



Special edition collection of poetry written  
with Rose Flint at Salisbury District Hospital

Words by Winterslow patients and Rose Flint

Illustrations by Penny Robbins

Page 27 photographs: details of stone seats at Salisbury District Hospital by Zoe Cull & Alex Evans

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Since 2002 poet Rose Flint has worked with patients at Salisbury District Hospital. This special edition booklet celebrates and re-publishes works and words created during her time with ArtCare.

An Introduction by Rose Flint from 2002 project

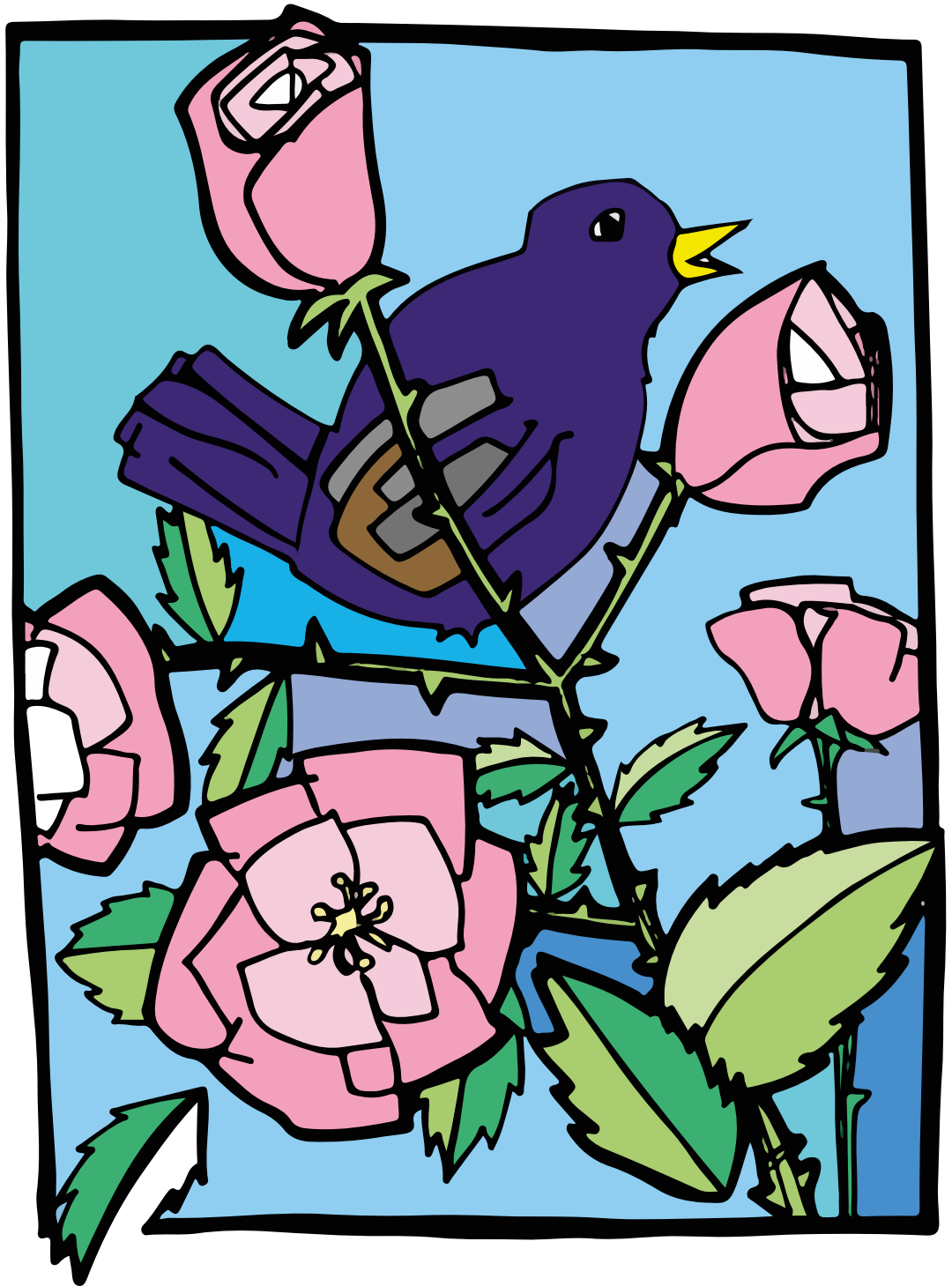
Winterslow Ward is in the older part of the hospital and is approached down a long straight corridor devoid of all character. Artist Penny Robbins and I spent twelve weeks working with patients on the ward with the aim of using their words and images to decorate the windows in the corridor, adding some much needed colour.

We worked with themes that gave the opportunity to bring the outside world a little closer. Beyond the hospital are the hills and valleys of the Plain and the small farms and villages of Wiltshire. The patients brought them all to life for us and now fleeting glimpses of rivers and reeds, swans and sunsets glow in the corridor window, like jewels.

*High on the rosebush  
blackbird sings and sings into the shining air*

ArtCare is the charitably funded arts-in-health project at Salisbury District Hospital. Mainly funded by the Stars Appeal, ArtCare has provided colour and inspiration to patients and staff at the hospital for more than 25 years. Work includes exhibitions, caring for the permanent art and historical archives, improving environments, public consultation, patient experience and wellbeing.

Air is...



## **Blackbird**

Beyond the window the sky scuds grey and white;  
dark clouds could bring stormy weather  
but summer wind  
now is soft –  
soft to touch as bird's wing.

High on the rosebush  
blackbird sings and sings into the shining air –

what is the song?  
is there something worth singing out?

I sing the joy of flying  
flying through endless spaces of wide blue sky  
my wings catching the winds and the weathers  
and blue pulse of each precious moment.

Three neat green lawns  
with flowers bordering them round;  
dahlias and michelmas daisies  
black-eyed susans, delphiniums  
and bergamot, rosemary, violas  
Like tiny up-turned faces



Earth is...

The fine black soil of my garden  
where I grow the best veg:  
the best carrots and white potatoes  
the best shallots and brown onions  
all fit for the Show  
so round and fat and good they grow  
in the fine black soil of my garden.

2.

Three neat green lawns  
with flowers bordering them round;  
dahlias and michelmas daisies  
black-eyed susans, delphiniums  
and bergamot, rosemary, violas  
like tiny up-turned faces.

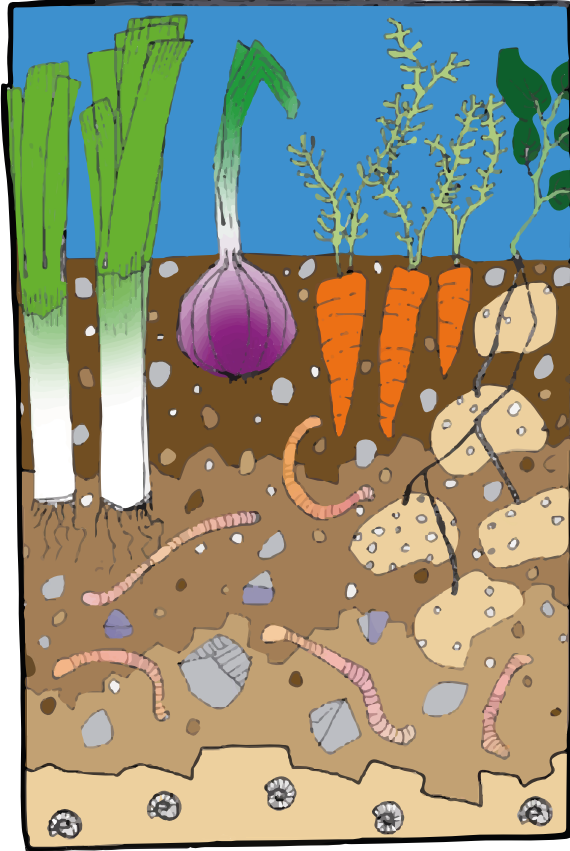
3.

In the walled garden  
the sundial points its shadow  
to the quiet cherry tree;  
the bees hum above the lavender;  
and we are all enclosed in drowsy peace.

4.

on the winding path by the quicksilver river  
under the dark overhanging beeches  
the scent of mint and bluebells rises like a mist

the fresh whiteness of snow scents the countryside  
woodlands snap and crunch under my feet  
soft and yellow with sunshine the summer garden  
one tree is blossoming  
with the bees attending and birdsong  
someone lies on the grass, sleeping in the shadows



5.  
When I was a lass  
Granny took me milking  
out to the early-morning field with a stool  
and the white milk frothing in the bucket,  
the cow standing patient, whisking the flies  
at the farm we made our own butter  
set the pans in the dark cold frightening cellars

6.  
near haunted Cuckoo Lane  
we ran and ran  
one old stone ivy-covered archway  
seemed a place of terror to us boys

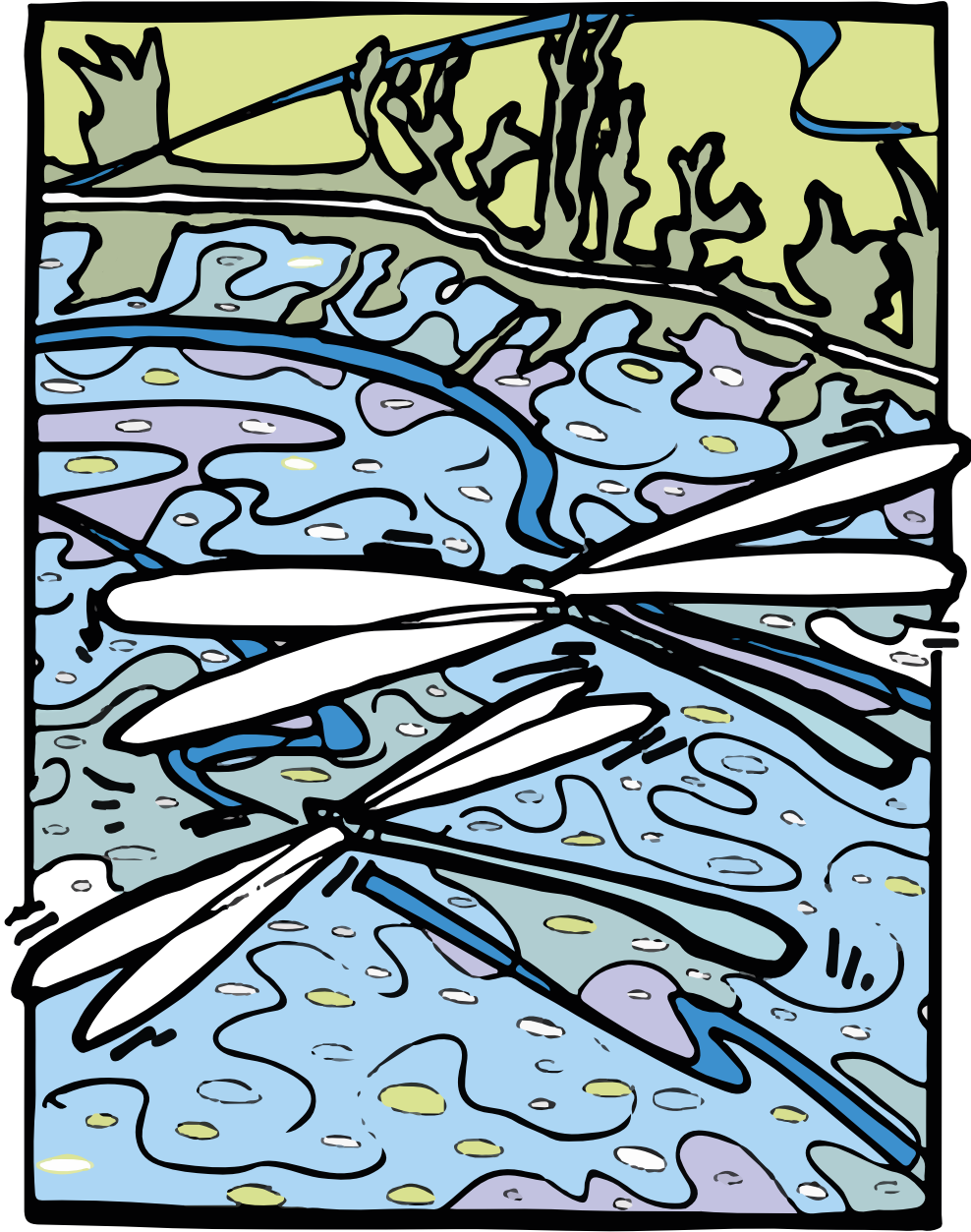
7.  
Dover Lovers Lane, past the Tinworks  
Over the River Taff  
Me and my three-wheeler  
Dashing about our business in the sun



Water is...



I remember that first sight,  
going down the hill  
we thought it was wonderful  
that great gap of water shining there!



The glistening water in the wild pool,  
harbours birds and the bright electric shimmer  
of turquoise dragonflies

1.

We didn't know how to swim  
but threw off our shoes  
to feel the sand running through our toes.  
We had just a bucket and spade  
and we went digging and digging –  
Oh it was marvellous!  
Such happy memories  
my first day by the sea, forty years ago;  
one grey day of sandbanks, gorse and grass  
and the big wide ocean – all for me!

2.

Back then, there was a wheel driven ferry  
to the Isle of Wight, that took thirty of us,  
all ages, crowded together.  
We went to see the elephants at their pond,  
time of the Raj it was, Empire days.  
And there was the Sunday School outing  
down to Brighton in a charabanc  
with the top folded back.  
I remember that first sight,  
going down the hill  
we thought it was wonderful  
that great gap of water shining there!  
We still keep shells at home.

3.

Somewhere out there in the blue  
are protozoas and basking sharks  
and the echoes of the last few blue whales

4.

There were fifteen ornamental ponds  
of lilies and goldfish at Fordingbridge  
and saunas at the Roman villa.  
High up on the Downs there were ancient dew  
ponds  
made from clay and wheatstraw,  
scooped out of a hollow in the valley  
so that there was always water for the sheep.  
And pure spring water clear as crystal  
flowed and bubbled over five green cressbeds, then.  
If you sank a borehole there  
water would well up from the deepest earth  
cold as ice and pure, it would never cease to flow –  
water holds the mysteries of life.

5.

I hate getting wet on the way to work  
but I don't mind on the way home  
I pick up an umbrella  
go singing happily in the rain  
enjoying that wet leaf smell  
of summer showers on parched land,  
fat raindrops running down the back of my neck  
and rainbows shining in the clouds  
of indigo and mauve.  
I love the rhythm of the rain  
stormy skies, big skies, storm's bright end

6.

The glistening water in the wild pool,  
harbours birds and the bright electric shimmer  
of turquoise dragonflies.  
Mosquitoes drone under the willows  
where the dancing light dazzles  
and nippers come with nets  
or try to tickle trout, lying on their stomachs  
with their thin brown arms waving underwater.  
At the wild pool, fishermen wait patiently  
for gudgeon and roach, tench and perch  
or go lamping for eel on a silent summer evening.

Wind in the willows,  
flag iris and reeds, ripples and weeds –  
twelve Salisbury swan go slowly down river  
all grace and dignity, fiercely protective  
they show-off their whiteness as perfect as snow.  
River-shadows hide the shy reflection of herons  
the kingfisher's swift blue dart.

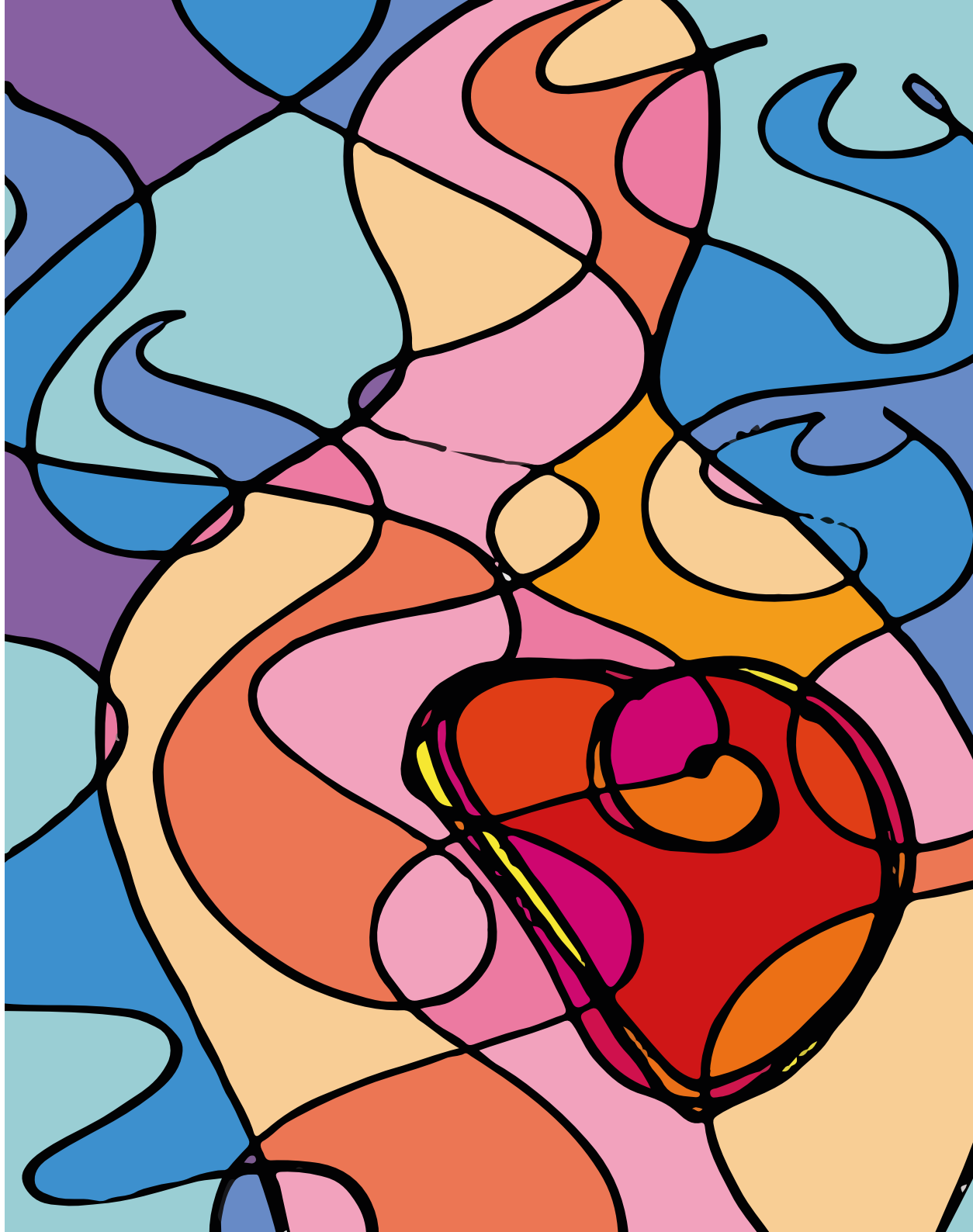
But I know the danger of rivers; I dare not go on them.  
I may be swept under, swept away by the water  
that quickens in the dark beneath bridges  
where Sabrina Fair, so dainty,  
enthrals with her long green weed hair.

twelve Salisbury swans go slowly downriver  
all grace and dignity, fiercely protective  
they show-off their whiteness as perfect as snow



The flame in your heart  
the passion that consumes all consciousness  
love

Fire is...



Space is...

It makes me wonder  
when I look up at the sky  
when I look at the stars  
shining in the deep black darkness –  
how space goes on and on  
in a terrific arch





1.

I was a boy yesterday  
when me and my friends  
made a den by the old field hedge.  
We gathered up bits of stone and brick  
and laid them all around us  
but we never made the roof  
except in our minds  
and that served us, like a palace.

2.

It makes me wonder  
when I look up at the sky  
when I look at the stars  
shining in the deep black darkness –  
how space goes on and on  
in a terrific arch –  
goes on forever.  
And forever will puzzle me.

There is nothing to stare up into  
but the emptiness of space –  
so frightening –  
I can't define space  
but I marvel at the fact  
of looking into sky  
that is never ending.  
We are used to seeing a house,  
a wall, an edge that defines a boundary  
but you will never see the end of space  
it goes on into infinity.

3.

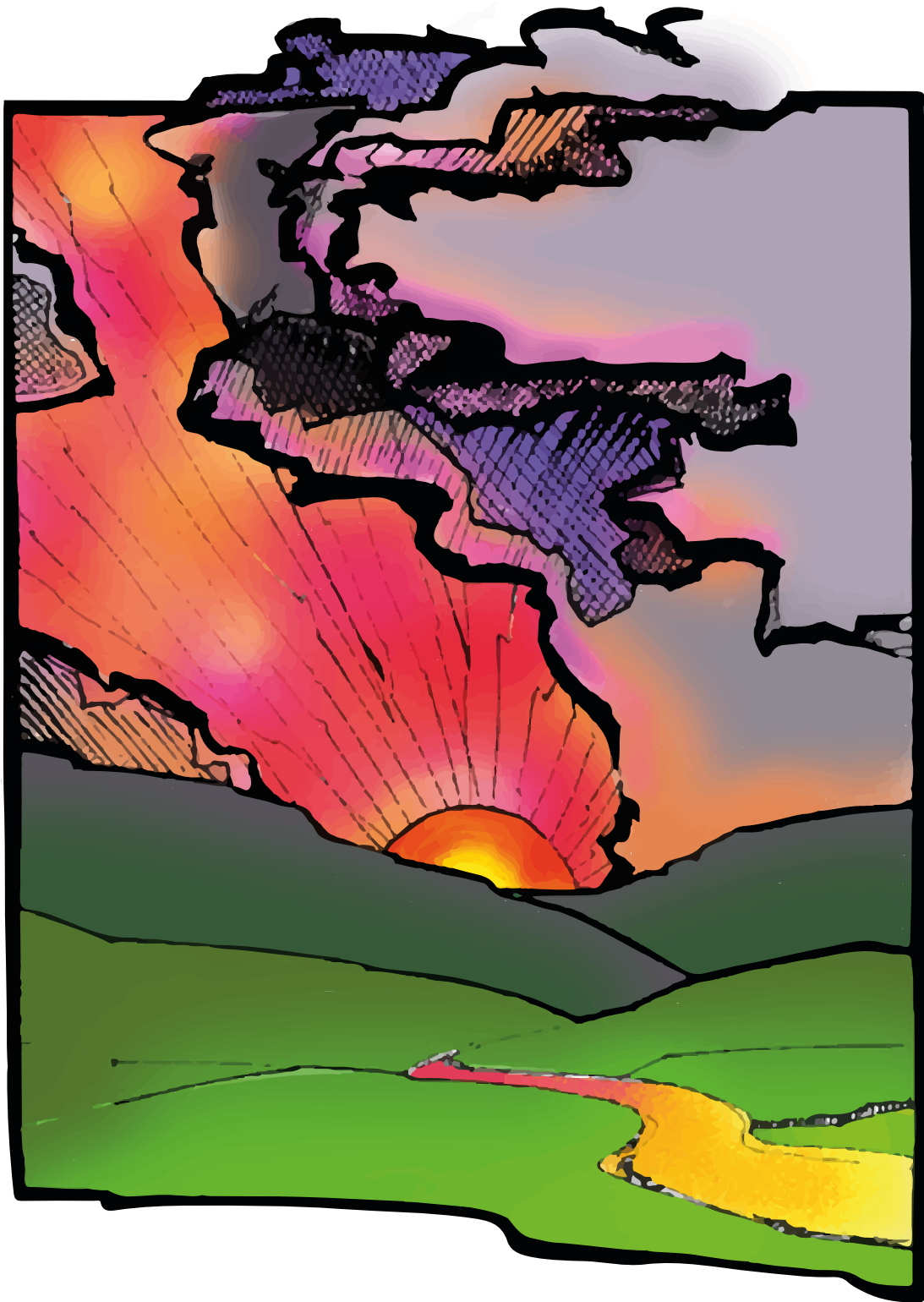
Playing Tarzan;  
hiding under little bridges  
from the gang of bullies  
dark and scared  
till my elder sister came

4.

Flying Lancasters –  
Look out!  
They're in the sunshine in your eye

5.

Look at the sky and see all the stars  
and wonder how  
they all got together to hang there?



1.

I wasn't big as a boy  
But when the school bully  
gave me a push  
I pushed him back  
and he pushed me  
and I pushed him back  
and I floored him.

That woke a fire in me  
and after that  
something changed in me:  
still and lightweight  
I became a boxer.

2.

evocative smells of a coal fire  
so smoky, bitter, sulphurous;  
firelight dancing with the shadows  
on the wall, the small hiss of flames

3.

Once a chimney fire went leaping like a dragon  
Crackling and roaring red breath to the winter night

4.

Red sun shines its last rays  
Through the black anvil of a thundercloud:  
The river turns to gold sheet hammered by the gods

5.

Once, at Ponders End when we were boys  
we went to the forbidden water of a local pool  
on a homemade raft and sailed out  
and capsized.  
My brother nearly drowned.  
we dried our clothes by the fire in a hut  
and had to confess.

6.

When I was first married  
I cooked milk puddings  
on the black iron range in the kitchen.  
That oven cooked much nicer  
made all my puddings crisper.  
That old range in the kitchen was always warm,  
Dad banked it up at night;  
and he went wooding every day

7.

Smoor the coals for Brige to enter

8.

I was in Service then.  
I did all the fires  
black leading and raking out  
relit the lot by seven every day  
every day  
black leading and raking out  
I did all the fires.  
I was in Service then.

# Time is ...

1.

Long shadows  
the clock  
I've got to be somewhere  
Time gentleman please  
half time  
special occasions  
prison sentence  
double time  
old time  
mean time  
passing time  
time passing

2.

When I was twelve  
I went out hunting one cold day.  
Trailing through the wintry copse  
the huntsmen flushing a fox  
and that fox came right by my pony's foot  
and looked at me.  
Then he was off  
and I shouted  
but we never saw him again.  
I felt as if I'd been given a silver coin.

3.

Sundial

When I was young  
I was a gardener at Broadshaw House  
First for Sir Cecil and Lady Chicester  
later for Toyah Wilcox.  
There was a walled garden where a cherry tree grew  
straight up by the ivy walls  
and in the centre of a round lavender bed  
stood a sundial on a stone pillar.  
Beautiful the scent of those pale blue flowers  
at midday. No shadows  
only the humming of bees  
the flitting of red admirals over the blossom  
in the quiet.

4.

Watching

Watching the fox cubs in the early morning  
in the Spring  
in the Spring  
watch them rolls down banks  
and jump and play.

Once, three badger cubs at dusk  
with little dark bars across their heads  
all stopped to look at me.



5.

Special occasion

I was married sixty years ago in St Martin's Church.

The rector played the Wedding March

and said the words

and we all went down the Anchor in Chicken Street  
for our reception.

It was wartime then you see,

chocolate cake with cocoa on the top and rationed beer –  
just enough to make you happy.

I was a soldier then.

I'd cadged a lift down from the New Forest

to be there in the sunshine with my wife

in white and pregnant holding black-eyed susans  
and carnation in her hands.

I'm not a religious man, but that day

I was in the right place at the right time  
and it was perfect.

6.

Son

He said: 'You taught me how to use a hammer, Dad.'

I love him for this, I treasure him.

I watch him in the garden, now he does it for me

and it's a satisfaction to me,

a good job – exactly like I'd do it for myself;

My whole life is wrapped around my family.

7.

My daughter's wedding

Picture me spaced out!

It was the finest day I can remember  
when my daughter married her Pakistani Prince.

Three receptions in London  
two calves and a Hereford bull in exchange  
and at the church the father of the groom  
87 and just flown in from Pakistan –  
looking anxious, asked me to go in with him  
because he had never entered a Christian church before.  
We never think how hard it may be  
for someone of another religion  
to step inside some other place of faith.

8.

Steam Trains

Steam and smoke  
whistling  
shrieking  
sparks and smuts –  
the giant's coming!  
The giant's coming  
taking us  
on a pleasure trip  
just for fun!  
We keep with mother  
Father's down the boozier  
soon as we arrive  
don't see him much  
on holidays.

9.

## Grey Sunday in the rain

War brought out the best in us  
we had a good time, that way  
doing something that mattered for us all.  
I remember going that Sunday morning  
in the soft grey rain, the train waiting for us  
belching smoke above the crowd.  
A thousand young men gathering together,  
all going off to sign up for their country  
ready to fight whatever came their way.  
We were bound to go and get that train.

At the recruitment centre – you go this way,  
you go that – we were put into sections  
as we arrived, you might be lucky  
with what you got or you might not,  
I was in the Royal Ambulance Medical Corps.  
A new life, rarely going home but travelling  
and not by shoe for once. I got on very well  
in my section, stayed a corporal with two stripes  
although they would have had me be a sergeant  
I said no. I'd too much loyalty to my mates for that.



## First Love

This chap, he does all the talking  
He's a bit of a lad with a glint in his eyes  
And I am the quiet type, the steady one.  
Saturday night on a warm summer evening  
And we're walking down Beeston High Street  
Having a good time, maybe a pint or two  
And looking, looking  
At all the girls parading by.

Saturday night on a warm summer evening.  
We liked to get around a bit after six days working  
I was a nurse at the hospital then.  
And now there's me and Clifford  
Having a good time, watching the girls  
With Clifford, talking.

There were these two young girls  
About our age, just standing chatting.  
One with brown hair and dark eyes.  
Clifford, he did all the talking  
And the four of us went walking  
Round Beeston, down the High Street  
Out to the park and the bit of woodland.  
Clifford does all right, he's talking  
But I was shy, a bit tongue-tied.

Well, we matched up then,  
Went walking two sets of two  
And I went into the woods beside her  
The young lady with dark eyes.  
We were shy then, Dorothy and I  
But we kept going into Beeston  
And I'd meet her, the two of us only.  
She was my first love, my girlfriend  
And soon we married,  
When they told us the war was coming.

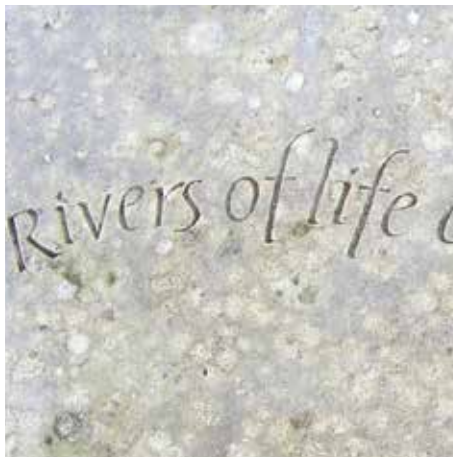
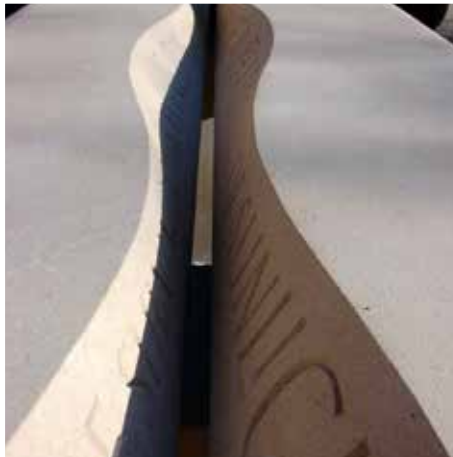
Rivers of life

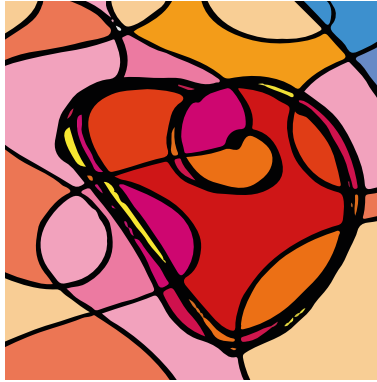
Avon, Ebbles, Bourne, Nadder, Wylde –  
shining rivers  
carry light

Sun, moon, star  
light into land and hearts of people  
whose lives  
wind through green hills

Where hares race over primrose and trefoils  
and trout snooze beside rushes  
where larks sequin the air with songs  
and herons gaze into crystal

Rivers of life  
connecting us all  
in circles of brightness  
with no end  
or beginning  
only patterns of light





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