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THE ABANDONED SOLDIER

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*With greatest thanks to Helen
for her support and humanity in getting this book published
and my family who endure all the hardships which attach
themselves to creative form.*



*This book is dedicated to the Servicemen and women who
maintain the freedom in which we all live
and also the families who are left to pick up the pieces
of those whose lives may be shattered by war.*



FOREWORD

The purpose of this book is to raise awareness of the plight of the Servicemen and women who suffer combat-related trauma. However, the effect of war can be far reaching, as a ripple washing over the lives of those around the point of impact.

This collection of poetry should not detract from the bravery of the people who stand in line, but simply enhance the public's understanding of PTSD and its effects.

Condition yourself to helping those who now walk amongst us as prisoners of their own dreams and who fight for understanding and awareness.

As you read some of these pieces, you may feel uncomfortable – but these feelings are often those that PTSD sufferers deal with everyday. If group awareness allows freedom of speech between people, a therapy in itself, then that has to be a great outcome.

Thank you for reading.

Mark Christmas

Powys, Summer 2010



... *there are many kinds of sorrow
in this World of love and hate,
but there is no sterner sorrow
than a soldier's for his mate*'.

from *His Mate*
GA Studdert Kennedy MC
'Woodbine Willie'



THE ABANDONED SOLDIER

I created the sculpture of 'The Abandoned Soldier' to honour those who have fought valiantly for our country, but who are not treated as the heroes they truly are. The statue took four months to complete, and was then temporarily erected in Trafalgar Square. The objective was to draw the public's attention and rally support and gratitude for soldiers and veterans who have been forgotten or have received little support despite their bravery and selflessness in serving their country.

I modelled the sculpture on Lance Corporal Daniel Twiddy, a soldier wounded in Basra by friendly fire in 2003. Lance Corporal Daniel Twiddy sustained many injuries, including facial wounds from shrapnel. I wanted to create a fragmented appearance to portray a soldier physically and mentally broken from the effects of combat. It was also important for the statue to embody the emotions of sadness and despair whilst revealing its inner strength and dignity.

I hope my statue can evoke all these feelings and connect with the soldiers it is intended to represent. 'The Abandoned Soldier' is a fitting visual accompaniment to this book and with that in mind, an appropriate percentage of proceeds raised by its sale will go towards casting a permanent bronze version. Once this is achieved, we hope to find 'The Abandoned Soldier' a permanent home in the National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire.

James Napier
London, Summer 2010

For more information please visit www.theabandonedsoldier.com







THE ABANDONED SOLDIER

Reflections of War

Mark Christmas



THE ABANDONED SOLDIER

youthful face, innocent cares,
wide eyed child, infant stares.

child grew up, played soldier games,
sticks for guns, a pretence to maim.

boy left school, sought to be a man,
to render peace in Afghanistan.

all too soon the decision made,
some years of his life with the Army he'd trade,

training done, off he flew,
to fight a war in pastures new.

a mortar attack, killed, outright four,
'lucky' for him he was blown to the floor,

though injuries sustained were incidental,
not so physical, more like mental.

cuts and bruises would heal away,
but the mental scars, with him they'd stay.

the career he'd wanted as a child,
became a curse, it drove him wild,

with visions of battle, that never would end,
he'd witnessed the death of his closest friend.

he had to leave the new family he trusted
with a broken head, psychologically busted,

he hoped they'd help to resettle him.
instead discarded, thrown in a bin,

abandoned and left to his own devices,
thoughts of suicide and similar vices.

so look what has happened, there is no one bolder,
than the man we call;

'The Abandoned Soldier'

who fought for his Country
over hundreds of years,
did not die,
but is left,
with a wounded man's tears.

THE SOLDIER'S HEART

I'm older now, not a soldier anymore,
though my heart beats its strength
in reminiscences of a youthful glow.

The heart is the soul of life.
When you have heart you have purpose,
but what is your purpose?

When your direction is misguided
the plan has to be self made, regroup.
Contingency.

My boots don't shine as much
as the identity of the future is nurtured.
Brilliance now from inside.
Gleaming.

Reveille these days is as and when
although the clock still rules.
The urgency is self control.
Timing.

So analogy and simile are drawn,
as you can see, from a source close to my heart.

ADIOGENES

Diogenes always worked,
a Soldier, a Sailor, an Airman,
for Queen and Country.
One day tossed aside,
a wound, Mental? Physical?
Pensioned off, sacked.
Down scaling.

He knows no other life,
guided, pushed and driven.
Only now, loneliness darkens
around him.
The Politicians have finished,
cheque mate? Pawns discarded.
Just give him his dog and rope,
stick and bag.

Let him tramp the streets,
embalmed in the thoughts,
of who he is,
was,
or might be?

BASRA BERETS

Basra Berets, things of the past,
replaced by kevlar, made to last.

As in Ireland, the smiles all cease,
but the casualty lists are on the increase.

And yet we ask why our men fight.
Is this war wrong? Or is it right?

The questions we ask won't go away,
as long as they live,
to fight another day.

WHOSE CASUALTIES OF WHAT WAR?

a little girl looked at her dad
she asked him why he looked so sad,
just stood there, blank,
not saying a word
the little girl, hoped he'd heard

a tear rolled down her pale white cheek
onto a granite headstone, which cannot speak.

ROBOTIC ANALYSIS

A Soldier is not born
He's forged to be strong,
He's machine-like, robotic,
Working hard, fast and long,
But when machines break,
They go terribly wrong.

Their chassis are bent, broken, busted,
Their control centres are short circuited,
Their rhythm is lost, function diminished.

They're sent
to the scrap yard.

THE FINAL WHISTLE

Reveille effervesced on the air.
Hope of a new day dawned.

Soldier meekly walked to his parapet,
he stood silently waiting, thoughts buzzing.

Tommy, next to him spoke out,
“Is it possible, The Nutcase is here?”

“Not likely,” the meek man said,
“This is his idea of humour”.

With a shrift bellow, the whistle blew.
Over the top, On command, No hesitation.

The meek man and Tommy, distant memories,
personal belongings now an exhibit:

‘The Dead of Verdun’

POPPY

Once a year a time comes round,
to remember those who have died,
in time of conflict throughout the ages,
but sometimes the poppy we chide.

The colour we wear is predominantly red,
the Legion is not going to yield,
in remembrance of men, both the young and the old,
who were killed in a Flanders Field.

From that day to this we must not lose sight,
of the sacrifice our servicemen made,
to keep this country, as 'Great' as it 'Was',
a deadly game our people have played.

So when Sunday comes, the band beats its drums,
we stand still, a moment of prayer,
in remembrance of dead, the Country gave up,
our traditions are getting more rare.

The red poppy invokes, a sign of blood spilt,
in pursuit to uphold our tradition,
so remember the dead, 'The Glorious Dead',
and our new war, it's one of sedition.

TRAUMATIC TIMES

Traumatic times, require drastic measures.
When more traumatic than now,
'Tommy' Soldier?

How many tours do you carry out?
Not those around Curium,
any more.

Just operational tours these days
and you know what they say,
about 'All Work'?

'Tommy', if not dead, becomes dull.
No real fun or family times.
PVR or sign off?

If the wars you fight, 'Tommy',
are far, far away,
for who knows what,

who is watching your back
and your interests,
at home?

When you finally get home, you leave.
no more traumas, for you.
Or are there?

Time will be the Judge of that,
not you,
eh 'Tommy'?

FINANCIAL IMBALANCE

spare a coin in a collecting tin,

buy some merchandise;
t shirts,
wristies,
trolley coins
badges.

put money here,

to help all our;
fallen,
heroes,
wounded,
families.

help spend the money,

on worthy causes in
shops,
dealers,
wholesalers,
therapists,

and all pay taxes,

which governments take to pay;

the Army,
the Navy,
the Air Force,
the Rest,

to wage wars
on whose behalf?

as the charities spring up, the
more is earned;

Contrary Coins!

LEST WE FORGET

Lest we forget the many brave men,
Who went over the top, then over again.
Who fought in the trenches and died in the fields,
With no one or nothing as guards or their shields.

Lest we forget the comrades in arms,
Who all left their jobs, their homes, their farms.
Who fought for their Country, their families, their friends,
With one simple question, "Will we see the end?"

Lest we forget those who can't let go,
Who poured blood like sweat, hid from bullets below.
Who all left at home their children and wives,
With them all taking risks with their precious lives.

Lest we forget those who faced the hun,
Whose husband, whose brother, whose father, whose son?
Who all fought so bravely, to their very last breath,
With the warmth and finality of a cold, mud soaked death.

Lest we forget the nurses of war,
Who stood at their bays, feeling chilled to the core.
Who did all they could to save these brave men,
With memories intrusive of the dying back then.

So, Lest we forget to honour brave men,
Who gave up their lives, right there and right then.
Who died for World peace, freedom and love,
With one final march to the Kingdom above.

Thank you to Kate for her inspiration

CROSSING THE START LINE

the plans are laid,
troops stand by.

a very light illuminates
the anxiety filled declivity.

as the advance begins the pre supposed
ideas of progress are thrown into chaos
and
two prominent features
now dominate the mind's wilderness.

survive and communicate,

for death awaits those who
step outside
these rigorous boundaries.

THE MESSENGER

A young lad came,
knocked the door with a tap,
he stood and he waited
in blue jacket and cap.

His attire was edged
with scarlet red trim,
from the seams of trousers,
to his cap and it's brim.

The lad stood and watched,
as the door opened wide,
it was Jack Starling's Mother,
who beckoned inside.

They walked to the kitchen,
she was packing a box,
with chocolate and fags
and two pairs of new socks.

“These ‘ere are for Jack,
I’ll not be a mo,”
she said as she scurried
here, there, to and fro.

“Would you like some tea?”
asked old Mrs Starling,
and “What is the message?
Pass it here, little darling.”

The boy’s face looked solemn,
he passed her the letter,
“Is it news from the ‘Front’,
is the war getting better?”

But there’s only one news
that the young boy delivered,
the old woman stood,
her whole body quivered.

I’m sure that you gather
what news she received,
was the war getting better?
Well don’t be deceived.

She thanked the young lad
and gave him a bob,
“It’s all not your fault,
you just do your job.”

He thanked Mrs Starling,
the tenth one today,
he then tipped his cap
and went on his way.

But he turned as he walked
through the old wooden gate,
he said, "Mrs Starling,
I hope I'm not late.

I'm joining the army,
tomorrow I'm gone,
there's a new battle looming,
near a river called Somme."

QUESTIONS

Monday 7am

Mr Humphrys radiates from the Roberts.

A man dies.

No ordinary man,
purportedly he was fighting for his country,
but what was the country fighting for?
Helmand? Where?
Khyber Pass?
Why? We should ask ourselves,
Who is next?

Your son or daughter?

And for what?

YOU CHOOSE

poppies fell from the ceiling,
like a flood of blood red tears,
the roof cried the life,
of the countless dead,
like it has for a hundred years.

when we wear our poppy,
whether it red, or white or pink,
we must stand alone,
and take a reflection,
it means take a moment to think.

why do we make it an issue?
the choice is most definitely ours,
to wear the poppy,
that we choose,
it's only a choice of which flowers.

so once you have picked your poppy,
you pin it on to your chest,
surely what,
you decide to reflect,
is what only you know best?

ATTENTION TO DETAIL

The pair scoured the land for prey.
Mouths wide open, stained, tarnished
teeth revealed.

Spotted.
There!

Moving slowly
across the barren landscape.

A glance exchanged, the plan was pre-formed.
One plunged earthward from the heavens,
diving towards its target,
spitting fire and wrath.

Its mate, circled, watching,
waiting for a chance at the victim.

Soon it came.

A sharp pull out of the dive.
Free air, regaining altitude.

The circling became
a screeching plummet earth bound.

The quarry lay lifeless,
spewed innards peppered the dusty ground,
entrails and claret were the litter.

The hunt was over.

A savage silence hung in the air.

6/6/44

A prayer to the Goddess Juno,
With her Gold and magical Sword.
A hope to smite the enemy,
An Operation called 'Overlord'.

Our Country Cousins were close by,
From Omaha and Utah.
We'll meet them for a welcome break,
Then Berlin, foot to the floor.

But as we found out later that day,
It wasn't that easy at all.
When we counted the cost, our cousins had lost,
Over a thousand brave men to fall.

The biggest invasion the world had seen,
Was on the Sixth of June.
An immeasurable cost of life and limb,
A hope it'll not happen again soon.

The Veterans now are recounting the day
When they fought for all they were worth.
A day to remember and not to forget,
When Hell paid a visit to Earth.

So remember these men, in a way that you choose,
And those who did not come back home.
For your tomorrow they gave their today,
The freedom in which you now roam.

Lest We Forget.

THE TRUCE

Late December, 1914.

Mud clung to his feet,
boots submerged in dark slurping mud,
as thick as coffee, ten sugars.
A nasal tear, hung frozen in time.

The soldier looked,
geared up in anticipation.
Expectant,
eager.

Then it came.
A shrill whistle blast,
he leapt up, victory in his sights.

He ran, for all his worth,
the opposition eyes fixed firmly on him.

The soldier struck it hard,
buried it deep...

Into the net!!!
Enemies? Fraternization?
No.
Just soldiers playing football at Christmas.

WAR WOUNDS

Steel hook, plastic limb,
what will people,
think of him?

Back at home I cannot see,
both my eyes
deserted me.

Look again, I cannot hear,
I only have
my right ear.

In my dreams I wonder why,
it was my time
not to die.

For my country now I'm half a man,
but some folk
don't give a damn,

That I lost my limbs for my Queen,
in a war,
should never have been.

My reward for this a piece of tin,
but my only wish
to see my kids grin.

ADVICE FROM AN OLD WARRIOR

Spewing into the aisles of the Roxy
to watch 'Groundhog Day' but this
is not the Hollywood version, with its glitz
and glamorous stars, this is my version with
no parallax in time, just the here, the now.

The reel clicks into life, once more my eyes
make me taste the ripening, putrid bodies that
soak up the noon day heat. I sample the copper
flavoured shake on my lips. Taste buds explode
with the sensation of bodily waste fermented with

a tinge of cordite on the sweaty, warm air.
End of the reel, the projectionist refits
a new one but for me it's not original,
it's the same one, same ending, if it
ever does? Same terrifyingly, intrusive past.

Each moon rise I raise the shutters, turn the latch
key in hope, to keep the demonic past locked
out. Tonight, however, the sedative will man the
defence barricades, to subdue the advancing hoards
of relentless memories that threaten to over-run.

Tonight, I am prepared to wave
my white flag to them, in a last
unenviable hope the assaults
will cease. Though there is little optimism
left as these adversaries,
take 'no prisoners'.

*Based on an article by Gene Ladnier,
previously published in Poems of the Poppies.*

HEADLINES NO LONGER

“I made the Papers today,
Page six, last column,
Right hand page.

That’s me there, yes,
Twenty three, young wife,
Two beautiful daughters.

I know it’s only eight lines,
But what do you expect?
I’m not that famous.

Just a young man,
A Father, a Son, a Soldier,
Killed eight years after it started.”

GO FORTH

Go forth, go forth
sacrificial child
a Holy Lamb of God.

You gave up your life,
in pursuit of belief
your blood stains the Earth's green sod.

But surely we ask,
the same question
was the sacrifice worthwhile?

To send you away,
brave little children,
to put you all through this trial.

The debt you paid,
the ultimate cost
the price was far too great.

Is the war wrong?
Is the war right?

One of life's crucial debates.

HOSTAGE WITHIN

When he flew into his home
from his second tour of Iraq,
the thoughts lay in his mind
of never going back.

The sights he'd seen, of children
blown out of recognition,
and collecting body parts
surely, this was not his mission?

His beret was replaced
by an unwieldy Kevlar helmet,
being shot at every day,
he tried to adjust his mind set.

But he couldn't come to terms
as his age was twenty one,
with the maiming, death and trauma,
he was still a child, a son.

Though his family tried to help him,
he'd never want to talk,
his visions captured, held inside
he'd built a mental baulk.

For 12 months his life was tranquil,
only training day to day.
Yet the problem with PTSD
it lingers, wants to stay.

A date then came on Orders,
deployment for tour, number 3.
His trauma raised its ugly head,
and this time he'd be free.

The sights he'd seen, the things he'd done,
they flooded back to haunt.
His mind exploded, anguish, pain,
the visions start to taunt.

“It was all too much,” the Captain said,
“He was his parent's son.”
They found him prone, like a hostage,
Dead,
head blown off
with a gun.

Please take the time
to ask yourself,
is this someone you know,
who suffers in a silent way,
whose dreams become a foe
who
deals with it in their own way,
an injury not on show?

VC

The powder hissed, the stench of cordite,
steel projectiles hurled at man and rider.
Some of the 'Brave Six Hundred' fell.

The now silent guns

Melted down, formed into crosses
that 'Heroes' wear on their chests.

Bronze cannons are rare today,
not much left now, heroes or bronze.

The price of precious metals grows
yet we do not act to prevent the making of more crosses

The System's response;

"The saving grace is,
the majority won't be asking for Mess Dress Miniatures".

For the heroes of 'Great' Britain.

RECESSIONARY SALES

Recession here again, not seen like this in years,
if ever.

Sales Begin.

‘New Year 2009, sales start New Years Eve’.

If, however, the recession continues,
does the price paid the life of a soldier,
go up

or

reduce?

An inflationary piece of political collateral.

BORN TO SERVE

Plans laid down in '42
I was born in '43
This Island Nation here to protect
My Nation, the world to me.

With crew abound,
The Captain too, I eased away from shore.
It was a time of conflict
Or to you and me 'twas war.

The days they passed
The guns rang out, a battle then ensued.
We turned to port, then starboard too,
A thud then changed the mood

“We’re hit we’re hit!”
The cry rang out. “Abandon Ship”, was called
The bodies, dead, the living too
There was no one left aboard.

My back then broke
I slid beneath, the shadowy, frothing sea.
My friends the crew, the Captain too,
I hope they remember me.

My work now done
The setting sun, I got what I didn't deserve
A ship or man this country needs
We were all

Born to Serve

IN MEMORIAM

The clock struck 11.00.
A gun sounds,
Not in anger, but the start
Of a minute of contemplation.

Trooper Jones was not there,
In body anyway.
But in the mind of a two year old,
He lived on.

The little girl never knew Basra.
“Saddam who?” she asked.
“Sod ‘em all,” her mum answered,
“They took Taff away.”

“Where is Daddy, Mum?”
She asked softly.
“He plays with the Angels now,
Fights the Devil no more.”

11.01, second gun sounds.
Tears wiped away.
A heavy heart for the next twelve months,
Or eternity. Which is longer?

The little girl held her Mum's hand.
They turned, backs to the monument,
Walked away, disappeared into the Autumn mist.
Who are they?
Do you know them?

We should not forget them.
Those left behind.

THE LINE

I've toed the line when on parade,
I've walked the line of barricades.

I've held the line during intense war,
I've stood in line, but what for?

I am in line, when told to wait,
I see the line, psychological debate.

I stand in line, identity parade,
Intravenous line, what a mess I've made.

The line was fine and I overstepped,
My memories raged as darkness crept.
I am the line.

What can you see?

DRILL

1, 2, 3...1
Sgt Major barked
razor-sharp turn to the right.
Robotics combined with precision
next command, bellowed
across the square.
SLAP, CRACK, AWAY.
Rifles held to attention
bodies frozen
waiting
no whisper
men acted as one
elegant
proud
Killing machines in unison

THE IRAQ DODGERS

(Sing to 'Lily Marlene')

We're the Iraq Dodgers
Out in Afghani,
Always on the Vino
Always on a spree,
Is that what you all do think of us?
A holiday, without a fuss,
Cos we're the Iraq Dodgers out in Afghani.

Mr Blair, you sent our boys
Out on combat tour,
Half the boys you sent,
Don't know what they're fighting for,
Then bullets fly right overhead,
There's some alive and some boys dead,
We're Artful Iraq Dodgers, in sunny Afghani.

The food is crap, just like the digs,
Why are we all here?
We'd rather be at home,
In Blighty with warm beer,
But no instead we're here on tour,
We're fighting a forgotten war,
We're flamin' Iraq Dodgers, in flamin' Afghani.

We fight a war we did not choose,
The terms we did not make,
We're now page twelve in last weeks' news,
Oh for heaven's sake,
When will this war decide to end?
It's driving us around the bend,
We're traumatised old Dodgers in dear old Afghani.

We've been here o'er five years
And we didn't catch Saddam,
That was left to those
In the Country near Iran,
We're in a Country far away,
It's good to see, but not to stay,
We're long forgotten Dodgers in barren Afghani.

So when the time arrives
And it's time to go on leave,
We look at one another
And what did we achieve?
Then on the transport fly back home,
With wife and kids, we're free to roam,
We're lucky Iraq Dodgers from war torn Afghani.

The leave is up, we must go back,
To our daily job,
Fighting for World Peace,
Only earning half a bob,
Then on a plane out to Baghdad,
It's war again we feel quite sad,
We're not so Iraq Dodgers,
We're not in Afghani.

*This was written before the escalation of the Afghan conflict,
when it was the second front to Iraq. The idea is based on
The D-Day Dodgers, a song sung by troops during World War II
who were fighting on the Italian front.*

INTENSITY

The surrealism of war.

Extremities reached of

Life

and

Death

seen by few,

glimpsed by more,

but only the few

relive horrors of war.

A situation so dense in its objective nature,

though its subjective matter lives forever,

in the 'Few'.

‘OF COURSE’

Are the Military understrength?

‘Of Course’

Are the Military under-equipped?

‘Of Course’

Are the Military fighting wars for no reason?

‘Of Course’

Are you blinkered?

‘Of Course’

Eyes closed?

‘Of Course’

Being subdued? In your place?

‘Of Course’

‘Of Course, Of Course

My Kingdom

for

Of Course.’

LACKING

The attack went in,
Taliban stronghold.
Tracer flew,
like swarms of fire trailing hornets,
buzzing, zipping,
stinging.

“Re- group”, a withdrawal called.
Head count.
One missing.
“Who saw him last?” A decision,
made from camaraderie, not monetary gain.

Brave men, strapped to the wings
of a Warrior War Bird,
searching for the lost one.
They swoop, this heroic flock
and raise their fallen brother.

Actions of true friends and comrades
overcome the instinct of
self preservation and fear.

The adversity thrown at them, flung aside.
for the sake of a man,
and his family.

MADAME JULIETTE

Young girl Mademoiselle,
felt deprivation during conflicting
countries and the years.

The butcher of war showed you the
price needed for the carcasses, dismembered
on the slab of dissension.

A young man took you, relieved you of
burden; a destroyed, disassembled life,
where soldiers burrows plotted
the landscape of your homeland.

He hoped time and distance would
relieve you of the damage, where a
thousand pounding guns had created
unfixable craters in your innocent mind.

Though it fell apart, you
were found, trussed like the
Christmas turkey you looked to
price from twelve grocers.

What was the force that made
you feel self destruction? the
denial had faded and maybe
the truth was inevitable.

Sorely missed Madame, though
introspection may give us direction;
only you held the map.

A tale of a young French girl who married a local man after WWI.

REMEMBERING IS HARD THESE DAYS

(Trying Not To Is Harder)

the grey haired man sat
confiding in his mug of
cocoa and his pipe.

turning the pages of
his daily, the world
in turmoil, 'again.'

'tumultuous mind of
me or many?' spoke
the voice inside.

a warm day, summers
ago, waiting for the hour
to chime, just like the case
in the corner.

following orders, but what
was the task, as the rifles
were raised, judgement spoke.

how I miss him, I try not
to, but he is always
there, trussed limply to the post.

just following orders, that's
all that was done, but
who gives the orders now?

once more, for the last
time, he raised the gun,
pulled the trigger.

now it became clear.

this old man grew not
older today.

For the unseen casualties of 'Shot at Dawn', the penalty of death by firing squad for the offences of cowardice and desertion during the First World War. The Shot at Dawn Campaign was set up in the early 1990s to bring about a parliamentary group pardon for the men shot under the orders of their own generals. Supporters of the campaign argue that those soldiers deemed cowardly during the war be formally recognised as blameless, having suffered the effects of severe psychological trauma undergone in combat.

THIS PERSON

I sat and watched,
As time went by,
I sat without a care,
I sat and watched,
This person sleep,
Not knowing I was there.

This person lay,
So sound asleep,
Locked in a world of dreams,
A better place,
I'd surely think,
Tucked in around the seams.

A sudden finch,
A twitching eye,
Nightmares unlocked the door,
Sat up erect,
Face in cold sweat,
The dream, a nightmare tore.

This person then spoke,
In a quaking tone,
"It's the voices inside my head,
They scream at me,
Do evil things,
Kill them, make them dead."

I calmed them down,
This person there,
How did they feel, now awake,
The reply they gave,
Put fear in my veins,
“I heard them and evil they spake.

The voices are there,
By day and night,
They never pass me by,
The urges I feel,
To harm everyone,
Perhaps it's best if I die.”

This person then smiled,
“Let's play chess,
It's a wonderful day one and all,
The voices have left,
But I don't know how long,
It will be, before they recall.”

So we started the game,
Like two Russian masters,
Both focused and eager to win,
Yet it can't have been long
Before they came back,
And the board it was thrown in a bin.

“Not talking to you.”
This person told me,
Shrugged and said, “Well that’s up to you.”
This person stared back,
But the eyes, were not theirs,
Said, “Well, what are you going to do?”

This person, I said,
“You must talk it through
And get to the core of the issue.
If you do a bad thing,
Like do yourself in,
Imagine all those who would miss you.”

Just for a mo,
A glimmer shone through,
It was like the lifting of fog.
The eyes that stared out,
For such a short time,
Before being dragged back in the quag.

So imagine your life,
From one day to next,
When you cannot control your head,
How lucky you are,
Not to hear the voice say,
“You’re much better off if you’re dead.”

SOLDIER SOUL

“Purvey me your soul,”
The Devil cried,
To a war-torn and downtrodden warrior,
“We’ll descend through the Earth,
An insidious place,
Much deeper than any old collier.”

Looked up from the ground,
The young soldier did,
Looked him firm and square in the eye,
“I’ve done no wrong,
Just done as I’m told
And I’ll not visit you and fry.”

The Devil looked back,
A pervasive glance,
Said, “You’ll come with me it’s your time.”
“We’ll plunge to the core,
To my sizzling lounge
And there you’ll pay for your crime.”

A cool, subtle retort
Came from the young man,
“I’m not the reason you came.”
“In a place just like this,
Ubiquitous, you are
And you’re looking for someone to blame.”

“Blame?” He replied,
“No not on your life,
I’m looking for someone to praise.”
“He’s an equal to me,
As black as can be,
A salute and a glass we’ll raise.”

“Whoever he is,
He’s done a good job,
Of embroiling himself in this war.”
“With reasons that are
So way above me,
So why? Even I’m not sure.”

The soldier rang back,
“No neither am I,
I was sent here, my job is to fight,
I do as I’m told,
Day in and day out,
I don’t reason what’s wrong and what’s right.”

“Well, you’re not the one
I’m looking for.”
The riposte made the soldier relax.
“There are much bigger fish,
Out there to get snagged,
In the boiling pot, now that’s Iraq.”

“So what is your name?”
The Devil asked boy,
“It’s George, I’m a patron saint,
“And the reason I’m here,
Is to defend against you,
The soldiers whose names that you taint.”

The Devil’s jaw dropped,
An exchange then ensued,
A battle of pure good ‘gainst pure evil.
With no weapons drawn,
Just colloquy and chat,
Between George and a fed up old Devil.

When they came to the end,
A decision was made,
About who would make Hell’s extradition?
Not the soldiers at all,
Though they fight and they fall,
It must be, A war monger politician.

THE BRIDGE

Interned until the end of the war,
the rest of the world, they never saw,

the treatment of prisoners, from Commonwealth Nations,
when building a railway; Japanese stations.

Through jungle so dense you could hardly see,
the prisoners hacked to carve an alley.

Then the track was laid, more men died,
“if the world only knew!” the prisoners sighed.

After more than ten thousand men perished,
the railway complete, the line was finished.

Right up to today, the world asks “Why?”
so many of our men just had to die.

If you need, to see proof of the story,
go to the graveyard at Kanchanaburi.

There you will see the graves and cry,
for the men who built a Bridge at the Kwai.

25 YEARS

The moss grows damp on the stones,
A bone chilling wind grips the air,
Tundra grass bows to the audience,
Then continues to dance.

Stones, piled there for a reason,
Different sizes and shapes,
Interlocked like small fingers,
Making shadow pictures.

The slap and flutter of a flag,
A whip 'crack,' as it plays
With the wind, teasing and taunting,
To try and rip it to freedom.

A desolate place, the sky behind
The Cairn, sombre as the wind picks up.
Stone counting done, now
A total of 257.

Collar turned up as the biting
Southerly tears at his neck.
Last time he was here, he
Was surrounded by the chatter of friends.

Here he was back to see them,
It had been ages, he pondered
His next move, come back to
See his friends, but what now?

They did not want to talk news,
All they 'harped' on about
Was how things were,
Not how they are.

Of course they didn't know,
They had not left in years,
25 now to be exact,
A tear rolled, the wind froze it.

He quietly smiled, back with his pals.
Slowly he drew his pistol,
Cocked it in the frosty air,
A round clunked into the chamber.

He was back to finish the war,
Personal it was, then and now.
"You kill, I kill," words tore
At the pathways in his head.

His skull was full of screaming,
Young men maimed and dying,
They ripped at his cranium,
Kicked his soul to the core.

His war went on after surrender,
In fact the feeling burned,
That he had been 'a captive
Of the victory.'

The cold steel tasted vile,
It stuck to his lips, an omen?
No turning back, finish the war,
The trigger clicked, then a recount,
258 stones
And rising?

JOHNNY GURKHA

I was selected by you,
I was trained by you,
I was sent by you,
To go wherever.

I was clothed by you,
I was fed by you,
I was housed by you,
At the end of a tether.

I was there when you called,
I was there to attend,
I was there to serve you,
My adopted Queen.

I delivered my service, so loyal and proud,
I delivered a war cry, frightening and loud,
I delivered my life, shot dead in a crowd,
All the things might have been.

And the price that was paid,
Gets higher each day,
Now that I'm gone
Some others must pay,
So my family, you deport, away.

THE EMPEROR

At the height of Empire
men were called to fight a war.
The war was fought,
many miles from home, against an enemy they hardly saw.

The Afghan wars
were bloody and brutal, lasted for numerous years,
with countless men dead,
leaving families at home, crying and shedding their tears.

Along came Sleigh Roberts,
'Our' General Fred, who took on the Afghans and won,
but today in Helmand,
we've no General Fred, just many a Welshman's son.

As said once before,
was an Empire war, but where is our Empire now?
Crumbled into the sand
and our green pleasant land, the last bastion of Empire to show.

So get the men out,
at the double and shout, "This war is not one for us."
The Empire being built,
is not of our own, it's one that belongs to
U.S.

THE SELFLESS INFANTIER

Tolling noon on an August Day
the cast dome struck forth, a call
for a gathering of grief. Summoning a
silence which was heard throughout
the land as time ceased its meaning.

A patriotic symbol draped the
final carriage as comrades held
him aloft in a dutiful acknowledgement
of his sacrifice. Old warriors lowered
fluttering standards in salutation.

Homogeneous bearers worked in unison.
The sharpness of hobnails in time
as the choir gave voice to the 'Men
of Harlech', from then to now. The
stone floor eased the salt from drying tears,

And if salt were still currency, today was
paid for, ten fold. The procession halted
in front of the altar, a place for all
occasions, though today was a premature
gathering, for the warrior.

Brothers and friends stood and evoked stories of him, his quintessence filled the air, a reverberation of solemnity echoed the silence. Minds held memories of his 'amazing character',

He was dependable, loyal and wise, a bright enthusiastic youth. Superlatives of one who had passed scribed for time on the pathways which he trod with each of those gathered today.

Each person had a dedication for him; the young man, whose shyness masked the bravado. 'The Selfless Infantier'. *Masel tov* was hailed to send him on the path of the wandering soldier.

Today, a small border town felt the pain of war waged a life time away. Today people joined in the celebration of a life but the mourning caressed the very souls of all fellow countrymen.

When the families and media had
finally laid you to rest, I took
a repose, I sat with you and
drew the scent from the cream and
violet swathe, now laid over you.

Pride was felt in equidistance; snipers
had paid homage, whilst Great Aunt Muriel
harboured her feelings but acknowledged
them to you. You were the focus, a milestone
though one that should never have been reached.

Your physicality now placed in view of
Ty'r Pwll while the pool falls still in your
tribute. The schoolyard no longer echoes with
your joyful cries and sound of running
feet. Today reflection is the order.

This final journey which started
in the distant, dusty, sun scorched land
has ended in the fertile, brown earth
of your homeland. We salute you
'Welsh Warrior'.

AGED WARRIOR

explain how,
conflict enhances the transition
from adolescence,

explain how it is
exacted by images viewed,
only by the elite

childhood memories explode within
dismembering
destroying

faceted destruction.

explain why
gene-rations
are being alarmingly depleted.

A CRAFTSMAN'S BANTER

'Crafty' is a name for a Private in our Corps.
The Corps was formed at Alemein,
in the last World War.

The Armourers with weapons,
from around the World so wide,
But you must clean your rifle to 'Gleam',
show some British pride.

The 'Reccy Mechs' are ready, they are so rough and tough,
Though when you go out drinking,
don't try to call their bluff.

The 'Gun Fighters' are called; they will meet you
there at dawn,
They're gonna be real early,
with their brand new pieces drawn.

The Tels Techs and The Comms, The Radars and The Ecces,
Everyone of us so invidious, of the very high paid Techys.

The Metalsmith is bashing one out.
No!! A hot piece of steel,
Or mending a bent Rover or a Warrior idler wheel.

The Storeman is stood stacking, his blankets one by one,
But he'll learn to count in fives,
when his promotion finally comes.

The Electrician, a man who'll fix your Landrover,
And he'll rewire your house, if beer you hand over.

The REME Air Tech, in his powder puff hat,
He's a flop from the RAF and that is just that.

And then there's the Shipwright, I've only met two,
He'll mend your rubber dingy with some paper
and some glue.

At nearly the end, there's the old REME Blacksmith,
Are there any left, if your horse shoes go skewif?

And finally the one that I nearly forgot,
But actually the one I saved for this slot,

The lowly VM, the best trade of all,
Not much of a Welder, a Tels Tech at all.

A Reccy Mech, Blacksmith, a Shipwright not found,
But the duties of all are made more profound,

When the VM is stood there, out on the ground.

'Cos whatever the Job, to the VM is no test,
Because as you've all guessed, my trade is the *best*.

So I leave you alone, with this wide choice of trade,
In the Corps that out of adversity was made.
An apology for the Trades I forgot to include,
And the phased out ones, now on the shelf they are stood,
But let's not forget that without the 'Best Corps'
The Army has no chance of fighting its wars.

Arte et marte

20/6/2010

gather your worldly memories,
march for the final time through the hot gates and
enter Valhalla together.

a place where tale and deed are proven vindication for entry.

let Herodotus take his scribe
and eternalise your names as you rest
in the Elysian Fields.

courageous

300.



*For more information about the poet, the sculpture,
and The Abandoned Soldier Project, please visit
www.theabandonedsoldier.com*

