

# After The Storm

Ah, the wind, the wind is dying,  
As it puts the storm to bed,  
In the sky the clouds are flying  
As they chase each other o'erhead.

The halyards on the masts  
Are quiet now they sleep,  
When in the night they shrieked  
Like tormented from the deep.

The shore is piled high  
With bladder wrack and weed  
And in the rippling shallows  
The swans still search for feed.

In the harbour they are bailing  
Storm water from the boats  
And the Ferry won't be sailing  
Till we're wearing lighter coats.

They're sweeping shattered mast wood  
From off the granite pier  
And three boats sank in Old St Ives  
Across the land neck there.

In the park they use a chain saw  
To cut up fallen trees  
But after a storm like that  
There'll be no more falling leaves.

The Fuchsia's at the Station  
So bonnie just last week  
Are curled, burnt and shrivelled  
From that storms salt reek.

I've salt upon my windows  
Five hundred yards uphill  
And though it's battered now  
And tattered, my flag is flying still.

(December 2007)

Res John Burman



# 'Alias'

A parcel returned.  
'Addressee Not Known! '  
I phoned to check  
But the address was right.  
"What name are you living under? "  
He told me.  
"What's that, " I asked, "an alias? "  
No, No, " he said,  
"That's my proper name,  
The one you use is my alias! "  
Good Grief!  
I've only known him  
Forty four years!  
It was easier in the old days  
When none of us  
Had surnames  
And I was known as  
Restless!

Res John Burman

# 'Ancient Visions'

An elderly gentleman  
Standing in the middle of the junction  
Completely oblivious to the traffic  
Trying to edge around him.

I took him by the elbow  
And led him to the safety of the kerb.

'D'you know? ' he asked wistfully  
Gazing at the mist haloed street lights,  
'It was just such an evening as this  
I last saw Nonie Collins! '

Res John Burman

## Appalachia, Applachia.

Appalachia, your green mountains are weeping black tears.  
Mine Owners. Your neighbours are living in fear.  
You're raping the mountains and Good Mother Earth,  
Your millions are nothing to what this land is worth!

Appalachia, your sons have fought in all wars,  
They've given their lives so what's yours remains yours!  
They've marched off to battle for that Dread God Mars,  
Would you have them return to a land that's all scars

Appalachia, Appalachia, I know you of old,  
Your songs are worth more than silver and gold.  
Scots - Irish and English and Cornishmen too,  
All men who sang here when this land was new.

Appalachia, your mountains will always need trees,  
To hold back the rainfall, like the shore holds the seas,  
Without them you rivers will run clear no more,  
But be thick with slime like a slaughter-house floor!

Appalachia, your mountains should be sacred lands.  
To show what your God could do with His hands.  
Mountain Top Removal is a crime against Him!  
And a crime against nature, a terrible sin!

Appalachia, the time has more than come round,  
Time to start healing on this Holy Ground.  
Your men folk have fought that all men might be free.  
That freedom should apply both to you and to me!

Who wants to hear the rumble of dynamite all day?  
Or giant earthmovers where the blue jay should play!  
The shareholders and mine owners don't live around here,  
So time to leave the mountains to the people who care!

America, America, come listen to this prayer,  
It'll be too late to save 'em when the mountains ain't there!  
Appalachia, come waken, and nevermore say,  
Mr Peabody's Coal Train has carried us away!

Appalachia, Appalachia, I know you of old,  
Your trees should be valued much higher than gold,  
The green lungs of the mountains in the Land of the Free  
Not a scar on a Mother, where her breast used to be!

(28th May 2008)

Res John Burman

# 'Asked Mother'

"These are your playmates? " asked Mother.

Eyeing the East End kids

On the TB ward, warily!

"Why, they talk like gutter-snipes.

Not our sort of people at all! "

"Yeah, they're me mates! " said I

In the language of my peers

"But why don't you touch me?

Why don't you hold me?

Why don't you kiss me?

Said I, aged four, strapped flat on my back

"Woz that yer 'Olds'? "

Asked the East End kids

With the kindness of the streets

"But why don't they touch you?

Why don't they kiss you?

Why don't they bring you bread and dripping? "

"These are your friends? " asked Mother.

When she saw my travelling companions.

"Why they are almost like gypsies,

Not our sort of people at all! "

"That was your family? "

My friends asked, those

Men of the travelling people

"Why don't they touch you?

Why don't they hold you?

Why don't they kiss you?

Why don't they care for you? "

"Come sit down by the fire.

Take tay or take a drink,  
Break bread, taste salt.  
Come listen to some tales  
Which will touch you,  
Which will hold you,  
And which will kiss your soul! "

"These are your workmates? " asked Mother.  
Eyeing Jim Keating and Tony Barry  
From Ennis in County Clare  
"Why, they are almost gypsies,  
Not our sort of people at all! "

"Was that your family? "  
My travelling Irish friends said.  
"Why did they not touch you?  
Why did they not hold you?  
Why did they not kiss you?  
Why did they not care for you? "

"Come sit down by the fire  
You've earned your bread today  
By the sweat of your brow  
And the strain on your back  
You've earned your beer  
And you've earned your tack  
Come sing up a song  
That will touch you  
That will hold you  
That will kiss your soul! "

"These are your friends, Dear? " said Mother.  
Looking through the Photo Album  
"Why, they look quite foreign,  
Why are they nearly naked?  
Why, they look like savages!  
Not our sort of people at all! "

"You are a long way from your family."  
Said my Head-hunter friends.  
"With no one to touch you,  
No one to hold you,  
No one to kiss you,  
You must feel so alone! "

"So come sit down by the fire  
Here's some rice wine for joy.  
Sing us a song, share in our dance,  
Here's the young maiden who captured your glance  
She's young and she's lovely  
And she loves your white skin,  
She will touch you,  
She will hold you,  
And she will kiss your soul! "

So these are my friends, Mother,  
And they've done me no end of good  
And had you, like me, joined them for tea  
They'd have done you no end of good too.  
I hope where you've gone to now, Mother.  
You have learned to see a bit clear,  
That the men of the earth are the salt of the earth  
And the one's who are worth holding dear.

And I hope where you've gone to now, Mother.  
You can find someone to hold dear,  
Who will touch you,  
And who will hold you,  
And maybe, kiss your soul!

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Res John Burman

# Babycakes!

Picture This.

Knock on the door  
Postman  
Parcel  
Inscribed with my name  
In full  
No Mister  
No Esquire  
Just my name  
Followed by  
B.C.  
Before Christ?

I wondered,  
I am sometimes  
Fondly called  
Old Man.  
I enquired..  
Earthy Mother  
You've done it now  
BABYCAKES! ! !  
I knew I'd never  
Live it down!

(25 Jan 2008)

Res John Burman



# 'Beech Wood Haiku'

Evening sun shines  
Sideways through the trees ~ bird song  
Calling all to rest

~~~~~

These old beech woods wait  
For the joyful sound of pigs  
Autumn's mast rights feast

~~~~~

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Mast rights were the rights of the medieval peasants to turn their stock out in the forest to forage for mast, an early English name for tree seed, namely beech, sweet chestnut and oak mast. This was in essence free feed just at the time when stock needed fattening up for winter, or the larder. This must have been a joyous time for the stock and the peasant families. I often think I can almost hear the echo of contented stock foraging in the woods. I wonder if the woods can remember them. Res

Res John Burman

# Better To Go Barefoot

Better to go bare-foot,  
Than wear that old soft shoe.  
Be the altar of your own soul,  
And let them come and worship you!

You wear your torment and your pain,  
Like an old soft shoe,  
And so you live again, again,  
The things that damage you.

Upon their altars you lay you down,  
For them to cut and rend,  
Time to throw off the thorny crown,  
And change the pattern, Friend.

Take charge of your own journey,  
You are your only traffic cop,  
You only do it over and over,  
Until the day you stop!

Better to go bare-foot,  
Than wear that old soft shoe.  
Build a brighter, lighter temple,  
And let them come and worship you!

(13th February 2008)

Res John Burman

# Blades

I am the sword of the Samurai,  
Lovingly sharpened, honed,  
Polished by skilled craftsman's hands.  
Some talk of thirsty blades,  
But we are indifferent to flesh.  
Though flesh is unwise to cross us!

I am the Cavalry Sabre,  
Sharpened on the mobile whetstone,  
Every unit carries, before battle.  
I am the pike and the bayonet,  
The shining spear point blade,  
Winking in the sun and air.

I am myriads of knives  
Fighting, hunting, whittling  
Cooking but seldom "Flick".  
Invariably an inferior tool,  
Made from suspect steel.  
And wielded by fools.

I am the carpenters chisel.  
Honed bright on Arkansas Stone,  
And leather or canvas strop.  
Handle polished smooth with use,  
Fit to pare wood as thinner than a whisker  
Worthy of the hand of a Saviour.

I am the surgeons scalpel,  
Razor sharp, stainless,  
Used only once.  
And I am millions of razors,  
Open, safety, twin, three, four, five  
Bladed and disposable.

Scraping daily at men's chins  
And ladies legs, etcetera.  
I am carbon enriched steel  
Danish, Solingen, Damascus.

Forged in the white heat  
Of the furnace glare.

I am Scorpio personified,  
As good or evil as he who uses it,  
As constructive or destructive,  
The Sharp Cutting Edge.

26th March 2008

Res John Burman

# Bloody Moon

Lantern hanging in the trees,  
Full moon overhead,  
An orange moon, a bloody moon,  
As I buried my dead!

She'd been a lover for many a year,  
A friend so true and brave,  
But under that bloody moon  
I slaved to dig her grave.

A long-handled Cornish shovel  
Digging in the night  
The lantern swaying in the trees  
Casting a ghastly light.

Tears flowed like salty rivers,  
As I looked up at that moon,  
I'd rather I'd been howling  
Than sobbing like a loon.

I dug that grave so deep and wide,  
As far as I could go,  
And then I went and fetched her  
To lay her down below.

I laid her down in that cold earth,  
And shovelled in the soil,  
And tears fell upon the sod,  
As I finished up my toil.

Lantern hanging in the trees,  
Full moon looks down scowling  
An orange moon, a bloody moon,  
I swear I heard it howling!

I placed some stones above her,  
And marked it with a log,  
And whispered to her, as oft before,

"Lobo. Stay. Good Dog! "

(7th February 2008)

Res John Burman

# Book Shelves

Today  
I have no time  
For poetry and such  
Today I must make bookcases  
To make space for some of  
This poetry  
A-floor.

I'm tired  
Of tripping up  
On Kipling and Bukowski  
And all of the Nav Works Bloggers  
I will break my poor heart  
For my poor art  
Sometimes.

But not  
My neck, not yet  
Not too young to die now  
But en-tir-er-ly too busy  
To pop my clogs over  
A pile of books  
Unread.

16th March 2008

Res John Burman

## 'Bow Music'

The old man plays his bow  
And dreams of the young maid  
The young maid listens to his music  
And dreams of a young man.

But the music has but one desire  
The perfection of the melody!

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Res John Burman



# Boxes.

When I  
First moved into  
This house I had a bed  
And a rocking chair to my name.  
And boxes. About two  
Hundred boxes  
Of books.

I told  
A neighbour I  
Was sitting on boxes.  
I was eating off boxes too.  
I was putting my feet  
Up on boxes.  
Boxes

Two weeks  
Later my new  
Friend asked me if  
I was still eating off boxes  
"Not now" I said "Now I  
Have a brand new  
Dinner plate! "

27th March 2008

Res John Burman

# Boys And Girls

You said,  
'You must be nine! '  
In your fond,  
Mock chiding, voice.  
'Of course I am, '  
I replied,  
'You know the rules,  
Boys WILL be boys,  
But Oh you Girls,  
You Lovely Girls,  
When you're awake,  
You are always  
Grown-ups! '

(18 January 2008)

Res John Burman

# Breathing You In

I like the cool side of the pillow  
The warm side of the bed  
Your long slim legs entwined with mine  
Your head beside my head.

My hand upon your belly  
Your skin against my skin  
And slowly pull you closer  
And simply breathe you in!

Warm your feet upon me  
Snuggle closer in  
I'm glad to have you with me  
And simply breathe you in!

Res John Burman

# Brown-Bread Tommy.

Poor Tommy Atkins  
In trouble  
Running round the square  
"Double! "  
Large pack small pack  
Bayonet and scabbard  
Bullet pouches all  
Buckled upon him.  
Rifle overhead  
At full stretch  
Of his puny arms.

Sergeant Ottley  
Drill Sergeant  
Or as we said  
Drill Pig!  
The scourge of the innocent!  
Fault finder among the faultless!  
The only person  
In the British Army,  
Certified: -  
"Unfit for Human Consumption! "  
Pursuing him  
With demented shrieks  
"Double, double!  
Lift that rifle up!  
Higher, higher!  
Get them knees up!  
Higher, higher! "

Poor Tommy demised.  
Run into the ground!  
Brown-bread,  
Dead!  
Passed over!  
Answered the final question!  
Gone for a Burton!  
D/D,  
Discharged /Dead!

Poor Tommy  
After he'd handed back  
His rifle and kit  
He was posted  
To Heaven.  
Saint Peter said  
"Welcome,  
You are welcome here  
Because you knew hell  
On earth."

Crafty Tommy  
Peeked in the Gates  
Recoiled!  
And shuddered!  
Up on the throne  
Starched and polished  
Chevroned and straight!  
Ottley!  
"I'm not comin' in there! "  
Sez Tommy,  
"That's Sergeant Ottley! "

"No No! " Saint Peter cried,  
"You'll be alright.  
That's not Ottley,  
That's God!  
He just thinks he's Ottley!

(29th March 2008)

Res John Burman

# 'Bugis Street'

Old Bugis Street was quite a sight  
With acetylene lamps burning bright  
Tables and chairs from end to end  
Where you could meet and greet a friend

And order food from any stall  
Those cooks all at your beck and call  
Sharks Fin Soup, Thousand Year Eggs  
And strange things done with chicken legs

Nasi Goreng, satay, saffron rice  
Tiger Prawns and Octopus so nice  
Tiger Beer and Anchor too  
San Miguel, now there's a brew

So when all the bars of Singapore  
Switched off their lights and locked the door  
You could still eat and drink all night  
For Bugis Street was a delight.

There were Lady-boys and Chinese Whores  
And sailors in from foreign shores  
Bush pilots resting from their flights  
And soldiers resting from their fights

Rubber tappers from Malaya way  
Tin miners down in town to stay  
And spotless children playing tic-tac-toe  
And winning - watch your money go

There'd be smugglers resting from the sea  
And traders in from far Araby  
Ginseng dealers trading fair  
You'd find all sorts of commerce there

Gun runners just in from the isles  
Soldiers from the rank and files  
Young ladies from the Embassies  
Doing just about what they please

Pirates, pimps and taxi drivers  
Royal Marines and pearl divers  
All the flotsam of a great sea port  
Gathered there to take their sport

Family and friends would come and meet  
Right there in what was Bugis Street  
Bulldozed now, and it don't seem right  
For Bugis Street was my delight

Res John Burman

# 'Bush Fire Tanka'

I remember smoke  
On the wind, always warning  
Of approaching fire

Out with the long handled shovel  
And beat beat beat all night

~~~~~

I have always said  
You get one fire, you get more  
There's always some fool

With more matches than sense  
More paraffin than brain cells

~~~~~

The fire is beaten  
And we see the damage done  
All the loss of life

What better time to remember  
Those friends that touched our hearts

~~~~~

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Res John Burman



# 'Campfire Dreams' A Tanka Chain

Tribal voices call  
Uniting all the People  
The beat of the drum

Synchronising the heart beat  
As Brother and Sister meet

I saw you dancing  
Such grace, such feminine poise  
Like a slender spruce

Waving in the mountain wind  
My soul melted into yours

I watched the fire light  
Anoint your silken shoulder  
Where I longed to kiss

Every curve and sway held me  
Captive ~ burning in the flames

Come dance with me now  
Until the drums fall silent  
And the music dies

But we and the flames still dance  
With our two hearts intertwined

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Res John Burman

# Caroline.

You were a wild child  
Like a banquet, feasting life  
Beauty dancing past.

Are you somewhere still?  
Cooking wonderful food, that smile  
Heavenly sunshine.

You were the whirlwind  
Or a star brightly burning  
Incandescently.

You lived three lifetimes  
With your lust for adventure  
Gone now, Carolina.

Still loved and still missed  
There hasn't been a party  
Like your last, last dance!

21st March 2008

Res John Burman

# 'Cinnamon'

"Cinnamon"

A sliver of cinnamon bark  
In my bowl of saffron rice

Oh how that taste and perfume  
At once sweet and earthy  
Still affects me

I can remember when young  
The scent of rolled peelings of  
Cinnamon bark  
Drying in the tropic sun

I recall as though  
From my own past  
The words of Michael Ondaatje  
And his tale of the  
Cinnamon Peelers wife

It is as though I can smell  
Her breasts and shoulders  
Warm and aromatic  
As if my scented hands  
Had lovingly caressed her  
With the dust  
Of that exquisite spice

I seem to remember her  
Touching her belly  
To MY hands  
And saying  
"I am the  
Cinnamon Peelers wife  
Smell me."

And I remember how  
As so many times before  
I really WANTED that woman!

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Res John Burman

# Come My Darling.

Come My Darling. Hold me tight,  
Kiss me now and through the night,  
To love so well will break no law,  
So kiss me now then kiss me more.

And while you undertake this task  
There's just one thing that I ask  
For now I want to kiss your back  
And everywhere else, come to that!

There's a hunger in you I can feel,  
So no more armour, no more steel  
I want to kiss each dip and swell  
Each lovely breast and scar as well.

Let lips and fingers create desire  
And stroke and stoke, and stoke that fire,  
So curling toes and bottom dance,  
And always always more romance

Come lie with me and be my maid  
In this battle you'll need no blade  
There'll be no winner, nor vanquish-ed  
Just the glory of your bridal bed

So come to me and be my sweet  
I'll love you from your head to feet  
I love you now and to your core,  
I'll love you, love you, evermore.

(12th December 2007)

Res John Burman

# 'Cosmic Moorings'

I know my place in time and space  
My position in the human race

I've a good idea where I am going  
And still, sometimes see where I'm growing.

But sometimes now my heart is calling  
Cast off from my cosmic mooring!

~~~~~

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Res John Burman

# Cowboys & Indians Or The Optimist

Many years ago  
When I first moved  
To the country  
I worked on a farm.

On my way to work  
I'd often come across  
A traffic jam  
In the country lane.

Godfrey walking behind  
Ernie Hathams Cows  
Re-enacting the film he'd seen  
The previous night on TV.

One morning he would strut  
Legs bowed from an evening  
Bronc busting, hands hovering  
Over his holstered colts.

Next day perhaps  
With his rifle at the high port  
He'd patrol the lane behind the cows  
Wary head swivelling to find Germans in ambush.

When Godfrey became a Red Indian  
Wellington boots lifting and shuffling  
To the beat of the war dance  
You kept tight hold of your scalp.

Every so often an advert would appear  
In the local paper  
"Wanted, Live in Housekeeper,  
Apply, Godfrey, The Caravan,  
Ernie Hatham's Farm! "

(22nd February 2008)





# Cultivating Love And Fruit. (Parental Advisory)

Hail, my lady, I stand proudly  
In your presence here  
I come to polish apples  
And plant my seeds down there!

I am intent on cultivation  
Is this fertile earth and fresh  
Watered by my salivation  
To bring sweetness from your flesh?

Oh your apples shine so sweetly  
In the candle light of night  
And the pips pucker to my touch  
Oh you are a lovely sight.

I love your scent I love your taste  
I love your peachy skin  
I love the splitting of the fig  
As you rise to let me in.

But first a salty furrow  
I'd plough with tongue and nose  
I'll tip-toe through your tulips  
Now who's got curling toes?

I see your nectar oozing  
I see this earth rise up  
I love your taste I love your scent  
Drinking from your loving cup.

I peel your grape  
And taste it there  
Oh thou art, thou art,  
Thou are fair!

And now comes time  
To stir the spell  
Mixed in this cauldron  
I love so well.

Pestle in mortar  
Grind on grind  
To stir the flesh  
To squeeze the rind.

To mix the fruits  
Till juices run  
You are my moon  
You are my sun.

This is my garden  
I till to please  
To bring delight  
To bring you ease.

This is my temple  
I worship here  
Goddess love  
Goddess care.

This is your bower  
'Tis where I serve  
When duty calls  
I serve with verve!

Hail Lady, I stand proudly  
To serve I am not loath.  
For in your garden of delights  
I'm Master and Servant, both!

(12th June 2008)

Res John Burman

## Darkened Doorways.

If upon a Golden Highway,  
Darkened Doorways you espy,  
Should you plumb those depths of darkness,  
Or on heels made hasty - fly?

Could you find - within the darkness,  
A Talisman or key which might,  
Someday unlock a gate of Golden,  
Into a City of Delight?

Could you lose yourself in darkness,  
Lost to light and lost to day,  
Or can you always keep some brightness,  
In your soul to show the way?

It isn't always choice that throws us,  
Into the abyss of despair,  
But if you wave off the birds of sadness,  
They can't nest there in your hair!

So, while you'd always choose the sunshine  
Try to stick to that Highway bright,  
The lessons most in need of learning,  
Are often hidden in the night.

So Golden Highway, rocky road,  
Or perilous crossing o'er the foam.  
The only place that means safe harbour,  
Will be the place you call home!

(1970's to 2008)

Res John Burman

## Dawn.

Old man like me, I need my rest,  
Three, maybe four hours at best,  
But that puts my head just right,  
Sleeping on the Black Breast of Night.

When I leave my bed it is so neat  
To put walking shoes upon my feet  
Life greets me fresh each early morn  
The amethyst nipped pink breast of dawn.

Oh what a way to start the day,  
Walking round the edge of old Mounts Bay  
Where Atlantic Current from Mexico  
Meets the cold English Channel flow.

And to the East and overhead  
Nights navy blue turns savage red,  
And then the red to pink and blue,  
To greet another day so new.

This is the way I start my day,  
Whenever age and pain say I may,  
And though I may be past my prime,  
I'm getting younger all the time!

(20th February 2008)

Res John Burman

# 'Dawn's Rails' Tanka

Pink tracks leading East  
Beckon the early morning train  
Rattling dawn-wards

Soon I shall ride those rails again  
Until the wheels turn the pink to gold

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Res John Burman

# 'Decorations'

A telephone call  
Do I want my medals engraved?  
49 years late

They were not so keen  
To hand out decorations  
When the sh\*t hit the fan

Just in time to go  
On the lid of my coffin  
My grateful country

At least HM the Queen  
Sends me my pocket money  
Regularly...

Bless Her

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Res John Burman

## 'Donkey Tales' A Haiku Chain.

Donkey in the kitchen  
With her hungry face on  
Rattling the lid of the bread bin

My boy and his donkey  
Busy with the daily round  
Two hearts intertwined

My boy and his donkey  
And a smart little two wheeled shay  
A chick magnet country style

Donkey and cart  
Rattling down the main road  
Surf-boards on the back

Blanket on the beach  
Donkey in the middle of it  
'Where's my sandwich? '

Stop at a road-side café  
Ruan, donkey and I  
Pot of tea for three

Donkey at the fair  
Giving rides to the kids  
Fuelled by Saffron Cakes

The donkey cart  
Full of ropes and climbing harness  
Off collecting tree seeds

My son and I collecting seed  
Seventy feet up a western hemlock  
The donkey waits below

Donkey back in the field  
With two Arab race-horses  
Donkey rules the roost

Res John Burman



# Door

An exercise in surreal poetry.

They say in Deep Space,  
No one can hear you scream!  
Of course they can't,  
There's no one there!

But there is a Door.  
A big, stout, solid door.  
You never see it,  
You never touch it,  
Or hear it.

But you do hear,  
The echo of it's slamming,  
That tells you,  
You're alone!

The echo,  
Like a life,  
Winking out!

(19th February 2008)

Res John Burman

# 'Dreams Of Portobello'

You're schlepping down to Portobello  
When Portobello was THE scene  
And you're young enough to cut it  
And too old to be too green

You've got a little swagger  
You know you're lookin' good  
An' you've got a dangle going  
And it's riding like it should

So you catch the ladies glances  
And you're nimble on your feet  
And you're known on every corner  
As a cool dude on the street

The straightest dealer on the block  
Delivers to your home  
Hand rubbed hash or best Thai sticks  
You seldom smoke alone

Leonard drops in for a chat  
To see what he can discover  
I wonder how many spliffs got rolled  
On his first two LP covers?

He passes Cat Stevens on his way  
He has the flat above  
And the most beautiful call girls in the world  
Sell their surrogated love

You can dropp into Hennessey's  
For a drink with all the boys  
Hawkwind's drummer buys you a pint  
Says, 'Sorry about the noise! '

You can grab a pint at Finches  
Or a curry at East and West  
But for Peas and Rice the proper way  
The Mangrove is the best

You can meet up with a travelin' friend  
Just hitchhiked back from Thailand  
Or spend the night with those Aussie Girls  
You met out in the Islands

You can schlepp on down to Notting Dale  
Find Bob Squire making tea  
Him 'n' John Martyn playin' crib  
And Beverley bored as can be

Bob always telling Vernon  
'Don't you bring the Old Bill near! '  
And when Old Bill did come round  
Bob said, 'He don't live 'ere! '

But that was in the good old days  
When Dear Juttè was still living  
When Bermuda Mick would cut a dash  
Before Martin took to drinking.

When Kieth and Val were host to all  
Their tiny room a-popping  
And Andy was quite beautiful  
And the whole joint was a-rockin'

I still listen for that other beat  
That I used to use for walkin'  
But I think now it is Time's feet  
And It's me that He is stalking

And now it seems just like a dream  
My loves 'n' friends of yesteryear  
But if you can remember it  
They say you were not there!

~~~~~

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Res John Burman

## 'Exiles Tanka'

As winter storms in  
My little mimosa tree  
Sports shivering blooms

The collared dove warms her feet  
Dreaming of Southern Sunshine.

~~~~~

Far from the mountains  
Where sages lived forever  
My heart grows older

Remembering younger days  
And weeping dark bamboo tears.

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Res John Burman

# Fairy Queen

If you were a Fairy Queen  
A crown of Clover would be seen  
Upon your head and in your hair  
I know because I'd place it there.

I'd scatter bluebells round your feet  
And bring honey for you to eat.  
I'd ask the birds and ask the bees  
To sing you songs and bring you ease.

Robes I'd weave from Mermaids Hair  
Scatter roses everywhere  
Write songs of you, for others to sing  
Were you my Queen and I your King.

Oh yes I know it's make-believe  
Like favours sewn upon a sleeve  
And heraldry so seldom seen,  
But to me you are my Queen.

And though we work and though we play  
The magic is not far away  
Your lovely hair crowns your lovely head  
You bring love and rose petals to my bed.

11th May 2008

Res John Burman

# Farewell Haiku

Little Church nestling  
Beside the River Camel  
Sweet morning birdsong

Blackbird sings on graves  
Saint Michael's Church Porthilly  
Mother's favourite song  
~~~~~

Copyright © Res JFB 14th May 2010

19 years ago we buried my Mother in the graveyard at St Michael's Church, Porthilly, a pretty little church built by the Normans in the 13th century, on the banks of the River Camel, just opposite Padstow. A sweet resting place.  
Rest in Peace Olive Eva ~ Much Love

Res John Burman

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Rest in Peace Olive Eva ~ Much Love

Res John Burman

# For My Heart

Give me seaweed for my thyroid,  
Celery seed for gout,  
Chilli and Ginger to warm my blood,  
And Aspirin to thin it out.  
Laughter for my spirit,  
And Oh Dear God above.  
For my heart give me,  
Love Love Love.

Give me food when I'm hungry,  
Give me water when I'm dry,  
Give me tasks my mind and hands can do,  
And Peace when I die.  
Give me wisdom when I need it,  
Give me friends Dear God above,  
But for my heart give me,  
Love Love Love

Give me companionship with animals,  
Give me tests to make me strong,  
A conscience when I need it,  
To save me from doing wrong,  
Give me kindness and understanding,  
And Oh Dear God above,  
For my heart give me,  
Love Love Love

(February 2008)

Res John Burman



# 'Forked Tongues' A Tanka

It is morning and  
I have had no sleep... yet still  
The sparrows chatter

Do they speak the truth... d'you think  
Or do they speak with forked tongues

~~~~~

Copyright © Res JFB 7th September 2010

Res John Burman

# Francoise

There is a poise,  
An elegance,  
In your pose.  
A stillness,  
That speaks  
Of the freedom  
Of the Dance.

© Res John Burman 24th October 2009

Res John Burman

# 'Gandhara Buddha'

Gandhara Buddha  
On a lucky red necklace  
His hand on my heart

Gandhara Buddha  
His hand resting on my chest  
His smile in my heart

Gandhara Buddha  
Hanging around my neck  
His wisdom in my heart

Hopefully!

Copyright © Res JFB 30th September 2012  
Thanks to Dr Gabi Greve San  
For the inspiration

Res John Burman

# Goodbye Charlton Heston

Goodbye Charlton Heston

I shall miss your acting skills  
Your epic movies and the thrills.

You may have been too fond of the gun  
Or did it protect your place in the sun?  
Surrender it now, this race is run!

To many you are the eternal charioteer  
Now you're racing to a new frontier!

I know the Girls will miss you here.

(13th April 2008)

Res John Burman

# 'Green Thoughts Of Home'

'Green Thoughts Of Home'

Let me find a nice soft bed  
Where beech and oak and ash hold sway  
A mossy bank to lay my head  
And blackbird's song at end of day

Let me listen to my hearts content  
As I lie among those stately trees  
The robin's call, the dove's lament  
Floating on the evening breeze

The sound of water over stone  
Was always music to my ear  
The dragonfly's passing drone  
And drifting pollen on the air

Just once more before I die  
I want to smell the loam and flowers  
And spend some time in a bluebell wood  
Where moving shadows mark the hours

And should I die as well I could  
Please don't shed a tear for me  
But bury me there in the wildwood  
Because that is where I want to be

So I could rest where foxes roam  
And badgers snuffle in the leaves  
I'd know that I had made it home  
Sleeping beneath my beloved trees

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Res John Burman

# 'Heartbreak'

"Heartbreak"

I remember those heady days  
When we both thought  
This might be the real thing.

Exploring likes and experiences  
Enjoying the shared discoveries.

Remember the Gurkhas?  
How fond I was of them  
How proud I was  
Of my service with them?

What fun we had drinking  
Rice wine in Longhouses  
With the Headhunter's trophies  
Hanging above our heads.

How delighted I was  
When I heard you say,  
"Mum used to date Gurkha Officers."  
Still delighted, I asked,  
"What, Nepalese Gurkha Officers? "

The horror in your voice  
Was echoed, chill, in my heart.  
"No..." you shrieked, "No... No...  
White Men... White Men...  
They were White Officers! "

In such glimpses through  
The curtain to your soul  
Heartbreak is born!  
Things were never the same!  
And there is no going back!

© Res JFB 27th March 2013

Res John Burman

# History

In Olden Days, which are best forgotten,  
The men were hard and the times were rotten.  
In Saint Buryan, there did dwell,  
A brawny farmer, I knew him well.

Henwood Penwallet, take my word  
Grew the finest shallots, in the Western World.  
Those times being hard, he did say,  
I'll take a load to sell up England way.

Course, silly bugger, din't know the way,  
So he followed the coast line, every day.  
Suddenly he found, before he could scoot,  
An English Army camped across his route.

He thought he try to sell them shallot  
But conscripted was all he got.  
They thought perhaps he was a Yeoman  
So they turned him into a bowman.

The King before the battle visited his men,  
And gave 'em peppy speeches to make 'em brave again  
He checked the lances sharpened, the axes fit to slice  
And then he came to Henwood, an' spoke to him so nice.

'You any good with that bow? ' he asked 'My good man.'  
'Buggered if I know, I'm a conscript, that's what I am! '  
'Well, try it out, see if you can hit that tree o'er there.'  
The arrow flew left and right and vanished in the air!

King Harold said, 'Don't worry, you are doin' fine.  
Captain, put this Cornishman, in the front line.  
An' for Gods sake! ' he said, 'Have someone watch this prat,  
He'll have someones eye out, shooting arrows like that.

Hastings 1066 (17th March 2008)

Res John Burman



# 'Homeless London 1961'

'Homeless London 1961'

I remember the rain, the hunger and pain  
The cold that burnt under my skin  
The long sleepless nights when I lost all my rights  
Because homelessness then was a sin

There was Sally Ann\* if you were in a jam  
The Rowton House\* or the Spike\*  
But if you hadn't the bread to pay for your bed  
You could "P\*\*s off! On yer bike! "

So at night I would stray Covent Garden way  
And pick up fruit and veg from the gutter  
Some porters would fuss and some of `em cuss  
But most of `em would only mutter

With thruppence to pay, a nice cuppa tay  
At the tea stall with it's spoon on a chain  
It was warm and was wet and the best I could get  
Standing out there in the rain

One could sleep in the Park, bugger that for a lark  
Stretching out on an old park seat  
'Cos Old Bill would nick you or often just kick you  
And then you were back on the street

If you could beg, borrow, steal, just thruppence, a deal  
The best place to sleep that I found  
On the Circle Line train, you'd sleep out of the rain  
Going round and around underground

Another shilling a day was needed to pay  
For the locker where I kept my pack  
A wash and brush up just might change my luck  
And a cleanish shirt for my back

All day I would seek for some work for a week

Or a day, or a meal, all that mattered  
But London's a hard city and hadn't much pity  
For the young and the hungry and shattered

Sometimes you just might, find work for a night  
Washing up in some swank eating house  
But the job was no snap and the wages were crap  
And they treated you worse than a louse

Some said we were lazy but that is just crazy  
Nobody starves for a choice  
But the weaker you grow the less chances show  
And the smaller and smaller your voice

So months of poor diet, you really should try it  
It's not something you'd find very merry  
Your swelling feet, see, means you lack vitamin B  
And you know that you've got beriberi

To the vagrant population of this capital nation  
It was known as Skippers Foot  
And the agonizing pain bombarded your brain  
And you thought that your life was kaput

London's such a rich city it is such a pity  
The hospitals don't want to know  
&quot;Your legs will get worse, come back when they burst.  
And now it is time that you go! &quot;

Luckily I had a friend, who helped me in the end  
Gave me food and a bed for a while  
Then with the loan of ten bob\* I soon found me a job  
And soon I was living in style.

The 'Sally Ann' (Salvation Army) , Rowton Houses and the 'Spike'  
were hostels for the poor and homeless but only supplied accommodation at a  
price. There were 'Receiving Stations' for the homeless but they were  
similar to WWII delousing centres, and the treatment received there was  
guaranteed to drive one out again.

Ten bob = ten shillings 10/- in old money.

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Res John Burman

# 'Huà Shàn Mountain'

Pilgrimage to Huà Shàn Mountain,  
Beside me a rock face and a rusty chain,  
Beneath me, three planks and the eternal wind.

No wonder they thought Taoists immortal.  
Come this way once and you'll think,  
You can live forever!

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Res John Burman

# Hunting.

You ask me if I've hunted,  
Or been a fighter too,  
Or if I'd leave the ladies,  
So I say this to you.

Hunting, yes I've hunted,  
When I've needed to, to eat,  
But never took much pleasure  
In killing for my meat.

And soldiering, yes I've soldiered  
When needed to, you must  
When weaker trusting people  
Need somebody they can trust.

But leave the ladies? Never!  
I've no wish to lose touch  
They can break a man or make him,  
And I love 'em all too much!

And as for Mister Sun Tzu  
My warring days are done  
It's let's make love not war for me  
Or, failing that ~ just RUN.

(February 2008)

Res John Burman

# Ines

I saw that glance  
As you looked back  
Your eyes so brown  
Your hair so black.

Those perfect lips  
A sculptors dream  
That oval face  
Your skin like cream

You hair like silk  
Down that sweet back  
I wish you'd looked  
At me like that!

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Res John Burman

# Injured Birds

Injured birds break my heart

Like injured innocence  
Losing the gift of flight

If only one could cradle  
Them in warm palms  
Heal with the touch of love

Breath fresh confidence  
Into their timid breasts

Their recovery would mend my heart!

(13th April 2008)

Res John Burman

# 'Johnny Gurkha'

In the rattle of the battle  
In the fog of fusillade  
There's a comrade I'd have beside me  
And no better friend was made.

He's a Gurkha from the Mountains  
I'd have watch my left and right  
And stalwart stand, kukri in hand  
A Comrade day and night.

And when the battles over  
You forget those bloody miles  
And what sticks most is your courtly host  
And those gentle Gurkha smiles.

And now I hear them marching  
To the door of Number 10  
They've come to say, we saved your day  
And you throw us away again.

Refused the right to Doctors  
Refused the right to stay  
They've been our friends, right to the ends  
How can we serve 'em this way?

You can thank your Gods, whichever Gods  
You choose, why even Kali  
They politely ask, don't take you to task  
Or shout 'Ayo Gurkhali! '\*

In every little skirmish,  
In every war that's been  
He's been our mate, since early date  
In Eighteen Seventeen.

And now it's time to show the world  
To lead by some example  
To show these friends before it ends  
Our gratitude is ample.



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\*The Warcry of the Gurkhas: 'Ayo Gurkhali' = 'Here come the Gurkhas! '

'Jai Mahakali, Ayo Gurkhali' = 'Hail Goddess Kali. The Gurkhas are upon you! '

This was written in 2008 when I heard that an 87 year old winner of the Victoria Cross, Britains Highest Honour for Valour, RSM Tul Bahadur Pun VC, handed back his medals at the door of Number 10 Downing Street, the official residence of the Prime Minister, in protest at being denied medical treatment in a London hospital! This event caused an enormous backlash from the British Public backed by a vigorous campaign led by Joanna Lumley which did eventually win for Our Gurkha Comrades some of the concessions we, their old Comrades-in-Arms, believed they were entitled to.

Res John Burman

# Jungle Warfare

Drifting through this hell of green,  
Trying to remain unseen,  
Youngsters really, many a teen,  
In a Jungle War e're their manhood's seen.  
Just think what these kids might have been,  
While the dirty politicians preen.  
You won't find them in this scene,  
'Cos they have to keep their hands clean!  
Leave the kids in school with the Dean,  
And feed the politicians to the War Machine!

(23rd May 2008)

Res John Burman

# Lao Tzu

Confucius he say: -

"Given a few more years  
Of life to finish my study  
Of the Book of Changes,  
And I may be free from great errors! "

Just goes to show  
What a Big-head,  
Confucius was!

Lao Tzu smiled  
And whispered: -  
"The beginning of all things,  
Lies still in the beyond,  
In the form of ideas,  
Yet to become real."

We both smiled  
And walked on,  
Arm in arm,  
Playing Ping-Pong,  
With ideas of Love.

Xiao Gao Jiao, Little Longhorn,  
Munched contentedly,  
On fresh grass and water chestnuts,  
I'd gathered for him.  
Kind brown eyes liquid,  
With loving wisdom,  
Too slow and deep,  
For me to understand.

"When will you get to the West,  
Master? " I asked,  
"When can I expect to see you  
Riding down Causwayhead in Penzance,  
On your water buffalo."

The Old Man smiled,

Put a finger to his lips,  
"Ah you Westerners, " he said fondly,  
"Better to live in wonder  
Than just wondering! "

With a twinkle in his eye,  
He squeezed my arm and said,  
"Little Brother, if you thought less  
And felt more, you'd know,  
I'm already there with you! "

(20th February 2008)

Res John Burman

# 'Liam Clancy, Rip'

God rest ye, Liam Clancy  
You were a lovely boy  
With magic in your music  
And a way of spreading joy.

God rest ye, Liam Clancy  
A true son of Erin's Isle  
Your voice could break a thousand hearts  
Or make a Nation smile!

God rest ye, Liam Clancy  
The music was your own  
I pray your Mercy Angels  
Will carry you safely home.

God rest ye, Liam Clancy  
I'll shed a lonely tear  
We're poorer for you passing  
But richer you were here!

God rest ye, Liam Clancy  
Your music will not pass  
And while I play your songs again  
I'll raise a Parting Glass.

Rest Well, Old Friend  
~~~~~

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Res John Burman

# 'Life And Death In The Forest' Tanka

'Bamboo'

When darkness settles  
And the wind forgets to blow  
The trees are silent

But no matter how quiet  
The bamboo always rustles.

~~~~~

'The Fallen Beech'

So quiet she lies  
Stretched upon her leafy bed  
Resting in the sun

A monument to her life  
A Greater Serenity

~~~~~

Copyright © Res JFB 26th April 2010

Res John Burman

# Life And Death.

A sweet friend who I love dearly  
Not halfway through her beauty  
Starts to fear for her passing  
Starts to fear her dying hour  
Will she waste the beauty  
Of her loveliness and spirit  
By fearing the one thing  
That we know will come to pass?

We are all upon a journey  
An exciting vivid pathway  
Not just from birth to death  
But from alpha to omega.  
From amoeba to future man  
From Africa to America  
If we can trace our DNA  
To the dawn of time in Africa  
Surely by all that's Holy  
It must stretch as far the other way!

All of us who have loved someone  
Must have felt that consciousness  
That expanding of awareness  
Beyond the function of the brain!  
That knowing beyond thinking  
That's the senses of the spirit  
That's the knowing that can go with us  
When we leave this life behind!

I am quite content to know  
The limit of my understanding  
Cannot hope to encompass  
Everything that will be so.  
Whether playing harps in Heaven  
Or going walkies with a Dog God  
Or worshipping a Goddess  
Oh Goddess let it be so!  
Or imagine just an energy  
With that loving consciousness

Merging with all others that have ever been.  
Imagine all the sparking, the laughing and the larking  
When this life is over I'll be content to go there.

I'm in no hurry to move onward  
But I know it's surely coming  
There's one or two would kick my ass  
If I went too soon!  
When my time comes I hope  
I'm not a miser at my ending  
Clinging greedily to days and nights  
Who's worth is sadly declining.  
But ready to hopefully  
Face the onward journey  
With all the love I've saved up  
In my ever-loving' life!

Someone said 'twas better  
To always travel hopefully  
Than to arrive.  
I think that's a better way  
To try to live your life.  
Live up to life's promise  
Live all your life hopefully  
No matter what the setbacks  
Love as many dearly  
As you'd wish to love yourself  
This can be a life of beauty  
And your only duty  
Is to do your very best  
For the best part of your life.

There's no need to live fearfully  
Because of what is coming  
That is just to waste the thing  
That life has given us.  
Death is just the next step  
In the journey we must travel  
To regret any part of it  
Is to regret life itself.

So give yourself to living



Give yourself to loving  
Give yourself to travelling  
This lovely vivid road  
Give to travelling hopefully  
Till age make travelling wearyfull  
Then allow kindly death relieve you of your load.

(18th May 2008)

{This is dedicated to my dear friend Dena, with love and admiration.}

Res John Burman

# Lotus

The Lotus sits  
Pure, pristine and symmetrical  
Upon her murky seat.

The golden centre shining  
Illuminating the creamy  
White petals, from within.

I can imagine primitive man  
Thinking that Godhead  
Resided here, in this perfection.

I too, modern, sophisticated,  
Twentieth century man  
Trying on the twenty-first! .

Like a new overcoat  
And rather liking  
The fit and the feel of it.

I also feel, within this one  
Perfect bloom  
The touch of the Divine.

By whatever name  
You choose  
To call Her!

(28th June 2008)

Res John Burman

# Meditations Of A Soldier

The following Poem contains violence and language that may be offensive to some. Please read at your discretion.

You can see it coming,  
A mile off,  
On their hot,  
Eager, unthinking, faces.  
Always somewhere inappropriate.  
Like a dinner-party.

"You were a soldier, "  
"Did you .....? "  
"Have you ever .....? "  
Whispered... "Killed anyone? "  
You want to reach out,  
Across the table,  
And bitch-slap `em,  
Back to reality.

How would you react,  
If I were to reach,  
Under the table,  
And start to pile,  
Upon our Hostess's  
White table-cloth,  
Body-parts?

Dead friends  
And enemies,  
And innocents.  
Blood and faeces,  
Splashing in your face,  
Like this red wine  
I symbolically flick  
At you.

Do you really expect  
An answer?  
Do you think,

That we who went,  
Were more fool than you?

Perhaps we were,  
For going!  
But don't assume  
We still are.  
We ALL offered  
Service and Sacrifice,  
Loyalty,  
To Governments  
Who proved unworthy  
Of it.  
Until the only loyalty  
We felt was to  
Each other,  
Or to the dead.

What civilians do not realise  
Is that the dead cannot hurt you.  
It is always the living,  
Who cause us problems.  
All the dead can do  
Is wake the live horror  
In our minds  
Of what man does to brother!  
And what we have lost!

We learned to remember,  
The friends and the fun,  
The service and the hardship,  
The lives that were saved!  
Do you ever ask of them?  
But we also learned,  
To leave the killing  
And the dying,  
At the back-doors  
Of our minds.

Lest it wake you,

And our hostess,  
And fellow guests,  
From their sleep,  
As it still wakes us.  
Occasionally.  
Especially after  
Your silly, thoughtless,  
Idiot, questions!

So learn my friend,  
That simplest of lessons,  
One of the first,  
That we as soldiers learned,  
And keep your silly mouth  
SHUT!

We have buried our dead,  
And unless your name is  
Jesus H. Christ,  
It ain't your job  
To resurrect `em.  
So ~ don't ~ f\*\*\*ing ~  
ASK!

(11th March 2008)

Res John Burman

# 'Mickey Gaughan'

&quot;Mickey Gaughan&quot;;

Mickey Gaughan and me  
Singing Rebel songs  
Deep into the night.  
He'd play his records  
And I'd shout from the window  
&quot;Louder, Mickey, louder! &quot;  
We'd sing &quot;Kevin Barry&quot;  
That I learned from  
Tony Barry of Ennis  
In County Clare.  
Then &quot;Brennan on the Moor&quot;  
And &quot;They're Hanging Men and Women  
For The Wearing of the Green&quot;  
And while we loved  
The raucous, militant  
Songs of Rebellion  
We also loved the quieter  
More poignant ones.  
Like &quot;The Foggy Dew&quot;  
Whose sweet words  
I first learned on the pillow  
Of Beautiful Nonie Collins  
Of Dublin Town.  
And we'd finish with the haunting  
&quot;Glory-o Glory-o  
To the Bold Fenian Men&quot;

\*\*\*

I was never one of  
The Brotherhood  
And never would be.  
I could not agree  
With bombing civilians.  
Mickey knew that  
And respected it too.  
But we both had

Deep convictions  
About the 'Rights of Man'  
And the rights of men  
To fight for their freedom.  
And we loved the old songs  
That told of the struggle  
And man's love of home  
And family and freedom.

\*\*\*

Apart from close family  
I was probably  
The last friendly face  
Mickey saw  
Before they took him away  
And murdered him!  
'What's up, Mickey?' I asked.  
'They're taking me  
Across the road,' he replied,  
'And I don't think  
They'll let me come back!'  
And true to their word  
They didn't!

\*\*\*

You were a good friend  
And neighbour, Mickey  
And oh how I loved  
The music we shared.  
You were a good soldier  
And you paid the  
Ultimate price  
For your beliefs.  
If you didn't achieve  
Everything you fought for  
You did put an end  
To Force Feeding!  
That most barbaric  
And hideous of tortures!  
And political prisoners  
For generations to come

Should thank you  
For that!  
And every Englishman  
In whose name  
Such tortures  
Were carried out,  
Should thank you too!  
I Thank you!

\*\*\*

Goodbye old friend  
I needn't tell you  
I liked you well.  
You the dedicated  
Republican  
And bold Volunteer  
Me the ex Corporal British Army.  
Perhaps we should  
Have been enemies  
But we, both common men,  
Found more that spoke of brotherhood  
Than enmity  
More common ground  
Than differences  
As we both suffered  
Under Perfidious Albion's  
Thumb!

\*\*\*

I just wish  
They'd written  
A better song  
About you than  
'Take me back to Mayo!'  
One that captured  
The poetry of the Irish soul  
And the 'Terrible Beauty'  
To be found in the songs  
We loved to sing  
Window to window



In the night!  
I am proud  
To have known you  
And to have called you  
Brother  
Glory-o, Glory-o to you,  
You Bold Fenian Man

\*\*\*

R.I.P. Michael Gaughan  
5th October 1949 ~ 3rd June 1974  
Soldier of the Irish Republican Army  
Hunger Striker  
Son and Brother  
Friend

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The 5th of October would have been Mickey's birthday. I offer this, not in hopes of resurrecting 'the troubles' but perhaps as a very small gesture towards reconciliation.

Res John Burman

# 'Milk Fever And Cow Lifting'

'Res, I've got a cow down! '  
My friend Leonard said,  
'Show me, my friend! ' said I,  
And followed where he led.

Big black and white Friesian  
Fallen and wedged quite tight  
Behind the feeding troughs  
And it was coming on for night!

'Milk fever? ' I asked quietly  
So as not to fright the cow  
'Have you got the calcium in 'er? '  
'Yes, I've just done it now! '

'Did you stick it in the milk vein? '  
'No, just under the skin! '  
'Damn, it'll take forever,  
Milk vein's the place to whack it in! '

Though it wasn't Leonard's fault  
But it really was a pain  
With half a ton of cow on top  
You couldn't reach the vein!

'Leonard we'll have to lift 'er,  
But there isn't any space,  
What have you got in the lifting way  
That we can get into this place? '

'Well, I've got a pin-bone clamp,  
That I picked up one time,  
But nothing in the lifting way  
That we can bring on line! '

'Come Leonard, I've seen scaffold poles  
Out there in the scrap,  
And sheave blocks and grain hoists  
We can make something out of that! '

So we scot a hole up through the floor  
Of the granary upstairs,  
And built a sheer-legs out of poles  
And collected pulley wheels in pairs.

Some rope from the bale trailer,  
Threaded through the wheels  
And we had a block and tackle  
With a four to one lift deal!

So clamp clamped on the pin-bones  
And filled with more than hope, ,  
Two husky sons and I began  
To pull down on that rope!

'Oh Res, she's lifting nicely! '  
Our Leonard he did say,  
But her arse came up and her chin stayed down,  
And then she stayed that way!

'No good, no good, no good! ' I cried,  
'Lower her down once more!  
Gently now, don't let her drop! '  
And we lowered her to the floor!

'We need another sheer-legs,  
We need more rope and blocks,  
Send a son to fetch back mine,  
The one I use for moving rocks! '

So we built another sheer-legs,  
Another hole in the granary floor  
We made a sling for under her chest  
And we start to lift her more!

This time she came up even  
And we held her there a-while  
But she wouldn't take her own weight  
Not by a country mile.

'We need to massage her legs

To get some feeling back  
But there just isn't room to work,  
We'll have to lay her back! '

'No! No! ' I said, 'Let's tie her off,  
Let's make a careful plan,  
Let's cut some rollers and a door,  
To lay her back upon! '

This we did, we cut some pipes,  
We found a fine stout door  
And arranged them underneath  
Before we lowered her to the floor.

Now inch by inch we dragged her  
Backwards on her door,  
Until she popped, just like a cork  
Onto the loose-box floor.

Ah now we would have room to work,  
We let her rest just then.  
No rest for us, we had to do  
The whole job over again!

Two more holes up through the ceiling  
Arrange the sheer-legs and the rope  
The clamp, the sling, the blocks and all,  
And start again with hope!

This time we raised her neatly  
We were getting good by now,  
We tied her off just dangling there,  
And went to work on the cow.

We massaged each leg carefully,  
She really did look sick,  
We lifted them and flexed their joints  
She was too tired to kick.

We built a wall of straw bales  
To hold her up a while  
And gradually slacked off the ropes

You should have seen Old Leonard smile.

We were all smiling  
As we saw her take her weight  
Another cow saved once more  
From the Knacker-man's fate.

And in the lantern light we sat  
Mrs L bought tea and scones,  
Cow suckled calf, and Len and me  
Were weary to our bones.

But satisfied and well pleased  
With our labour on that day,  
We'd earned a piece of heaven  
As we went upon our way.

~~~~~

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Res John Burman

# Miracle At Country Life Press Station.

There comes a time in many a young life,  
After stony roads and loads of strife,  
We can fall into places inter-tidal,  
Then hopeless we sink to suicidal.

Young girl sitting by the railroad line,  
Feelin' she'd just run out of time,  
Body and mind shrieked the same refrain,  
"I'm gonna end it under the very next train! "

Sitting down the end of Chestnut Street,  
Waiting there her fate to meet,  
Praying for that final expiation,  
On disused Country Life Press Station.

Just sitting there in a world of pain,  
Waiting for that lethal train,  
She thought she sat all alone there,  
When "Got a Smoke? " whispered in her ear!

An old Hobo sat there by her side,  
Frightened her so she nearly died,  
Then she saw that as a ghastly joke,  
So they sat there quiet and shared a smoke.

A train was coming! But she just sat there,  
Suicide is a very private affair,  
Her innate good manners, she couldn't end  
Her life in front of her smoking friend!

The train pulled up, in that screeching way,  
"Better get on this one, " she heard him say,  
"Won't be another chance." he said so mild,  
"Thanks for the smoke, God Bless you child! "

She climbed aboard and waved good-bye,  
He wasn't there, she didn't know why.  
"Tickets please! " said the Conductor Man,  
Standing there, holding out his hand.

"I haven't a ticket, I must confess,  
Can I buy one from Country Life Press? "  
"You must be mistaken, Child, I greatly fear.  
Trains ain't stopped there for many a year! "

She was too shocked to argue the matter,  
Her heart was beating pitter-patter,  
A pain in her soul like a bowie knife,  
Had an Angel Hobo just saved her life?

From that day on she never looked back,  
On the smoothest roads or the outward track,  
Not once more did she go adrift,  
She made good use of the Hobo's Gift.

Young Girl grew up strong and true,  
Good friend to me, good neighbour to you,  
And the only flaw in her reputation,  
Is a belief in Angels on a disused station!

(26th May 2008)

Res John Burman

## 'More Haiku'

'Granite Headlands'

Patiently we stand  
Like a monument to time  
Enduring ~ Granite  
~~~~~

'Ancient Beech Woods'

Ancient beech woods shine  
Light and shade ~ mossy boulders  
Listen to leaves fall

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Res John Burman



# Morning Sun

The morning sun sets trees ablaze  
With a fiery rosy tint,  
It can do the same for days and days,  
Without a carbon footprint!

(15th May 2008)

Res John Burman

# Morning Walk

A pretty pastel morning,  
The sea a gentle swell,  
The morning Sun is climbing,  
Over sand and sea and shell.

The air is like cool satin,  
A caress against my face,  
I stretch my legs and swing my arms,  
Picking up the pace.

I want to get to Marazion,  
The next town round the bay,  
There and back will be five miles,  
I hope to keep fit this way.

The light is always changeing,  
The scene is always new,  
It would take a lifetime,  
To tire of this view.

There's rabbits playing on the grass,  
And always dogs I know,  
They'll remember me for a biscuit,  
And bring me balls to throw.

There's flowers there to photograph,  
And swans fly over the foam,  
And maybe a 'bacon banjo',  
Before I venture home!

(12th May 2008.)

Res John Burman

# 'My Beauty Of The Lowlands'

She was small and beautiful  
A youthful bloom seemed to shine  
From beneath her sun tanned skin  
Her blonde hair like corn silk  
Framing her exquisite face  
And she was my companion  
For the bumpy bus ride  
From Matala on the south coast of Crete  
Over the mountains to Iráklion

We had talked a time or two  
In the taverna society of Matala.  
Danced a time or two at the Mermaid Café  
Not knowing how famous it would become  
From Joni Mitchell's 'Carey'.  
But she was too beautiful  
For a tired old soldier like me to pursue  
And she was always surrounded  
By those wanting to share her beauty  
Or her body! While the wind  
Carried the smell of African dust  
As we danced in the night.

When she talked to you  
She had a habit of stepping closer  
Right into one's personal space  
And looking directly up into your eyes  
With those eyes so deep blue  
They were almost violet.  
And although she was surrounded  
By admirers,  
For those brief moments of conversation  
It was as though we were quite alone in the world.

Now tired from the farewell parties  
We shared a seat on the bus.  
Her bare arm touching mine  
As we talked about our mutual friends  
And acquaintances among the freaks

And draft dodgers, deserters and ex-soldiers  
That made up the floating population  
Of Matala in those days.  
She told me her name was Helena  
Which, she said, meant light,  
A perfect name for this shining beauty.  
Gradually she grew sleepy  
Her head nodding until it rested  
Upon my delighted shoulder.

I hardly moved for the rest of the journey  
For fear of waking her.  
I could smell the clean perfume of her hair  
Feel the softness of her skin  
Where her cheek rested on my arm.  
See the beguiling white Vee  
Where her suntan faded  
Between her perfect breasts.  
My breathing slowed as almost  
In a state of meditation I sat there  
Loving the trust and closeness,  
The warmth and the beauty  
Of Lovely Helena from the Low Countries.  
And while the Greeks around us  
Fervently crossed themselves  
At every roadside cross and shrine  
Commemorating every fatal accident  
On that twisty mountain road  
I sat there wishing the journey  
Would go on forever.

Eventually we rattled down  
From the mountains into Iráklion.  
I bought a ticket on the Ferry  
With the money I had received  
From 'selling' my cave on  
To it's next occupant.  
That was the way on leaving Matala.  
You always 'sold' your cave for the price  
Of the bus fare over the mountains  
And the Ferry ride back to the mainland.

We shared the Ferry ride  
Helena and I, across the Aegean Sea to Piraeus  
Athens' seaport, busy bustling and earthy.  
We took a room together in a cheap hotel.  
It was only when I went to the bathroom  
And spied girls standing in the dim doorways  
Of their rooms that I realised that  
We had taken a room in what served  
Piraeus as a Brothel! Complete with  
Government Rules and Regulations  
Printed behind the doors.  
I made sure that I accompanied my  
Beautiful friend to and from the bathroom  
After that! But we both found it funny,  
And perhaps it added a little to our passion,  
But none to the tenderness that grew  
Between us that night.

Tenderness like a balm to my old wounds.  
It was there I learned she had deliberately  
Chosen to travel alone with me,  
Away from the competition of her attendants!  
She could switch from Dutch to German,  
To English to French, easier than I could  
Change hats! But she said, "French is the  
Language of Love, mon chéri"  
"Rather than the guttural language of my own country!"

She said she had always collected  
Injured birds and animals,  
That was why she wanted to become a  
Veterinary Surgeon.  
I asked her, "Is that what I am to you  
An injured bird?"  
"Mais non, mon chéri, but I have always  
Had a way with injuries! To me you are  
An injured horse, non? Like the knights  
Used to ride!" She didn't know that  
My Chinese Horoscope sign  
Was the Horse.  
"Now you must learn to let  
Your scars dance, just as we did

At the Mermaid Café! " And we danced  
Naked, to a tinny radio in a Brothel  
In Salty earthy Piraeus.

Next day we took the lovely wooden tram  
Up the line to Athens.  
There to go our separate ways.  
She to join friends for the overland journey  
Across Albania and Yugoslavica to Austria.  
I, forbidden that route by my Government,  
Unwilling to allow the secrets I still carried  
In my head, to venture behind the Iron Curtain,  
Was forced to remain in Athens.  
Sleeping on a camp bed on the roof of a Hotel  
In the centre of the city.  
Waiting for a cheap passage on a \*Gastarbeiter bum boat  
Carrying poor Greeks across the Ionian Sea  
To Brindisi in Italy and thence overland  
To a life of servitude in Germany.

We exchanged names and addresses  
She writing hers on the flyleaf  
Of my copy of The Lord of the Rings  
Still only part read despite six months in the Islands.  
And so we parted! She, again surrounded  
By admirers, but stepping away once more  
Into my personal space for one last kiss,  
As her attendants glowered behind her back!

It was a couple of months before I heard  
Leonard Cohen sing 'Sisters of Mercy'  
On an LP in a bed-sit in Notting Hill.  
And a year or two before I met the man himself.  
But 'Sisters of Mercy' became  
Always our song in my mind!  
Lord of the Rings was washed to a pulp  
As I hitch-hiked through the Alps  
Her name and address dissolving into  
Wet sludge in the bottom of a rucksack pocket.

I did eventually buy another copy  
But the name and address of lovely Helena

Was sadly absent from the flyleaf!  
I did eventually finish Tolkien's saga  
But every mention of Hobbit Holes  
Cast my mind back to when I too  
Lived in a Hobbit Hole on a Cretan cliff face  
In the ancient land of the Minotaur.  
And on leaving spent two loving days  
With the most beautiful girl in the world!

If I had known then what I know now.....(Sigh)

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\* Gastarbeiter = Guest Worker, in Germany. In those days many poor Greeks took ship to Italy and then overland to Germany to make money as Labourers in Germany's expanding economy. As a consequence of that, I learned more German in six months in Greece than I did in two years in Germany. The Germans spoke too good English to allow us to mutilate their language by holding conversations with us in German!

Res John Burman

# My Ex Wife.

Your face  
Sneering, scowling  
Contorted with malice  
Hands taloned to attack my face  
If I remember you  
It is like this  
My wife.

My life  
Has moved on from  
Such sad and spiteful days  
I suffered long enough for you  
Now I'm free, rejoicing  
Lib-er-at-ed  
Reborn

I shall  
Forgive, but not  
For your sake but for mine  
Forgiving sets me free, to be  
Endlessly so grateful  
To be away  
From you.

Now you  
Cannot hurt me  
You cannot hurt our son  
We both grow beyond you, away  
To replace your hateful  
And selfish ways  
With hope.

And love  
Beyond your ken  
Feelings that are foreign  
To you grim soul lost in darkness  
We walk away, relieved  
So free of you  
At last!



20th March 2008

Res John Burman

# 'My Fortune Beckoning Cat'

I changed the batteries in my  
Fortune beckoning cat,  
And set him in my window, beckoning again.  
Then I asked Barclaycard to repay all the  
Personal Payment Insurance  
That had been wrongly sold me!

Wrongly sold?  
I believe that is a euphemism for theft!  
"Wow! " said the man from Barclays.  
"That's a good pay-out! "

But I'd had three of his colleagues  
On the 'phone only a month or two before.  
Demanding that I give them the few pounds  
That I send to Médecins Sans Frontières  
Each month. And what I send to Unicef  
And WaterAid and Macmillan and a few more.  
They said they had a higher priority than  
The starving millions in Africa and Asia!  
They said they could have me evicted!  
Thugs in suits!

"Go ahead and evict me, " I said.  
"See what bloody fools you'll look,  
Evicting a 70 year old Disabled Veteran  
Just because you stopped  
Lending 'Interest Only' Mortgages  
To people of my age.  
You're not dying from dirty water  
Or lack of medicines! Though your lack  
Of manners may be terminal! "

They reluctantly agreed to let me stay  
For a short while,  
Provided I increase my monthly payments  
By six hundred and twenty five per cent!

I was forced to sell my house!

And promptly rented it back!  
I paid off my mortgage and all other debts.  
Barclays didn't even say, "Thank you! "

But then I changed the batteries in my  
Fortune beckoning cat!  
"Wow! " said the man from Barclays.  
"That's a good pay-out! "

"That's not a pay-out! " I said,  
"That's you paying me back  
All the money you've stolen from me  
In the last eighteen or twenty years! "  
And then I went out and bought another  
Fortune beckoning cat.....  
Just in case!

No wonder the Chinese  
Are so enamoured of  
These 'Lucky Cats! '

Now Barclays keep asking me  
To transfer any balances I might have  
To them!  
'More neck than a brass giraffe, '  
Springs to mind.

One cat beckons...  
The other waves Barclays off....  
It reminds me of the legendary bird  
Whose cry sounds remarkably like  
"Fuggoff... Fuggoff! "

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Res John Burman

# My It Consultant

I have an IT Consultant,  
Who, gently, with words of one syllable,  
Patiently leads me through the complexities,  
Of Mobiles, landlines, filters,  
Modems, USB's and other such mysteries.  
Whose gentle voice sometimes pauses,  
Just long enough, for me to say,  
I love you!

(28 January 2008)

Res John Burman

# My Morning Began (Tanka)

'Blackbird'

My morning began  
Hunting for the Early Worm  
Fuel for my life

It's a well fed blackbird sings  
The most exquisite love songs  
~~~~~

'Grey Squirrel'

My morning began  
Stealing that which was not mine  
This is my nature

The Divine Hand that made me  
Bade me thrive ~ so I obey  
~~~~~

'Mother's Headstone'

My morning began  
Taking bluebells to Mother  
Maybe the last time

However ~ the less I come  
The closer our next meeting

....

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Res John Burman

# 'My Place'

"My Place"

My place now is Cornwall  
I was drawn here by the clean air and the sea  
Driven by that heat-wave we had back in '76.

Cornwall is where the granite spine of England  
Lies exposed to the wind and the weather  
Before dipping below the Wild Atlantic Ocean.

It is a hard county. These Celtic people lead hard lives.  
It breeds strong, brave men, wide of shoulder.  
From mining tin from the granite, wresting a living  
From the sea, or crops from the land.

When a lifeboat is lost here, with all it's crew  
From one small village, they'll spend a day  
Looking for bodies or survivors.  
The next day a full crew of volunteers  
Report for duty on the next lifeboat!  
I've seen this happen and their courage still astounds me!

Here the old boys talk to the granite!  
They have built houses from it  
And Cornish Stone Hedges  
Since the Stone Age. They'll cut it  
And split it at will. Only telling it first  
What they want it to do!

It is a poor county. Most of the wealth  
Was torn from the ground and the sea  
Generations ago. But the prevailing wind  
Has the whole Atlantic over which to purify itself  
Before reaching here. Sometimes it will storm in,  
Hurricane force winds, but the air is clean  
And the water is soft. And so are the accents.  
And I'd rather be poor here, than rich in a city.

It's a fine place to raise your children.

There are many things that will kill them...  
But not so many that will sully their souls.  
They learn to swim early, and surf and drive tractors.  
Most boys sit their driving test on their sixteenth birthday.  
And with narrow lanes they often drive as fast backwards  
As they do forwards!

It is a place of rugged cliffs and rolling hills  
Green pastures with dairy cattle always ready  
For a conversation over the field gate.  
Dogs at heel and friendly neighbours... well mostly!  
Narrow lanes where bramble, hawthorn and blackthorn grow  
Swampy lowlands rich with lemon balm and orchids!  
And rugged moors, purple with heather, sharp with gorse.

The place is littered with Standing Stones,  
Iron age forts and villages.  
Legends that on a misty night you might swear  
Were coming true. Great inventors like Humphrey Davy  
And Trevithick and Old Henry Trengrouse,  
Who invented the 'Rocket life-saving apparatus'  
After watching the whole crew of HMS Anson  
Drown down at Loe Bar, below Helston.

If you imagine England as a Christmas Stocking  
Cornwall is right down at the toe.  
And like a Christmas Stocking  
This is where all the nuts collect!  
Artists love the light here and the blue of the sea.  
Sculptors settle, witches brew, old soldiers come to rest,  
Musicians pick, writers write and poets bloom  
Which may be why I'm so happy here!

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Res John Burman

## 'Nonie Collins'

Sometimes when the light's just right  
And the shadows look like water  
I think I see her in the night  
That Fenian's lovely daughter.

Perhaps a snatch of 'Danny Boy'  
She taught me on her pillow  
Perhaps a glimpse of auburn hair  
Or her hips swaying like a willow.

I can almost feel her smile  
Like silk upon my skin  
The whens and wheres of her kisses  
And her warmth that drew me in.

I remember well her temper  
Like livid sunset flare  
And the blessed balm of her forgiveness  
Her tenderness and care.

The beauty of her body  
Green eyes and auburn hair  
And her love that did enfold me  
I think she saved my life that year!

But now it is so many years  
Since I heard her lilting laughter  
And we'd practice, practice all summer long  
The Loving Arts to master.

I have much to thank Erin for  
Not least her lovely daughter  
Whose laughter could light up my day  
Or turn my knees to water.

Farewell my dear, my warrior maid  
My yardstick of perfection  
The lodestone in my compass points  
Always in your direction.



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Res John Burman

# 'Ode To Eve Elliott'

Old Causewayhead just ain't the same  
I don't know who is to blame  
But the street has turned to a dreary mile  
Without the sunshine of your smile

Nowhere to stop for a welcome kiss  
I admit it's that I truly miss  
No smile lighting up my day  
Now that you have gone away

No wonder Penzance is in decline  
All year round it's winter time  
Ashes to ashes dust to dust  
Perhaps I'll move out to St Just

Perhaps by bus or perhaps by car  
I'll never more eat a Grizzly Bar

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Res John Burman

# 'Old Charlie'

My old sarong's faded  
But my Viet Cong pyjamas  
Are still going strong

Old Charlie ~ he always was  
Damn near indestructible

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Res John Burman

# Paddington Station. Platform One.

Your beauty shines out  
In the monochrome station  
Sooty platform one.

We liked each other  
Long ago when first we met  
Such grace, we still do.

Your tinkling laughter  
Your voice in the night sighing  
I listen for you

Your taste and your touch  
The essence of your humour  
Spring comes to my soul.

21st March 2008

Res John Burman

# Paddy

(That's short for Patricia, not one of my Irish friends)

Our parting tears  
Yours, and mine  
I gathered in  
A blue paisley  
Handkerchief.  
I rolled it tightly  
And sewed it shut  
Tight, neat, little,  
Stitches.  
And tried to forget.

I joined the Army  
To forget.  
Because I couldn't  
Speak French.  
And a daily ration  
Of rough sour wine  
Didn't interest me.  
But climbing mountains,  
Did. Canoeing  
Rivers did!

Years later,  
Mountains and  
Valleys later.  
Loves later,  
Service and wounds later.  
Captivities and Freedoms later,  
Sacrifice and rebirths later,  
I found the handkerchief,  
And that little wooden mouse  
In my folks attic,  
Among other dusty traces  
Of vanished youth.

I cut the stitches,  
And unrolled the handkerchief.

The tears were  
No longer there.  
Now forty nine years  
Later. The pain  
Has gone. Even  
The longing.

But perhaps  
Like a faded spot  
On an old handkerchief,  
There is a trace,  
Just a shadow,  
Of regret,  
At what we missed,  
At what we might have been.  
Fare thee well!

(13th March 2008)

Res John Burman

# Papaver Somniferum

Ah Papaver Somniferum,  
The fumes of long gone dreams,  
A pipe or two, and dreams of you,  
Are never what it seems!

This Blessed Balm from Heaven  
Will sooth all kinds of pain,  
But sad to say, at the end of day,  
The pain doubles back again.

Better, Soldier on Regardless,  
Than to take the easy way,  
But those dreams of yore, when you're feelin' sore,  
Will always make you pay.

So like Old 'Tommy living cleanly'  
Ignoring the horror of my fall,  
Now when I'm in pain, I say once again,  
I ONLY DREAM of Poppies growing tall.

(10th February 2008)

Res John Burman

# 'Pipa Music'

From under the tea-house eaves  
Pipa music lifts it's exquisite voice  
And wafts up the mountainside.

To where the Gods sit smiling  
And gently tap their feet!

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Res John Burman



## Rapture. Miss P.

You have woken my soul from it's lonely sleep,  
You yearn me and churn me and make my heart leap.  
The thought of your love just fills me with flame,  
I go weak as a babe at the sound of your name.

### Rapture

Thank you and bless you, may you always be,  
As safe and secure as I'd want you to be.  
If I can't always be there, I want you to know,  
My love always folds round you with a warm loving glow.

### Rapture

I yearn to be with you, protecting and caring,  
Supporting and growing in loving and sharing.  
Come dance for me Lady, let our souls dance together,  
I promise to know you and love you forever.

### Rapture

(12 December 2007)

Res John Burman

# Ray On Cats

My friend Ray,  
Living in the woods,  
At Westmoor.  
Making tea on  
His woodburner.

"Look at Old Blackie relax."  
He said, "Isn't it wonderful  
How relaxed a cat can get,  
But....  
Ready NOT to be! "

22nd March 2008

Res John Burman

# 'Reflections' Tanka

The window reflects  
Dove and sparrows eating grain  
Busier than I

They eat the seed I buy ~ but  
I have the best of the deal  
~~~~~

The mirror reflects  
My own face but much older  
There is something wrong

Why can't it portray my face  
Without the sorrow showing  
~~~~~

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Res John Burman

# 'Remembrance Sunday'

Was it the throbbing in his head  
Or the growling in his stomach  
That woke him?  
He didn't want to wake up.  
He was cold and hungry, and with sleep,  
At least sometimes, came oblivion.  
When it wasn't fiery nightmares  
And for that the drink usually sufficed.

He pulled the thin blanket around him  
A'top his cardboard mattress.  
The throbbing grew louder.  
He'd had a warm sleeping bag  
Until last week when he woke to find  
Drunken teenagers p\*\*sing on it,  
And, not knowing if it was p\*\*s or petrol,  
He ran, in terror, leaving all behind him.

That night he'd spent cowering behind  
A waste bin, near a Supermarket  
Trying to master his terror  
While the sores on his legs  
Itched and festered!  
Still the throbbing in his head  
Grew louder.  
Reluctantly he crawled  
Across the cardboard  
In the shop doorway.

And there, marching to the beat of a drum,  
Be-chained and resplendent,  
Pompous and portly,  
Marched the Lady Mayoress,  
And the Aldermen,  
And the town council  
Attended by Army Cadets  
With a banner

With Sea and Air Cadets  
And a single bass drum that  
Throbbled throbbled throbbled  
In his head.

Old habits die hard.  
He snapped to attention  
And saluted the flag!  
He would have worn his medals  
But he sold them long ago  
For the price of a full English Breakfast  
With a fried slice and a cup of tea.

His jerky salute caught  
The Lady Mayoress's eye,  
She took one look and turned primly away  
Her chins quivering!  
They were, after all, honouring the gallant dead  
Of two World Wars and many smaller ones.

They had no time for the survivors  
Or those who merely crawled away.  
They who had sacrificed their courage  
Upon the Altar of their Nation's Wars.  
And having spent it had nothing left for themselves  
It was clear, the Nation had forgotten them  
The Nation didn't care.

As the parade drew away  
The throbbing in his head died away too.  
And he sat, wrapped in his thin blanket  
On his piece of cardboard  
And he remembered the fallen.  
As though it were yesterday!  
More vividly than the Mayoress  
Or her minnions.

The Mayoress was dry eyed but he shed tears  
They dropped on the sores from his last burning  
Which were on the skin grafts he had earned  
Wading through liquid fire on Sir Galahad  
In Port Pleasant, trying to rescue his mates.

After the parade, and a wreath and a hurried prayer  
The Lady Mayoress sat down to a hearty lunch.  
"Remind me, dear, " she said to her husband,  
"Remind me to phone the Chief Constable  
To ask why our Remembrance Sunday parade route  
Was lined with drunks and vagrants"

But she needn't have worried  
The receding throbbing wasn't the drum  
It was his tired heart finally giving up  
To septic shock.  
Burns on skin grafts do not heal  
Especially when one is unwelcome  
At the hospital, and the disapproval  
Of the nurses and doctors  
Frightens a man who spent all his courage  
Years before in the service and uniform  
Of a grateful nation!

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Res John Burman

# Rudbeckia Hirta. Black-Eyed Susan.

Oh Maryland has got some sights,  
That all are pleased to see,  
But Rudbeckia Hirta is the one,  
That really pleases me!

Not as tall as many,  
But her slender upright form,  
Always makes her look taller,  
And prettier than the norm.

She has a grace all of her own  
As she sways in the breeze  
And flaunts her skirts before the wind  
As pretty as you please.

Maryland has loved her,  
Since Nineteen Eighteen,  
And I, who love her just as well,  
Know just what they mean.

She is the Queen of Daisies,  
So radiant, dancing, smart,  
And a Goddess among women  
And the Princess of my heart!

(27 Jan 2008)

Res John Burman

# Sands Of Time

Written for a Poetry Challenge. The challenge was to write a poem including sand dunes without mentioning either word, this was the result.

Take the train to Bodmin Road  
They call it Parkway now  
But nothing has changed  
Except the sign.

Catch the bus to Padstow  
Rattling and shaking  
Through the Cornish  
Countryside.

Did you know Cornish Drivers  
Can drive as fast backwards  
As forwards  
Narrow lanes teach backing  
Fast.

Padstow or Padstein  
As they call it now  
Fish smell from the harbour  
Gulls call, all the time  
Buy a flower!  
Not a kiss me quick hat.

Look across the Camel  
That's a River not a cigarette  
D'you see Brae Hill  
Standing huge, rounded  
Beach heaped by the wind.

Partly grass covered, tufty  
Blown detritus  
Of the River  
Estuary. Take the ferry  
Go there.

The far side of Brae Hill



Is part of a golf course  
And the hill becomes  
The largest bunker in the world.

Unless you count Saudi  
Which is of course  
All bunker  
What ain't concrete  
Or hotels  
Now.

Walk across the Golf Course  
Beware of low flying balls!  
Mostly grass but granular ground  
Showing here and there.

Beyond the greens like velvet  
You'll find a little church  
Tiny, once lost under  
The flying wind blown  
Grains of beach.

Walk through the hedge  
Of tamarisk, look right  
First grave you see  
Lay your flower down.

Dear Sweet Poet  
I hope the granular  
Open grained, porous  
Nature of your bed  
Allows the songs to filter  
Down to you there.

The song of the Sea  
Beating upon Doom Bar  
And the wind in the tamarisk  
The song of Trebetherick  
Which you loved so well  
And the song I would sing to thee  
Had I the sweet facility  
You had with words.

Rest in Peace  
John Betjeman  
"Poet and Hack"  
Poet Laureate  
Social Climber and Knight  
And lover of  
Miss J Hunter Dunn.

You lie among these tiny  
Wind polished grains  
Of Daymer Bay  
Like myriads of universes  
Ground small by time  
And the tide.

(22nd February 2008)

Res John Burman

# Savour

You sounded  
Delicious  
This morning  
Your voice  
Warm and sleepy  
On the 'phone.

Three hundred  
And ten miles  
Didn't disguise  
Your need  
For sleep.

And yet  
Willing to wake  
For my sake  
If not for yours.

Concerned lest  
I should feel  
Rejected  
Neglected  
Unloved!

Foolish Girl  
Don't you know  
I intend  
To Love you  
Forever.  
We have all  
The time  
In the World

Your love  
Seeps through  
The Golden Storm  
And sleepy wires  
To my heart!

You were  
Delicious  
This morning  
Savour  
My Delight  
At your taste!

(1st March 2008)

Res John Burman

# Sea Salt

Here in Cornwall, where I reside,  
We live with sea, we live with tide.  
The English Channel, brings the cold,  
The Great Atlantic, wild and bold.  
Both these seas, surround us here  
Where `ere we go, the sea is near.

Sometimes pacific, almost benign,  
But always waiting, for it's time!  
Artists love it, come to see,  
The blue, the green, the turquoise sea.  
But we who live here, all the time,  
We never trust that sea sublime.

Oh, she can change, from blue so rich,  
To wicked, murderous, killing b\*tch!  
And when the winds, behind the scend,  
She'll take ship and man, to their salty end!  
Ship killer! Man eater! Child stealer, she be,  
Bringing us "Nearer My God To Thee! "

Yet men who sail out there so brave  
Upon her bosom, upon her wave.  
They bring the food they bring the trade,  
Were ever greater heroes made?  
They love her still and their life so free,  
Making their Daily Bread upon the sea.

22nd March 2008.

Res John Burman

# 'Singapore Annie'

&quot;Singapore Annie&quot;;

Singapore Annie  
Was eighty if a day  
And a hard life  
Had written it's story  
Upon her raddled face

She'd graciously sit  
And accept a drink  
From guys on Bugis Street  
Among the beautiful  
Lady-boys

And the smart  
Spotless kids  
Who'd clean one's shoes  
Or play tic-tac-toe  
For money  
And always  
Eventually win!

Annie earned her way  
By hailing Mercedes taxis.  
She wanted her special friends  
To ride home in style  
And the drivers and her friends  
Paid her a commission.

When she knew you well  
She'd coyly slide the hem  
Of her cheongsam  
Up her aged leg  
And show a tattoo  
A Highland Soldier  
Painted upon her thigh.

Then from her handbag  
She'd carefully take  
A letter, much mended  
With sticky stamp borders  
It was dated long before  
World War Two.

Then she'd ask one  
To read the letter to her.  
She'd sit with the glitter  
Of tears  
In her ancient eyes  
As one read the words  
Of a Soldier  
Long dead.

Who had  
Been enamoured  
Of her beauty  
And obviously  
Loved her dearly

Who says that  
An Old Whore  
Has no heart?

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Res John Burman

# 'Solstice Tanka'

Midwinter solstice  
There is ice upon the ground  
But the Jackdaw waits

When the sparrows leave the feeder  
There will still be seed enough

~~~~~

Slipping adroitly  
Between sunshine and showers  
I walk the Beach path

Sunlight warm against my neck  
Avoiding icy puddles

~~~~~

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Res John Burman



# 'Sons Of Wadebridge'

Yesterday I sat  
Where Neville Shute's father prayed  
In that little church at Egloshale  
I wonder if he imagined  
His son's words would fly around the world  
Just as his son did  
Uniting Cornwall with Dublin 1916  
With Burma and Malaya  
And his beloved Australia  
And like my nephew Andy  
Another of Wadebridge's best loved sons

Res John Burman

# St Just Fire Brigade

St Just Fire Brigade are volunteers  
But when they are called out  
The Butcher, Baker and Candlestick maker  
All turn out for a "Shout."

One time they put out a fire  
In a Penzance Square,  
They say they put the fire out  
Before Penzance crew got there!

They'd turn out for anything  
Cat up a tree, or stuck under a log,  
A puppy down a mine shaft  
Or a heifer stuck in a bog!

Peter Bennetts prize heifer  
Up to her belly in marsh.  
And 'im an' his lads couldn't budge 'er  
Oh Lord' Peters comments were harsh!

So they called the boys out with their engine  
Duckboards and sheer-legs and toys  
Slings and sheave blocks for pulling  
They knew what they were doin' those boys!

They heaved and they splashed and got muddy  
The heifer got frightened and guess,  
Yeah, frightened cattle always add  
A good contribution to mess.

Things got smelly and mucky  
Neighbours arrived to lend hand  
And with much swearin' and sweating  
Eventually they got her to land.

Poor heifer stood shaking and trembling  
The boys started cleaning their tack  
Peter said to his son Johnathan  
"Get a bottle of rum! Hurry back! "

All the firemen looked hopeful  
And slowed down what they was doin'  
They'd earned a drink of any mans rum  
But they didn't know what was ensuein'.

The Firemen all looked thirsty  
The bottle arrived like a zephyr  
Peter Bennett took one long sniff  
An' poured it all down the throat of the Heifer!

Faces have never dropped further  
As they watched the gurgling grog  
They saved Bennetts heifer that day  
But Peter, they threw back in the bog!

(25th February 2008)

Res John Burman

# Stapled Rocks

Here in Cornwall  
We get such weather  
We often staple  
Rocks together!

To make our sea wall  
Strong and stout  
To keep the tide  
And water out.

But sea salt and iron  
You can trust  
Eventually will  
Give way to rust!

So now when our sea wall  
We must heal  
We put our trust in  
Stainless steel!

9th May 2008

Res John Burman

# Storms, Squalls & Tempests

Making love  
While  
The Rain  
Beats  
On our window

Matching our rhythm  
And our pauses  
Increasing  
In intensity  
Building

Like handfuls  
Of gravel  
Flung  
Urging us  
On

Squalls  
Whipping us  
To a frenzy  
Higher  
And higher

The cold  
On the window  
Overcome  
By the Heat  
In you

The cold wet  
Of the rain  
Washed away  
By your liquid  
Fire

Outside  
Winter storms  
Here with us

Volcanic  
Paradise

You are my squall  
My tempest  
My Goddess  
Let me bathe  
In your storm

Let me lie  
In the sunshine  
On the beach  
Of your  
Spent passion

Forever

(21 Jan 2008)

Res John Burman

# 'Swelling'

When you can HEAR  
Your feet SWELLING  
Over the hum of the computer

You know you've been  
Writing too many  
Haiku

Time to put  
One's feet  
Up

Don't laugh  
I'm not a  
Footballer

We Old  
South China Seas  
Hands

Are entitled to  
Wear a sarong  
When the feeling takes us

These were my feet  
When I was  
A younger man

Before oedema  
And medications  
Raised their ugly heads!

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Res John Burman

# The Apple. To Eve.

You did not tempt me,  
With that apple,  
'Twas not you.  
Led me astray.  
I ate of it,  
And Oh so gladly,  
So that, with you,  
I might stay!

Oh I dearly loved  
The Garden.  
But that Paradise,  
I freely state,  
Would be a  
God Damned  
Hell on earth,  
Without thee, Beloved Mate!

(12th February 2008)

Res John Burman



# The Apprentice. A Gulls Tale

I am young but I am learning  
Learning how to make my way  
How to make my living  
And getting better day by day.

Sometimes hungry, sometimes sated  
Sometimes hungry once again  
And yes! I'm sometimes raucous  
And sometimes I'm a pain!

On land I am a scavenger  
Some say a 'flying rat'  
But I swim upon God's Ocean  
Now what do you think of that?

I am young but I am learning  
To be accepting of all things  
And I can soar just like an angel  
With God's wind beneath my wings!

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Res John Burman

# The Beaufort Scale

Without regard for life or limb,  
The weather, it comes storming in.  
The waves do build, the wind does wail,  
As the weather climbs the Beaufort Scale.

At Force Six, Strong Breeze, large waves with foam  
The fishing fleet starts to think of home.  
At Seven, Near Gale, the foam does streak  
Out-doors is no place for the weak!

At Eight, the waves are eighteen feet,  
And cars veer across the street!  
At Strong Gale Nine, the slates do fly,  
And chimneys shake against the sky.

At Ten, Whole Gale, whole trees do go,  
And whole roofs too, "Look out below! "  
Force Eleven has thirty seven foot waves,  
And has taken many to their graves!

But Force Twelve has another dread name,  
And that dread name is Hurricane!  
Ninety miles an hour winds, sixty foot seas,  
Will do with you just what they please!

And wind and wave can go much higher,  
If I told you now you'd think me liar!  
But in the shriek and wave and wail,  
You'll pray to God that you prevail!

And when it's over you won't believe,  
This friendly breeze knocked you to your knees,  
You count your dead, lay them away,  
And brace to face another day.

But remember when the fishers head away,  
And sailors seek a sheltered bay,  
When the weather is unfit for all,  
The life-boat is ready for your call.

Those brave, brave men will always sail  
No matter what the Beaufort scale.  
They'll do their best for you and me,  
And all in peril on the sea!

7th May 2008

Res John Burman

# 'The Down 'Omers' Or 'The Angels Of Wan Chai'

They were the flowers of their poverty,  
The prettiest of the weeds.  
The need to eat and support themselves,  
Would often shape their deeds.  
But when British Troops lay bleeding,  
In foreign streets so far,  
T'was the Angels of Wan Chai,  
Showed what real ladies are!

They'd enter short term contracts,  
With soldiers posted there.  
They'd keep his board and keep his bed,  
And be his wife out there.  
And as long as the posting lasted,  
They'd cleave close to his side,  
And when the troopship sailed away,  
They'd be someone else's bride.

'funny an' yellow and faithful,  
Doll in a teacup, she were,  
But we lived on the square,  
Like a true married pair,  
An' I learned about women from her! '

'Where're you going, Tommy? '  
You might ask as he left camp.  
'Down 'ome! ' was often his reply,  
As downhill he would stamp.  
So 'Down 'omers' they became,  
Those flowers of the night,  
And while Tommy treated 'em decent,  
They'd always treat 'im right!

The memsahib looked down on them,  
As nothing but sluts and whores.  
But the memsahib looked down on Tommy,  
Those pale insipid bores!  
But while they were complaining,  
How hard the war was on the wives,

T'was the Angels of the gutter,  
Went out and saved some lives!

When the memsahib in Singapore,  
Were bribing passage for a few,  
The Angels of Wan Chai,  
Went were the bullets flew,  
They carried food and medicine,  
To the defenders of Hong Kong,  
They bandaged up the wounded,  
All night and all day long!

And when the fight was over,  
That Christmas the wounded lay,  
Out in the streets for 'most a week,  
And were tended every day.  
By Angels in silk cheongsams,  
Skin tight and split to thigh,  
Who braved the bullets and the rape,  
That Tommy wouldn't die!

British and Canadian,  
Indian Soldiers lost,  
Were rounded up like cattle,  
And into jail tossed!  
And in all the years of hardship,  
The Wan Chai Angels threw,  
Food and meds across the wire,  
To try and save a few!

They were the flowers of their poverty,  
The prettiest of the weeds.  
The need to eat and support themselves,  
Would often shape their deeds!  
But when Commonwealth Troops lay bleeding,  
In foreign streets so far,  
T'was the Angels of Wan Chai,  
Showed what real ladies are!

© Res John Burman 22nd October 2009



# The Earthquake Trilogy. A Mothers Sacrifice.

In the Land of the Giant Panda,  
In the Province of Sichuan,  
They were digging in the rubble,  
Still hoping to find someone.

They found a Mother stiff and cold,  
How long had she been there,  
Dying under the wreckage,  
Dust and grit in her hair.

They gently turned her over,  
Knowing they were too late,  
They saw, shielded by her body,  
A baby, saved from it's Mothers fate.

A careful Policeman noticed,  
The Mother clutching tight,  
A cell phone with a text upon it,  
The last thing she did write.

'Dear Baby' she had written,  
Trapped there in the dark.  
'Remember the person who saved you,  
And these words you must mark! '

'Make a meaningful life for yourself,  
Live so all our neighbours can see,  
That you are worthy of my sacrifice,  
And an Honourable Son to me! '

(22nd May 2008)

Res John Burman

# The Earthquake Trilogy. The Worthy Teacher.

This heaped up pile of rubble,  
This was once the school.  
Where The Teacher held his classes,  
And taught the Golden Rule.

He took his duties seriously,  
He loved to bring the light  
Of learning to his pupils,  
And taught them wrong from right.

'Be true to yourselves and each other,  
Stand up for your fellow man,  
Help your brothers and sisters,  
And protect all those that you can! '

When the Dragon shook it's shoulders,  
And tore their world apart,  
There was only one lesson left,  
For that worthy Teacher to impart.

Three students he pushed under the platform,  
Protected by the overhanging shelf,  
And when he couldn't cover the entrance,  
He covered it up with himself!

He gripped the edge of the platform,  
His fingers locked on so tight,  
They had to break his dead fingers  
When they bought his poor body to light!

But under the platform, protected,  
Saved from all flying stone and glass,  
Three teenage pupils were found safely,  
Where The Teacher had held his last class!

With the vice-like grip of his fingers,  
With his blood and his very last sigh,  
He proved that the lessons he'd taught them  
Were the things for which he would die!



This is one tale among many,  
Of brave people who answered the call,  
But the lesson that brave Teacher taught  
In his last class, is one for us all!

(25th May 2008)

Res John Burman

# The Earthquake Trilogy. To Lao Tzu And The Earthquake

A Message From The West.

You spent your life  
Learning and teaching  
Serving by being.  
Like water content  
To take the lower path.  
Seeking the common level.  
And like water  
Moving softly  
But wearing away  
Mountains of greed,  
Ignorance and prejudice  
By the practice  
Of your faith and  
The truth of your words!

As you grew older  
Who knows if 'twas  
Towards the end  
Or the beginning  
Of your sacred life,  
You abandoned mans greed  
And took another pathway.

You mounted your Water Buffalo  
Xiao Gao Jiao, Little Longhorn  
That most patient of companions  
And rode away  
Towards the West,  
Where your wisdom  
Was then so badly needed.  
More so than at home.

I have often wondered  
When you would get here!  
But as you told me in a dream,

To those whose hearts are open,  
You are already here.

Perhaps now, Honoured Friend,  
Whilst China's bosom is bleeding  
By the Dragon's shrugging shoulders,  
So many dead, so many needing comfort.  
It is time for you to return  
To China once again.

Ah! But of course,  
Lao Tzu. Wo lao pen yu, \*  
To those whose hearts are open,  
You are already there!

Take your wisdom and your acceptance  
To those in need of understanding.  
Join with Lady Kuan Yin,  
Bring healing to the sore.  
Lay the hand of comfort  
Upon the souls of those who suffer,  
Grant them the strength to survive  
And the wisdom to rebuild.

Tell them that those who see  
The Tao. By whatever name  
Different peoples give it,  
Send their wishes for recovery  
And our hopes for days to come,  
And their love to share  
In both the sorrows and the happiness  
Of our brothers and our sisters  
In the East and Everywhere!

(21st May 2008)

{\*Lao Tzu. Wo lao pen yu = Lao Tzu. My old friend.}

Res John Burman

# 'The Headhunter's Daughter'

Her hair, blue-black and silky,  
Hung down to her waist,  
Her breasts, pert, round and perfect,  
Were exactly to her taste.

As sweet and soft as wild hibiscus,  
A maiden to her core,  
A short sarong from hip to knee,  
Was all she usually wore.

A hundred gods had laboured  
On the perfection of her face.  
And her steps were slow and graceful,  
With seduction in every pace.

Washed clean in jungle rivers,  
Kissed by the tropic sun,  
She was the sweetest thing of fifteen years,  
And her life had just begun!

She chose her lover wisely,  
Sleek and sure as a jungle cat!  
And all the young men thought about,  
Was to share her sleeping mat!

And when she was quite certain,  
With touch and glances long,  
She lured him to her bedside,  
And opened her sarong!

And when she was quite certain,  
And happy with her choice,  
She let him love her one more time,  
And gave her thoughts a voice!

'You have given me much pleasure,  
I know the same is true for you.  
I feel life start within my belly,  
As it's supposed to do.

Now early in the morning,  
Get up 'n' leave my bed!  
And prove to me you are a man!  
And Go! Fetch me a HEAD! '

Res John Burman

# 'The Hung Parliament' Tanka

Did they promise us  
A Hung Parliament... or  
Not... wishful thinking?

Perhaps they'll vote another  
Allowance... this time for hemp!

~~~~~

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Res John Burman

# 'The Legend Of Port Quin'

I see your pale face at the small cottage window  
Your sad eyes always looking far over the sea  
Searching the skyline for the fishing boats coming  
But there'll be no more homecomings for you and for me.

Every man in the village was out for the fishing  
Every boat in the village was out on the sea  
When the weather came storming in from the nor' west  
Now there'll be no more homecomings for you and for me.

Grandfathers, Fathers and their Sons now just learning  
The hard ways of fishing and working the sea  
In one short afternoon, so suddenly taken  
So there'll be no more homecomings for you and for me.

Every man in the village so suddenly drown-ded  
Every wife, every girl now a widow must be  
And now every small cottage window is suddenly tear stained  
There'll be no more homecomings for you and for me.

I was young and was strong and was happily married  
My young wife would sing her sweet love songs to me  
Now I see her in black in the small tear stained window  
There'll be no more homecomings for I'm lost at sea.

I see your pale face at the small cottage window  
Your sad eyes still looking far over the sea  
For three hundred years still searching the horizon  
But there'll be no more homecomings for you and for me.

I've watched as the slates from the roofs began slipping  
Watched as the weeds grew where we played happily  
But still I see your dear face in the small tear stained window  
As I watch from my berth here in the stormy grey sea.

(Fading)

There'll be no more homecomings for you and for me.  
No scones by the fire as you pour me my tea.

No singing me love songs as you sit on my knee.  
There's no more homecomings for you and for me.

~~~~~

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I wrote this after hearing about the Legend of Port Quin on the North Cornish Coast. The Legend has it that in 1698 all the men of Port Quin were drowned in a storm that sprang up suddenly one afternoon while they were fishing. All the women of the small village were left widowed and had to move away because without any men to fish, the village starved. Port Quin was left abandoned.

Res John Burman



# The Paso Doble

These tired old feet  
Dragging their ass  
Down these grey streets.

But my heart tells them  
They can still dance  
The Paso Doble!

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Res John Burman

# The Pipa Player

The right hand plucks  
The music from the strings.

The left, pushing, sliding, caressing  
Bestows it's soul.

She holds her instrument  
Like a lover or a baby.

But it is the heart and soul  
Of the pipa player

Meditating with her instrument  
That sings and soars to heaven!

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Res John Burman

# The Servants Reply

I should point out that in this case the term 'servant' applies to one who serves, not necessarily to one who is sub-serviant.

I am Restless, breathless with desire,  
Your studies have my skin on fire,  
Each touch and slide with hand or knee,  
Are fuelling fires deep in me.  
I feel your gaze as you take in,  
Every line from toe to chin.  
I feel your breath upon my skin,  
It makes my senses reel and spin.  
I wouldn't stop, I wouldn't wait,  
There stands a Queen at my gate.  
Oh Welcome, welcome, come inside,  
I pray that you have come to 'bide.  
Explore my body search my mind,  
There's love here, love, for you to find.  
Aye Love and Lust in equal measure,  
Give me, take me, equal pleasure.  
Pleasure me, love me, once, again,  
The perfect potion for all pain.  
And let this be a flowing sea,  
Between the shores of thee and me.  
There's nothing that you may not ask,  
Pleasure, pain or worthy task.  
And after lust is all assuaged,  
And you lie with bed and legs dis'rayed.  
Come back to love and love me sweet,  
You'll be my wine, you'll be my meat.  
You'll be my love, my heart and Queen.  
Like no love that's before been seen.  
Let's build a love as bright as day,  
And pray it never, ever fades away.

(December 2007)

Res John Burman

# The Temple In The Lake

The Temple stands quiet  
In the middle of the lake  
Lonely in the mist

Ten thousand meditations  
Leave only silence  
The cobwebs of former lives

The mist leaves dew-drops  
Like diamonds on every strand  
Natures offering

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Res John Burman

# This Country In Between

Every flower I send you  
Is yet another kiss  
Upon your lovely lips  
Every petal I send you  
Is a caress upon your soul  
My body lying so close  
You can feel my heat  
And you will feel my love  
All you have to do  
Is reach out, connect  
Bridge this tiny gap  
This country in between  
Complete the circuit  
And when we finally touch  
Twill be like fire  
And twill be like ice  
But every kiss upon your breast  
Will be like a rose petal  
falling  
Upon the ground it loves

(December 2007)

Res John Burman

# Tibet. Easter Weekend.

Easter Weekend,  
My Christian Friends  
Remember crucifixion  
And Resurrection.  
Seeing hope  
For the world.  
For man.

My Pagan friends  
See the Equinox  
See the beginning  
Of the ending of  
Darkness. With  
The Full Moon.

The Jews - Purim,  
Zoroastrian - No Ruz.  
Hindu - Holika-dahana.  
Harmony Day - Australia.  
Human Rights Day - South Africa.  
Amitabha Buddha.

Holi in India.  
Hola Mohalla for the Sikhs.  
Pengembang in Bali.  
Pakistan Day.  
Shushan Purim.  
Etcetera, etcetera.

I wonder if that means  
Cricifixions  
Are over.  
I wonder what sort  
Of weekend  
They are having  
In Tibet?  
Oh when will we  
Learn?  
When will we

Ever Learn?

23rd March 2008

Res John Burman

# To All In Durance Vile

A spot of sun  
Head - high - on the wall  
About the size of an open exercise book  
Sloping upwards - left to right  
I stand, facing the window  
My back against the wall  
Head in the sun  
Feeling its warmth  
On my skin.  
The light shines golden orange on my closed lids  
Turning my world  
To radiant warmth  
Like the touch of God  
Upon my face.

I forget my cold hands  
Cold legs and feet  
I bathe in warmth and light  
The universe is warm and bright  
Like a womb  
Taking me back to my  
Microscopic origin  
Whilst incubating the  
Macroscopic destiny of all  
I am as One.

The Universe swirls  
The world turns  
The sun spins  
The shadows move  
I shuffle crabwise along the wall  
Remaining in the ray of light  
As long as possible.

The sunbeam narrows  
A foot long, a thin bar  
On the wall  
Still sloping  
From left up to right



I stand with my head on one side  
To catch the sun, as though listening  
And I do listen  
To the silence of the sun.

Now the spot of light  
Is the size of a postage stamp  
Just big enough to cover  
One closed eye, still bathing it  
With gold.  
Half my world washed with sunlight  
While darkness slowly spreads  
Outward from my other eye.

The sunspot goes, I sway  
Seeking it. It's gone.  
Still with closed eyes  
I sink to the floor where  
Cross-legged, the cold returns  
To my hands, my legs and feet  
And I try to retain  
The warmth, in my mind  
And re-live upon my face  
That gentle touch of God -  
Until Tomorrow.

(Early 70's)

Res John Burman

# To Samarkand

(Written in answer to 'The Librarian requests your attention.' by Mlle Omnisciente.)

Ah. To Samarkand with Flecker, or Cathay with old Marco,  
Or Round the Horn with good Zeng He, so many years ago.  
And when I was a soldier, out there in the mire,  
We fought FOR running women and to save their homes from fire.

I'm written through with saga's and tales of misspent youth,  
And sufferings, wars and glories, and that old search for the truth!  
And simple soldiers poetry, that tell the tales of Old.  
And Beasts who come into your life, to save them from the Cold!

But when it comes to lessons, my slate is clean and clear,  
And so I come to sit with you, I come to sit and Hear.

(August 18,2007.)

Res John Burman

# 'Treat Our Soldiers Right'

These are our 'boys' we're sending,  
Sending off to war.  
They'll come back changed,  
They'll come back maimed,  
Or they'll come back no more!

These are our 'boys' who're serving,  
Serving in the fight.  
They'll do their best,  
To pass the test,  
And do what we deem 'right'!

These are our 'boys' coming back,  
Bearing tales they cannot tell!  
They find that you don't understand,  
Most will discard them out of hand,  
And their Government will as well!

These are our 'boys' we send to jail,  
Send them off right quick!  
We've learned that men who suffer stress  
Are better off in jail, no less!  
Than being pampered on 'The Sick'!

It's bad enough we pay 'em,  
To go and fight our part.  
Cheaper far to jail 'em,  
Than treat 'em for what ails 'em!  
This Country, full of heart!

I weep for all the lost ones,  
And those who're merely maimed!  
But most of all I weep for us,  
Who could treat our Soldiers thus?  
Are you not ALL ashamed?

I say this to our Government,  
Every Mothers son of you.  
If you're not working day and night,

If you don't struggle to put this right,  
Then you should be jailed too!

It's time we made a contract,  
If we send our 'boys' to fight.  
We should undo the damage done,  
Relieve the stress earned by the gun.  
And Treat Our Soldiers Right!

Treat Our Soldiers Right

This was written when I discovered that we have 20,000 ex-servicemen in England and Wales, either in prison or on probation due largely to untreated cases of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. As a Disabled Veteran myself I am aghast! Not surprised but Aghast!

Res

Res John Burman

# 'Trees'

I love wood  
I love the touch  
And the smell of it  
I love the textures  
All different

From the long grained  
Knotless Piranha Pine  
To the dense wriggles  
Of Ancient Yew  
Long fibred Sitka  
And the silica sparks  
Of Bloodwood Satine

The midnight shine  
Of Andaman Ebony  
The visual delights  
Of all the Rosewoods  
To the perfume of  
The sugars boiling off  
Turning apple.

I love it fresh from sharp steel  
With a shine all of its own  
Or sanded by finer and finer paper  
Or emery, wet and dry  
Until the surface glows  
Like warm glass.

I love the things  
You can make  
Books  
And bookcases  
To keep them on.

Plates bowls spoons vases  
Cups chopsticks  
Rollers for mangles  
Wheels to carry your loads

And carts to carry your families  
And beds for you all to sleep on.

Handles for tools  
Elm water pipes  
That last from Roman times  
To the present day.

Wooden boats to sail the sea  
And bring back more wood  
Exciting and exotic woods  
That smell like spices!

But most of all  
I love the trees!  
We have taken enough  
From the forest!  
If we are not willing  
To nurture the seedlings  
Clear the weeds  
Dig the soil  
And cherish the saplings  
Then leave the trees alone!

So take your axe and chainsaw  
And beat them into  
Trowels and  
Straight Planting Spades.

If you wish to use the bounty  
Of the forest  
First plant your trees  
And sometimes, during your labours  
Rest in the shade of your trees  
And in these days of Global Warming  
You will learn how trees  
Cool the air!

Learn the secrets of the woods  
And jungles  
Learn to love them  
Before you claim the right

To use them!

And you, human?

In your suit and white cuffs

Hiding behind the tree

You have no business

In the woods

Take off your choking ties

Your manufacture

Your profit and loss

Your futures trading

Away!

Off the Tree!

You have no business here!

Leave the trees to breathe

Let them get on with the business

Of making more trees

Manufacturing topsoil

Stabilising mountainsides

Fixing nitrogen from the air

Into the soil around their roots.

Holding rainfall in the ground

To feed the forest and the streams

That all Earths' Children may drink

Without flood or erosion.

Leave the trees to breathe

To filter dust and gasses

From the air

So that our children and grandchildren

May also breathe.

Leave the trees to heal

The damage that you, human

Have done!

BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE!

~~~~~

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# Tulip Petal Love

Tulip petals on a book of poetry,  
Upon the bed, where they fell,  
Would they hint at morning whispers,  
Morning dreams, if they could tell?

(December 2007)

Res John Burman

## 'Village Life' A Haiku Chain.

The children sit  
On the back of the water buffalo  
Who is minding who?

The women sing  
Rice planting songs  
Knee deep in cool water

In the bird scarer's hut  
The babies sleep  
Hanging in sarong hammocks

The planting done  
A little gift of food and flowers  
At the village shrine

The men drain the paddy  
For the sun to warm the roots  
Then flood again... the ageless cycle

When ripe the rice is harvested  
Threshed and winnowed  
There is no prosperity like a full granary

A harvest festival  
A toddler is lost in the crowd  
Found curled up safe with the water buffalo

Res John Burman

# 'Waveform Poems' Haiku

Above the wave crest  
A shaft of winter sunshine  
Lights it's path to shore  
~~~~~

Between reef markers  
Ravenous breakers rush in  
Hungry for the shore  
~~~~~

Stapled granite walls  
Help protect the railway line  
From the hungry sea  
~~~~~

As the waves die down  
Hungry gulls return to feed  
Dodging every wave  
~~~~~

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Res John Burman

# Weather Report

'There be' Squalls  
Here in Penzance  
Chasing each other  
Across roof-tops  
Of houses and cars.

Dashing themselves  
Into vapour  
On all surfaces.  
Death-sliding down  
Roofs ~ over edges  
Launders and gutters  
Down-pipes overflowing.

Making raging rivers  
In miniature  
Down the steep streets  
Leading to the sea.  
Causing little dams  
Of rubbish to form  
Behind the wheels  
Of Parked cars.

Last nights take away  
Making a dash  
For freedom  
To evade  
The hungry gulls.

School girls squeal  
As each cold gust  
Hits them  
Too fashion conscious  
To wear a coat  
Or carry a 'brolly.

Visibility closes down  
As each squall hits,  
Opens again as sight

Follows the squall  
Into the distance.

And between each squall  
Sunny spells shining  
On the washed clean  
Streets.

The street cleaners  
Will be happy  
All the rubbish  
Is at the bottom  
Of the hill!

(18 Jan 2008)

Res John Burman

## 'West Country Memories' Haiku-Ish.

New born foal - too weak  
And tall to suckle with ease  
Bonds with my sweater

Newly born goat kids  
Agility in goatskin  
Running the ridgepole

Goats up in a tree  
View pedestrians with scorn  
'We don't graze, we browse! '

Cold frosty morning  
Breath hangs like smoke on the air  
Mucking out calf pens

My cottage lay  
In the shadow of Carn Brae  
Last hill in England

The bus drivers knew  
My bus stop....the third gorse bush  
After Henwood's haystack

Dead fox hill  
So steep, so straight, so fast  
Reynard's bane

Two dogs... five fields over  
Waiting for the school bus  
My boy's welcome home

The flooded clay-pit  
Where the post-man drowned himself  
Our summer playground

Our horizon was dark  
Until distant St Buryan  
Got it's first street light

Six miles from the sea  
But when the Sou-Westerlies blew  
Salt on our lips and windows

The weeping willow  
Trailing it's many fingers  
In the passing stream

Headache?  
Chew some willow bark  
Natures aspirin

Lobo, good boy's dog  
Towing my son up and down  
The flooded clay-pit

Lobo, water dog  
Only her head showing  
Surrounded by shiver ripples

Happiness for a boy  
His very own dog  
And a litter of puppies

We had a great zip line  
Something for the kids to play on  
Health and Safety... moi?

By January  
Even a flooded hoof print  
Would be full of frog spawn

There were wild orchids  
Growing in the summer grass  
Protecting thousands of tiny frogs

Guy Fawks night bonfires  
A years brush-wood up in smoke  
The guy, a witch, a dragon, a masterpiece





# Who Am I?

I've noticed  
Over the years.  
Whatever you wake up with,  
Whatever state of health  
Or mind.  
Whatever advantages  
You may have,  
Whatever shortcomings.  
These are the tools  
Unequal though they be,  
With which you  
Must face the day.

Whatever day you wake up to  
Fine or foul,  
Hot or cold  
Peace or war  
Pain or gain  
Challenge  
Or tribulation.  
Captivity or  
Freedom.  
This is YOUR day.

It's how you handle it  
That determines  
Who you are.  
Not whether you  
Win or lose  
But if you tried.  
If you did the  
Decent thing.  
If you helped  
Instead of hindered.  
If you praised  
Rather than cursed.  
If you loved  
Rather than hated.  
Did your best

And not your worst!

If you have seen  
Every member  
Of your species  
As Sister or Brother.  
And Race as just  
The icing on the cake  
Little variations  
That make Brother  
And Sister  
Interesting  
To each other  
Not different

Who am I?  
I'm just one of the crowd.  
Who am I?  
I'm just one of US!

16th March 2008

Res John Burman

# 'Why Do We Bother To Remember The Dead'

Why do we bother to remember the dead  
Of all those wars, that even in our lifetimes  
Are almost forgotten?

Why do we watch mealy mouthed politicians  
Lay wreaths and make speeches  
While they deny the survivors a reasonable  
Level of help, or treatment?

....

Better remember all those young men and women  
As though they were alive.  
What would they say about the state of the..Veterans.. Hospitals?  
The way the injured and traumatised are treated still?  
What would they say about wars still being declared  
By the rich and powerful who don't send their sons and daughters  
Into harms way?

....

Better remember all those executed  
For cowardice or "Lack of Moral Fibre"  
When they were suffering from Shell Shock!  
No wonder they were traumatised  
When their own country was determined to prove themselves  
The real enemy that they had to fear!  
Let us remember their families with nowhere to go!

What sort of countries would these young men and women  
Have created had they not been thrown away  
Discarded like the flowers of the forest  
Before they had a chance of coming to full bloom  
Would they have tolerated politicians and leaders  
More interested in their own allowances  
Than the welfare of veterans or serving soldiers?

....

If we are to remember our dead, not on one day  
But on everyday. Let us dedicate ourselves  
To making the sacrifice of the dead worthwhile.  
Let us ensure that if we send our young men to war

It be a just war. Not to make money for the few  
But to ensure the safety of the many.  
So that at last we should have countries fit for Heroes to Live In!

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Res John Burman

# Will-O-The-Wisp

You are like a zephyr  
A will-o-the wisp  
The gentle brush of an Angels wing  
I felt one footstep in my life  
A tip-toe  
And you were gone  
With your enigmatic comment  
And your lovely smile  
Just briefly Beauty came  
And will live in my heart  
Forever

(19-2-08)

Res John Burman

# 'Winter Storms Tanka'

I hear winter rain  
Tap tapping on the window  
Like some urgent call

Is there not one last journey  
Across the far horizon?

~~~~~

Wind and water blow  
Winter storms surround me here  
Trapped in Northern climes

Oh to hear the temple bells  
Smell the incense on the breeze

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Res John Burman

# Witch

You, my Witch  
Are Magnificent  
In my heart  
You stand tall  
In the midst  
Of the fire  
Ablaze  
But not burnt  
Ablaze  
But not consumed

This morning  
I was consumed  
In your fire  
This morning  
I burnt happily  
In your blaze  
Of Beauty  
And Glory  
And I know  
This morning

Thou wast  
consumed also.

(2007)

Res John Burman

# 'Xmas Deals'

My letterbox vomits  
Unwanted waste paper  
Into the room!  
Shop Locally!  
Xmas Deals!  
Four pints of larger  
For four pounds!

Four packets of GoCat  
Eighty nine pence.  
My last cat died  
Years ago.  
Do they have GoDog  
Now my dog has gone?  
Xmas Deals!

Xmas always sounds to me  
Like a nasty skin disease,  
And, with Children grown  
And Old Loves flown,  
It is about as welcome!  
Humbug!

Happy Humbug Season!

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Res John Burman