

Bygone Times: As We Once Were

Being a series of poems:

Some in the Old Lancashire dialect;

Some I have composed myself;

Some I have collected.

*A reminder of the big changes and contrasts in our lives showing us
"As We Once Were"*

Frank Bamber
16th September 1995

A Walk O'er Thowd Moss

Walking out o'ert Moss that's called Bold
With grandchildren everything seems fine
Brings problem as one's getting old
Walking out with their hands in mine.

It's sometimes a job to make 'em do as they're told
As o'ert Moss slowly at times we wander
Lots of explaining at things we behold
I'm not given time enough to ponder.

Look up in't sky a lark fair singing to bust
More wind than your granddad I'd say
And watch yon peewits skim in't next gust
They've babies in't grass hid away.

“Alright, pull some buttercups, leave daisie abee”
Small hands cannot grasp them short stems.
They gather some clover and dandelion with glee
Making sure their pet rabbit never clem.

Then off we trudge home - they are happy - me too
“I can't carry thi' luv you mus walk.”
Some flowers for their mother, red, white and blue,
And I listen to their prattle and talk.

“Now all wash your hands, wipe mud off your shoes.
You can't go in there with them feet.
Eat up your butties your grandmother made,
I'm most glad to get down on my seat.”

Bonny young brids young lives to live as yet
Out 'ot nest you will flush up into the air.
Then tell all your children if children you may get
About thowd Moss, and nature and creatures that live there.

Frank Bamber
1995

As Time Goes On

Just a line to say I'm living,
That I'm not among the dead,
Though I'm now more forgetful,
And mixed up in the head.

I've got used to my angina,
To my dentures I'm resigned,
I can manage my new glasses,
But, good God, I miss my mind.

At times I can't remember,
When I stand there and just stare,
Have I come here for something,
But can't think just where.

And beside the fridge so often,
My poor mind is filled with doubt.
Have I just put some food away,
Or come to take some out.

And sometimes when it's dark,
With thoughts running thro' my head,
I'm not sure if I'm retiring,
Or just getting out of bed.

And if it's my turn to write,
And if you are waiting by your door,
I may believe I have written,
So please do not get sore.

I'm standing here by the post box,
With my face blushing red.
Instead of posting this letter,
I've opened it instead.

And so it affects all of us,
As times itself marches on.
It's an effort to climb on the bus,
"Good God, I hope it's the right one!"

Owd Ike Ashton

Owd Ike Ashton wer ar Sutton blacksmith best as yo cud see,
'Is place o' work deauwn Fisher Street wer a marvellous place to me,
Fer as a chilt ah've spent sum tarm, fo't 'ear 'is anvil ring,
Fettlin' horses wi new shoon, I' summer, Autumn an Spring.

Seed im eave up orses legs, geet 'em between 'is knees,
An clap on't 'oof, thot iron eed shaped, smell made me cowf and sneeze,
Nails knocked in, then rasp um off, wi skill ee showed un't job,
Thid cum in aw sizes, plew 'orse, cart 'orse on cob.

Edwin Garton browt in owd Sowdger who poo'd thowd tater cart,
Ort childer made a fuss oh'im, ee played in't big war a part,
Lark draggin cannon an near lost 'is seet,
Walked wi full o pride as ee cum for new irons on is feet.

Owd Haywood's coal 'orses, Swift's fruiterers mares,
An Owd Ike's own mares, Belgian Blacks to funerals in pairs,
Evry oof thi wanted shod, an all ad bin knocked in shape,
Owd Ike a born craftsman, never needed a tape.

Lots 'o' jobs eed ammer eaurt, often patched up mi trungle an bow,
At tarms ah see 'im in mi mind, I can see im now just so,
Leaning o'er 'is anvil mekin sparks fly for me,
But Isaac Ashton's Smithy is gone, no longer theer fot see.

Bold Moss: Owd Aincient Moss

Wot 'appened to thee owd aincient Moss,
Tha' wert warm and covered wi flowers so gay,
Wen't slag covered thee, wi all felt thi loss,
Tha wert brown an now thar left drab and grey.

Gone was the white and purple heather,
Gone was the birds of every feather,
And paths caressed with thousands of feet,
A crime agen nature, it was owt but reet.

We know that scars weer turf was took,
They run from Bold to thowd Moss Nook,
But many a wom tha kept reet warm,
From wintry blasts that spelt us harm.

Us childer, owd Moss, thad welcome us there,
To jump thi wide ditches for croddy, or dare,
An run carefree across thi ample breast,
An lie close on't thowd mound for grateful rest.

An in't far corner reet opposite Moss Farm,
Hives nestled there we'at bees did swarm,
Busy they were, working all't hours,
To and fro o'ert Moss visiting thowd Moss flowers.

Tha luct lifeless an cowl and grey was landscape,
National Coal Board was responsible for this sad rape.
Tha lay lark this for nigh on twenty years,
Wot could one do, only shed silent tears.

But then came two lasses, environmental rich,
One named Janet Sparrow, thi other Olive Romich,
And behind these two giving of its utmost
Was the grand operation of Ground Work Trust.

So awaken owd Moss from a score years of sleep,
A full circle as turned, now new flowers will peep,
And thi paths will appear where grasses brush thi knee,
And bird song will be heard and the humming of the bee.

So now aincient Moss, tha con live once again,
Wi seeds sown to grow, under sunshine an rain,
Thar't grateful to all who took such a measure,
Thal bring forth to young and old most wonderful pleasure.

Four Score Years in Old Sutton Town

Greetings to you Old Sutton Town
The place where I was born,
Where first of all my childish eyes
First saw the golden dawn.

Changes I have seen in Old Sutton Town
Since that fair September day
And heads that once were black and brown
Have meanwhile turned to grey.

Many happy years I did enjoy
At old Sutton National School
Masters have gone I knew as a boy,
Who taught us the Golden Rule.

Courtesy, discipline held firm in daily life
Vulgarity, ignorance is the latter day phase
Trampled with Jack Boot and present day strife
To crush finer feelings of bygone days.

Looking down the years, lives are only short stays
It seems our days are only lent
Both happy and content I am to end all my days
Where my old boyhood in Sutton were spent.

Perchance someone, someday in later years
Is reading these lines with a smile not a frown
Do not dwell on my absence and shed any tears
But think of me, content in Old Sutton Town.

**Frank Bamber
1990**

John Smith, Benefactor

Like the bell of St. Anne's ringing out good and true,
So the contents of my poem may interest you.
True facts from the past I bring you forthwith
About a true man of Sutton, his name, John Smith.

1792 in Viterbo to Sutton, St. Anne's great delight,
Dominic Barberi was born and saw his first light.
1794, two years later was John Smith's year of birth,
Two wonderful men, both of outstanding worth.

Now these two great men, born of older times,
The one saviour of souls, the other builder of railway lines.
They were chosen by fate each other to meet,
To create church and monastery called St. Anne's retreat.

With generosity abounding on a scale ever so grand,
1850 John Smith built church and gave of his land.
A benefactor of Sutton, held in most high esteem,
A man of true religion, of railway and power of steam.

St. Anne's Villa to live, he built on this ground,
No trace of it left, can now not be found.
It was followed by Glynn's, who farmed the land,
But in 1950, St. Anne's Junior School was built and planned.

So now Sutton's young ones come to enjoy this lovely school,
And partake of education with pen, pencil and rule.
And to read my poem, tis all truth, not a myth,
About St. Anne's Dominic Barberi and benefactor John Smith.

**Frank Bamber
December 1993**

Sutton Empire - Junction Lane

Greatest treat when we wus kids was fer't go ter't Sutton Bug,
When't cares of lyfe was cast aside an' everthin' seemed good,
Each wik we was treated ter spectacles as 'uman eyes n'er saw,
Of romance, luv an' adventure, of 'eroes an' villuns annor.

There wus Tom Mix, Bill Cody, Ken Maynard, Biggles an' Tarzan as well,
An girls wi' eyes lyke saucers, who knew aht treat their men well.
Er course it wusn't aw serious, tho every wik saw a narrer escape,
As somebody geet tyde ter't railway lyne, er a sailing ship tugglin rahnt Cape!

There wus plenty er funny's too, ah recall, lyke Ben Turpin' an' Chaplin er 'Ope,
Not fert mention Bing Crosby an' Lamour; an' Charlie Chan, chasin' smugglers wi't
dope!

But even them wusn't aw't pictures we saw as wi paid ower pennies thro't grill.
Fer sometymes we geet edukated abaht religion, lyke battles wi't Christian fot Pope!

Nah one such occasion was Crucifixion, which most of us knew fer't be true.
As Jesus, wi 'is cross on is showders, staggered as he climbed a steep brew.
One Saturday owd Mrs. Dyas, ooh alus went ter't kids' matinee
Tuk er seat in't front row as usual, wi' a jug er staht on 'er knee.

Nah, whether it wus faith or 'er bottle, wi couldn't quyte make aht,
But sight of Our Lord bein' ill-treated, compelled poor woman fer't shaht aht,
An lurchin' unsteady to 'er feet, ahf chocked it seemed wi despair,
She chucked er beer mug at Pilate, near causin' screen fer't tear!

"Leave lad alone." she cried, wi awt thinstinks of a lovin mother,
"Tha wouldn't der tha if I wus theer, tha rotten little b-----!"
Picture awse wus in uproar, as they tried fert quihten 'er dayhn,
Tears rowlin dahn 'er oller cheeks at sight of er Master in payn.

Burr at last they managed fert cahm 'er, wi thay'd of a bottle er staht,
An she sat theer singin awt hymns to 'ersell, till at last it were tyme fert go aht!

Just a Cowd Tap

We met 'an we wed just me an' mi lass,
Wi worked lung 'ours for very little brass.
No T.V., no radio, no baths, tarms were 'ard,
No 'ot water, just a cowd tap, and a walk darn yard.

No 'olidays for us, no carpets on floors,
We 'ad ar coal fires, an left open doors,
Big families there were, no pill in them days,
'Ow did wi all manage, wi no 'and art pays.

Safe wus ar children playing in't park,
Safe wus al't thowd folk gooin art in't dark,
No valium tabs then, no drugs, no L.S.D.,
Wi cured most ills wi a good cup 'o' tea.

Vandals were rare, there wus nowt much to rob,
In fact wi felt rich wi a couple 'o' bob.
But folk seemed 'appy back in't thowd days,
Thi were caring and kinder in so many ways.

Wash days were 'ard with a rub a dub dub,
Thowd Dolly swished rarnd in thowd Dolly Tub.
Clothes came out clean, then straight thro' mangle,
And art thid come, free of a tangle.

Folks who 'ad jobs would whistle and sing,
One neet at pictures wus ar weekly fling,
Bad tarms there wus, an trouble an' strife,
Folk put on a brave face, t'was part of ar life.

Folks showed good humour an all due respects,
An example to young uns so easy to detect.
An thowd folk 'ad nothing but were reet full 'o' pride
But todays 'carry on, some met well 'o' died.

Frank Bamber

Will They Fade Away With The Passage of Time?

Thinking aback when I was ever so small,
Tales told to me that now seem ever so tall,
Warnings handed down by some very old wife,
Sometimes have directed the path of my life,.

Remember this bad luck, the spilling of salt,
What one must do to remedy this fault,
Before you age and grow one minute older,
Throw small pinch of salt, over your left shoulder.

Take heed, do not walk under that leaning ladder
Less kith and kin become so much the sadder.
Suffer not a kiss from the Angel of Death,
Nor embrace of the rope that robs one of breath.

Come, run away children from that luscious green pool,
So inviting to small ones the waters so cool,
Jinny will catch you with her large teeth,
You'll be lost forever in the waters beneath.

April Noddy is with us, the day of the God,
Armed with pencil and paper, please give us a nod,
Twelve noon its all over, Noddy's past and gone,
Don't be branded a Noddy with thinking it's still on.

A break for old housewives round table they sup,
Eagerly waiting for that last twirl of the cup,
Upside down is the cup, then the reading of leaf,
Some may doubt teller, but for others its belief.

Encourage him not this old bird of woe,
Hand in hand is misfortune with wily old crow,
Upon one's house he must never be let stay,
Unwelcome he is, you must chase him away.

Pancake Tuesday, man and maid takes a turn,
The tossing of pancakes for fear they may burn,
The day upon which both the rich and the poor,
Every stomach is filled and can hold nothing more.

Customs and beliefs from time long ago,
Some are forgotten, some you may know,
Rekindled in memory in this my fond rhyme,
Will they all fade away with the passing of time?

**Frank Bamber
2nd April 1990**

Em's Corner Shop

Aa'm glad we've still geet corner shop,
Wheer wi con spend time o' day,
An' chat abeaut our neighbours,
In a friendly sort o' way.

An' it's nice when Em as keeps the shop,
Sez, "Ello luv, how are you,
'av yer 'erd ow Mrs. Breawn is,
Aa believe her's deawn wit' flue?"

Then 'erl ask about our Bill an' Nell,
An' ow t'babbys gettin' on,
An' did aa know as Cissy Jones
'Ad geet another son.

Then owd Sam Shaw as lives alone
Comes slowly shufflin' in,
He'd like a slice o' bacon,
An' would she cut it thin.

An' he's geet a letter from abroad,
He thinks it's fro ther' Jim,
Would her kindly read it,
His eyes ave gone reet dim.

Of course Em' reads the letter,
An' I, it's from his boy.
He sez he's comin' whoam quite soon,
An' we all share in his joy.

An' if yer runnin' short o' brass,
Yer know wer' find a friend,
Her'll say, "Now then doant worry lass,
Tha can pay mi at wik-end."

These friendly little corner shops
Are disappearing fast,
As Council teks thowd houses deawn,
They'll be a thing o' t' past.

An' th'owd folks gooin shoppin'
A'll wish shop wer' theer once mooar,
For yer met as weell be deaf an' dumb
In a supermarket store.

Tripe Shaws Pup

At Ellams 'Ouse in Ellamsbridge Road
'Owd Tripe Shaw has a dog,
It's only small and black and white,
But jumps up and down like a frog.

You can see it there from first daylight,
Until it's nearly dark,
If you can't see it, you can certainly hear it,
'Cause this bugger can't half bark.

It's tied up on some kind of rope,
Just behind 'owd Tripe Shaw's shed,
And the only time the bugger shuts up
Is when the bugger's being fed.

It has a pretty little face,
With a long and fluffy tail,
And it jumps for joy, when 'owd George comes
home,
After being on the ale.

Many years ago, we had a man called
"The Knocker Up"
We don't need one now, this present day,
We can rely on this bloody pup.

It might be better, after rabbits
Or rounding up some sheep,
I wish he'd take the bugger there,
So then we'd get some sleep.

Weer Tha Be Goin Owd World?

Owd world spinnin' thart mixed up false glitter an underneath gray,
Wi'aw thi changes good an' bad altrin ar larfs way,
Owd on, owd world ast fergeet Judgment Day.

Owd world, slow lark, thart being kilt wi' and o' man,
Oo'see no wonder or marvel at thowd cosmic plan,
Tha wert creator made, wen't world began.

Weer dus us be gooin neaw, to wot distant sphere,
Wot'll 'appen to us wen wi goo away from 'ere,
A lot o'foak tha noes ev cause fot fear.

An aw't little child er us do leave behind,
Cawn't find dacent livin', good will an no peace to find,
Amid aw these apless 'uman kind?

Tergether aw't foak will wreck this place,
An'swing ar clod o'earth swirlin' in't space,
Wi ort mixed up colors o't 'uman race.

Dost recon, science an edication rings art true,
Meks snob foak idle an less to do,
An lots moor tarm fot mischief to pursue.

Is self control, owd fashioned? Ne'er 'erd today,
They's no tarm fot ponder, no time fot pray,
We'at gooin owd world? Tha loosin thi way.

Tharsand years ago, wunnerfull words wur writ,
Ten Commandments fer good livin ort world did fit,
A way o' larf, lark a breet beacon lit.

Fer thousand o' years them words stood secure,
Gayin us 'onest guidance an th'ills o' larf to cure,
One big family aw't gether, God's way to endure.

Ne'aw leaders ot churches, shout these laws wi' due deference,
Foch back thowd core o' worship wi'thown't full reverence,
Afore us an't world dees in foul decadence.

Turn back owd world afore its too late,
Turn back owd world afore God shuts 'is gate,
An afore ort th'evil overflows God's slate.

Frank Bamber

Thatto Heath

A theory put forward concerning the unusual name Thatto Heath, as put into Rhyming Lanky. It is also known as Donkey Common by local folk.

Many life times ago, gooin' back many years,
It's abart the little beastie, the one with long ears.
Sum cor it a donkey, some cor it an ass,
But it favors ort same to me when it's eart to grass.

Tha con see um in't picture in't window at Browd Edge,
To ferrit art truth is my earnest pledge.
A part o' Sentellin is caed Thaaoo 'eath
An aw it was then cawd is my solemn belief.

O'er faced wi heavy burdens which man began to shirk
So 'e collared an ass fot do aw 'is donkey work.
When it wur dead beat and before it came to grief
It was put art to graze an' eat grass eart on't Heath.

An it was to th'asses on't Heath iff lost making thi way
But Lanky folk shortened it after mony a long day,
Thatto 'Eath wus much better on a Lanky mon's tongue
But iff tha asks for Donkey Common tha'll not go far wrong.

Frank Bamber
August 1994

Mi Owd Two Up Two Deawn

Ya can see it 'appenin' every day,
Slum clearance so thi caw it,
Of course ya gerr a fine new place,
But here's my version of it.

Ther' wer' just a row o' cottages
Th' outsides owd an' mean,
Burr if ya took a peep inside,
Ya'd find 'em neat an' clean.

An' folk who lived ther' you'd agree,
No kinder lot you'd meet,
They'd never pass yer by without
'Ello luv, or good neet.

An' Mrs Breawn who lived next dooar,
When I wer' ill, she cleaned mi flooar,
An' Mrs Smith across the way,
She browt a meal in every day.

That little street, it's empty neaw,
Th' 'ouses aw pooed deawn,
An' t'neighbours separated,
To different parts o' teawn.

An' me a've geet a little flat,
It's very nice I'll own,
It's modern, an' a bathroom too,
But aa spends long 'ours alone.

An' thinks about that little 'ouse,
Five minutes eawt o'teawn,
Aa'd swap this flat reet neaw,
Fer mi own Two Up, Two Deawn.

Elephant Lane

How did Elephant Lane get it's name? Some would say it was due to travelling circuses visiting Donkey Common.

But according to past lore of 'Old Uns', at one time there was a Holy Well in the area. It went by the name of the "Holy Font", and in true Lank dialect, as spoke by the 'Old Uns', it was called "The 'Olly Funt", and so, the following poem:

In days of 'owd' so we are towd,
Saint Ellen was a holy place
An't land around Thatto Heath,
Were lark a moorland space.

Thah noes in't middle o this land,
There wus a Holy Well,
All't locals cawd it "T'holy Font",
Abart it "Thowd Uns" could tell.

The Holy Font was "Olly Funt",
To folk as lived quite near,
Ant Lane to this fountain went,
Ant water was bright and clear.

T'was "Olly Funt Lane" to thowd folk,
In gradely lanky spent,
So when maps come by learned men,
And spoke to thowd folk then.

"Olly Funt" to them was Elephant,
A corruption they would say,
But neow it's cawd Elephant to this very day,
Not "Olly Funt" but Elephant iff tha' asked the way.

My Flag's at Half Mast

The clatter of clogs on cobble stones,
Is lost to footwear of softer tones,
And clogger had names that belonged to the past,
Like Weltin, Clog Irons and a Cast Iron Last.

The grocer's brass scales were polished and shone,
And all his staff wore a clean white apron,
Wrapped in brown paper and tied up with string,
An order is parcelled for errand boy to bring.

The ironmonger sold all tools of the trade,
No "Do It Yourself" for those without grade,
And pawn shops with three brass balls on display.
Kept all the hardship and poverty at bay.

At pork shop and butchers, fresh meat was sold,
Not meat frozen solid and a few weeks old,
The Post Office worked with no sign of a queue,
But 'winds of change' altered that too.

The chemical waste heaps are faded out,
Robots take over, now no-one's about,
Collieries are closed and foundries have gone,
Who are the next victims, as time marches on?

Breathing fire and steam was the old steam train,
Tremendous with power, now look in vain.
Houses of God were built for people's prayers,
Now some are converted for selling of wares.

Every park had a notice "Please keep off the grass",
Our parents taught us, we should not trespass.
Vandalism was a word seldom reaching the ear,
Law was respected and filled us with fear.

Schools and work sites were left in peace,
No need for fences and security police.
You were thought well off if you rode a bike,
Majority were hard up and so had to hike.

Hiking too, brought people much pleasure,
No need for rangers to keep within measure,
From local plots the crowing could be heard,
"Time to get up", crowed that early bird.

Our school playgrounds were then not man made,
Pot holes full of water, round which we played.
From outside our houses the swallow dived and skylark rose,
And wild rabbits roamed with keen twitching nose.

Bees and butterflies and birds in song,
Frogs and newts lived round the pond,
Sadly all these are a thing of the past,
My mind's eye for these flies a flag at half mast.

As it was Around Our Street

I was not born with a silver spoon,
When I was but a Sutton lad,
But my heart was warm as a day in June,
And so wealth untold I had.

We had the wonders of our street,
What wonders, the pavement did hold,
Top and whip and hopscotch at our feet,
And gutters where our marbles rolled.

Our tastes so simple and happy our play,
Belt horses and trundles we enjoyed to the full,
Ducky stones an piggy they all made our day,
Boredom was unheard of, our childhood never dull.

When daylight was chased by oncoming night,
The guessing game was ours, at the old corner shop,
Shop window and kind gas lamp provided our light,
Till bedtime beckoned and our games had to stop.

T'was Friday bath night, alas! One remembers,
From yard walls and nails came faithful old bath tins,
At front of coal fire and its cleansing embers
Lifebouy and loofah cleansed us like new pins.

And donkey stoned steps at every front door,
Our mothers did toil to make street look best,
Spars from our clogs as they met flagstone floor,
And Clogger Rothwells Irons were put to the test.

Time marches on but nostalgia returns,
The bobby on beat that someone called a clop,
At Ashtons, the Smith, smell of horse shoes that burns,
Smell of leather and tanning at old Cloggers shop.

I hear the street vendors and voices from the past,
Line props, rag bone and tubs to be mend,
Bring jugs for your milk, shrills the milk whistle blast,
“Scissors and knives to grind” was that long ago trend.

The Show Field is deserted and stands so forlorn,
For wild beast show and circus in vain you may look,
The roar of lion and tiger at the coming of dawn,
The walk of the elephant to our Sutton Brook.

The appetising smell of home baked fresh bread,
Jack Sharps in a jam jar we caught in the stream,
Remember Jinny Green Teeth that filled us with dread?
That's just as it was, not just a dream.

Frank Bamber

The Colliers and the Witch

The 1920s and 1930s

20s and 30s times were never so bad
Small money coming in made people right sad.
A knock on the door, a voice shouted "Rent",
Behind that shut door, a voice shouted "Spent".

Three days work was a poor collier's lot
Twenty seven and six was the grand sum he got.
For his walk to St. Helens, he was up with the lark,
To write in his signature, or just make his mark.

To arrive one day late or miss just one day
He'd forfeit his three days and nowt was his pay.
He'd beg for relief and pocket his pride.
For a few crusts for family o'er a few days would time.

The government and owners worked this foul racket,
A collier for three days, just £1 in his packet.
His three days from dole ran 7^{1/2} times one shilling,
He'd sign on each day, to show for work he was willing.

The collier and family prayed to Our Lord above
For help and compassion and for children some love.
Remove greedy men, please, Dear Saviour of my soul
So we work all six days and no longer beg from dole.

The 1950s to the 1970s

At last every collier was paid what he's worth
For toiling in darkness underneath Mother Earth.
For a third of his life, he lived like a mole,
His single endeavour was to bring out more coal.

Unfettered and free from capitalist yoke
Life was worth living for all colliery folk.
But plots were hatched and plans were writ
To kill off the good life and close every pit.

The 1970s to the 1990s

The witch from Westminster flew north on her broom
She shadowed each pit to bring disaster and gloom
She spelled out hatred in a black cloud of hate
And cackled with glee at the coalfield's dire fate.

This creature of hate was spawned in the South
Vehemence and spite poured from its loud mouth.
She bid one of her creatures, its name was MacGregor
Destroy pits and Union, and make each collier a beggar.

Collieries are closed and the foundries are gone.
Who will be the next victims as the Tories carry on?
Back will come pawnshops, three balls on display,
A means to keep living and poverty at bay.

Thatcherism and the Tories have closed most pits,
For colliers the dole, and to live on their wits.
No work for our young ones under this government of greed,
More money for the rich is the Thatcher creed.

Frank Bamber 1992

Pit Brow Lasses

Thas eard tales abart coal minin, disaster pits afire,
Of 'eroes an endurance and other thing we admire,
Weer ever coal wer getton, weer ever coal wer wound,
Women allus tuk the place wi menfolk underground.

Wen an't laws wer awterd, dearn pit for them ad t'stop,
Gaffer geet chep labour, employ um aw on top,
Fro draggin coal i' baskets, wit childer darn below,
To pushin tubs on surface an workin in screens just so.

They toiled from seven in't mornin, till very late in't day,
A pickin up great lumps 'o' coal, for very little pay,
Th' owners payd um afe a crown fer every day thi worked,
Fer shovelin coal in boxes an separated dirt.

Just wot them wimen went thro in't struggle just fert live,
Ah wonder iff God on heigh bad owners will forgive,
This showed up at church a Sunday, with carriage an dressed so fine,
Ah wonder iff they ever prayed for them poor souls a workin in ther mine.

So bless aw Pit Brow Lassies, yer worked lark any a mon,
Went wom fot kids to luk after no tarm fot sit in sun,
Wi picks in hond, shawls closely tied, bonnets cleanan fine,
Thi worked in't screen, an at Pit Brow, but neow, not down in't mne.

You Must Not Quit

When things go wrong, as sometimes will,
When the road you're trudging seems all uphill,
When the funds are low and the debts are high,
And you want to smile, but have to sigh,
When care is pressing you down a bit,
Rest if you must, but don't you quit.

Life is queer, with its twists and turns,
As everyone of us sometimes learns,
And many a failure turns about,
When he might have won had he stuck it out,
Don't give up though the pace seems slow,
You may succeed with another blow.

Success is failure turned inside out,
The silver tint of the clouds of doubt,
And you never can tell how close you are
It may seem near when it seems so far:
So stick to the fight when you're hardest hit,
It's when things seem worst that you must not quit.

Frank Bamber
1984

Farewell

When I must leave you for a little while,
Please do not grieve, and shed wild tears,
And hug your sorrow to you thro' the years,
But start out bravely with a gallant smile,
And for my sake and in my name,
Live on and do all the things the same.
Feed not your loneliness on empty days,
But fill each working hour in useful ways.
Reach out your hand in comfort and in cheer,
And I in turn will comfort you and hold you near.
And never, never be afraid to die,
For I am waiting for you in the sky.

The article below came into my hands recently, and I hope you find it amusing.

**We Are Survivors
(for those born before 1940)**

We were born before television, before penicillin, polio shots, frozen foods, Xerox, plastic, contact lenses, videos, frisbees and the pill. We were born before radar, credit card, split atoms, laser beams and ball point pens; before dishwaters, tumble dryers, electric blankets, air conditioners, drip-dry clothes, and before man walked on the moon.

We got married first and then lived together (how quaint can you be?) We thought “fast food” was what you ate in Lent. A “Big Mac” was an oversized raincoat, and “crumpet” we had for tea. We existed before house-husbands, computer dating, dual careers and when a “meaningful relationship” meant getting along with cousins. And “sheltered accommodation” was where you waited for a bus.

We were before day care centres, group homes and disposable nappies. We never heard of FM radio, tape decks, electric typewriters, artificial hearts, word processors, yoghurt and young men wearing earrings. For us “time-sharing” meant togetherness, a “chip” meant a piece of wood or fried potato, “hardware” meant nuts and bolts, and “software” wasn’t a word.

Before 1940, “Made in Japan” meant junk, the term “making out” referred to how you did in your exams, “stud” was something that fastened a collar to a shirt and “going all the way” meant staying on a double-decker to the bus or train depot. Pizzas, McDonald and instant coffee were unheard of. In our day, cigarette smoking was “fashionable”, “grass” was mown “coke” was kept in the coal house, a “joint” was a piece of meat you had on Sundays and “pot” was something you cooked in. “Rock music” was a Grandmother’s lullaby, and nothing more, while “aids” just meant beauty treatment or help for someone in trouble.

We who were born before 1940 must be a hardy bunch when you think of the way in which the world has changed and the adjustments we have had to make. No wonder we are so confused and there is a generation gap today.....BUT

By the grace of God, we have survived. What a hardy lot we are!