Poetry Series

Paul Gerard Reed

- 145 poems -

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Paul Gerard Reed

All my poems since 2010 are on poemsforlifebypaul.blogspot.com.
I wrote 365 poems between October 2010 and 2011.
I would like to write over 1,000 poems but as I have found numerical challenges usually reduce the quality (if there was any to begin with) .
Inspirations - all poets with a feeling for nature and 'insignificant' things that are actually significant.
Motivations - to express emotions, make people laugh or otherwise connect with the writing emotionally.

A Child's Voice

We adults trudge through our care-worn days
Lives lived in a frenzied and anxious haze
But in a moment, in life we again rejoice
All we need is to hear a child's voice

Innocence and joy mingled in a high-pitched note
The enemies of tiredness and sorrow are smote
May we forever continue to be beguiled
By the angelic voice of a child

Paul Gerard Reed

A March Morning

Everything is ready
As I take the morning air
Everything is in front of me
As Spring begins it’s repair
Every shimmy in the hedgerow
Denotes an impatient life
Knowing so much is to happen soon
Hearts brimming and hopes rife;
A cocktail of high and scattered songs
Gifted from this little commune
The wren’s flurry of happy notes
The blackbird’s rich and merry tune;
Were our breasts as bursting as theirs
Of such energy and joy
Were our steps as sure as theirs
Along their hidden branches coy;
Grant that their bold newness of life
Makes our lives more whole
And that their morning melody
Be planted in our souls

Paul Gerard Reed

Aira Force

Aira Force beckoned us to go and see
It's source amongst the Lakeland hills
It's tranquil setting of historic note
Where Wordsworth spied his daffodils

His eyes would have seen the same as mine
As he stood there on that morn
Where warm lush meadows and pink foxgloves
The path edges and steps adorn

That water which under bridge spills
And whose riverside beauties evince
Would have gladdened his view in just the same way
As mine despite the centuries since

Paul Gerard Reed

All Right Now

Sensing my doubt, you weighed in
Through the airwaves with music akin
To the most exciting sound ever heard
To label it just 'pop' would be absurd

That magic combination of rock and blues
Created a momentum none could refuse
The gravelly Rogers and solid Fraser
Kossoff's notes slicing the air like a razor

Not to forget Simon Kirke
Who thrashed the drums till he went beserk
So please gentlemen, take a bow
For it truly still is 'All Right Now'

Paul Gerard Reed

Alnwick Castle

O, Alnwick Castle on August noon
Standing firm against the Summer's swoon
Stronghold for seven hundred years
To the Percys and their sons and heirs

We stand high upon ramparts proud
Above the clinging and jostling crowd
Overlooking the Aln free-flowing
Your flag ruffling amidst breeze blowing

Grassy meadows fragrantly creep
Voles through verdant clover stems peep
Cowering under the turbulent skies
Rounded hilltops on which horizon lies

And over the river edge branches stoop
Within your baileys swallows swoop
Making light of life’s dreary pose
Racing past prickly thorn on rose

Guinea fowl bicker and announce their quarrel
On lawns fringed with box and laurel
The honeybees a contented song drone
Until a sharp storm turns wet the stone

The grass thus freshened and renewed
The gravel paths with showery rain imbued
The proud walls cleansed and soaked
History once again evoked

So reluctantly we leave you now
And let the evening take it’s bow
But be assured we will return again
To Alnwick Castle in sun and rain

Paul Gerard Reed

Andrew Marvell

A slim booklet
Of collected verse
By Andrew Marvell
Did brilliance disperse

Only two poems
Or maybe three
But a bit of a bargain
At only 50p

Paul Gerard Reed

Autumn Is Born

The chill wind reminds us all
That Summer is all but over
England is now in leaf fall
From Berwick on Tweed to Dover

The crimson sunsets flee
The strident times have gone
We reach the end of the spree
We so depended upon

The rose petals scattered and down
Our coats are buttoned or zipped
The thistle has donned his crown
Our hopes lie torn and ripped

The air rushes at the gate
It's gusts rattles and swirls
Summer's treasures too late
To save us from it's hurls

The sun-laden blossom and scent
Like stragglers leaving a dance
Their magic broken and spent
Their charms no longer entrance

Summers pages a dusty tome
Its bindings tired and care-worn
We reluctantly turn for home
For now the Autumn is born

Paul Gerard Reed

Back To The Hissing Lawns

It has taken me
Thirty five years to be free
To listen again to the melacholy droll
Slurping from life's porridge bowl
All that has happened in between
Including Queen;
Things I would rather not have happened
But have;
Now I listen to Joni and am not drawn in
By 'Don't interrupt the sorrow'
And the fear for tomorrow
Has passed;
Nostalgia did return like a wave up the shingle
But with different overtones now
And I am not going back
To the hissing of a summer lawn
Whence my misery was borne
With solitude and duty
No longer appalled by the beauty
Or in the trance
Of the 'Boho Dance'
My calendar no longer circled with compromise
I found a kingpin as did Edith
Reality, not a myth
My summer lawn at Ravensbourne
Became that at Hawthorne
And life moved on

Paul Gerard Reed

Before I Grew Up

There was bread baking on the hearth
Acker played ‘Stranger On The Shore’
There were all manner of wondrous things
All of them now no more;

I played football in the street
And read books in bed with a torch
Drank fizzy orange from the ‘pop man’
Left muddy wellies in the porch;

Ate my favourite mince and dumplings
Hated cheese and fish
Stuck together bits of model planes
In efforts distinctly amateurish;

Refused to wear glasses
Even though extremely long-sighted
Ran home from school with my report
My progress and shortcomings highlighted;

None of these things I do any more
I have left those lovely times behind
But how I wish I could go back
For one hour to let the past unwind;

Savour once again those boyish moments
Spent with dear Mam and Dad
I could tell them again that I loved them
From the heart of their little lad

Paul Gerard Reed

Bluebells

Time has grown over these plots
Of broken down plinths
And ragged headstones
With their faded engraving
Surnames, still proud in capitals
And dates from long ago;

The world has moved on
And left them sleeping underground
Here they lie, neglected, forgotten
Lonely in their spring-shaded place
The dappled sunlight caresses each marker
And the bluebells grow everywhere

We stand in respect for a moment
And hear the stillness of the breeze
That blows through our minds
We are captive on this earth
A dying breed forever
A victim of our own times

Paul Gerard Reed

Bonfire Night

Not for me the sparks and flames
Mattresses piled high and old bedframes
Not for me the acrid smoke
That gets in clothes and starts to choke
Not for me old planks and floorboards
Ripped from the derelict housing hoards
Not for me the hot potato jacket
Or sizzling rocket and mortar bomb racket
No, I'll be sitting by another fire
That burns more evenly, less haywire
The one that warms the living room grate
Without soot or wretch to ameliorate
With feet firmly planted on carpeted floors
My bonfire night will be spent indoors

Paul Gerard Reed

Call To Arms

I am called to arms
A thousand times a day
To wage this war;
And each time I must emerge
Victorious and able to say
That I can take some more;
For in this war
There can be no defeat
And no sabre rattle;
Only success countenanced
Defeat is unacceptable
Victory speech just prattle;
Triumph is silent
And not trumpeted
No medals to pin or braid;
Winning just means living
And facing another day
Pretending to be unafraid

Paul Gerard Reed

Clay

Would that we were made of clay
So that nothing might hurt us on our way
Would that we were hewn from rock
Our innocent notions never shocked

How would it be if we were made from glass
No- too fragile and too easy to smash
Better that we were carved from wood
But no! tomorrow’s ashes if we should

Best if we were forged from steel
So that pain and sorrow we would not feel
Much the best if we were made of grass
And be grazed away as cow’s feet pass

Paul Gerard Reed

Cleadon Hills

I stood on the top of the world
And saw hills from Cheviot to Cleveland
A North Eastern dreamland
of sorts;
And remembered many carefree days
With the summer forming a haze
over the grass;
A place where rabbit and yellowhammer abound
Where foxes hide
And the owl abides
And when the only sound
Was the movement of the air
As it swept the hill

Paul Gerard Reed

Clouds

Clouds
The rolling clouds gather overhead
Masking the sun from view
What strength those clouds must have
What integrity so true;
To change aspects from bright to bleak
To change the blue to grey
To swirl their cloak around the earth
And stand in daylight's way
What impenetrable cloth could man invent
To carry out such similar feat?
What sturdy but floating veil
Could rain and hail excrete?
Yet let the hopeful sun rays poke
Through such weighty and serious flesh
To banish the rule of darkness
To start the morn afresh;
What turbulent and glowering mass
Could be set around the world to roam?
To hold the sun's spears in it's hands
To thunder provide a home
Yet drift aimlessly over mountain top
Lie morose on invisible bed
Clasp damply indented coastlines
Betroth that rivers and streams are fed
So, gather clouds! and block the sun
Set free your wispy trails
Stand sullen and immovable
Or chase along the gales;
Be there to balance our hopes
To take with cheer the rain
For we know that soon you will relent
And wave through the sun again

Paul Gerard Reed

Cold Start

One of the worst tasks by far
Is having to defrost your car
When the windscreen is all full of ice
You'd agree it's not particularly nice

The wipers seem welded with superglue
To the glass and your hands are turning blue
As you scrape and rub and scratch away
Just like you had to yesterday

Then another problem you've been posed
The doors are apparently welded closed
You try and thaw out the lock with your lighter
But the frozen morning gets no brighter

Because when you finally wrench open the door
You fall backwards and fall on the floor
You dust yourself off and stagger back to your feet
To see frost scrapings all over the seat

Still, just wait till the engine is on!
You can get warmed up and sing a brave song
But, hang on a moment, you start to feel sick
When the ignition just gives an unhelpful dull 'click'

The battery's flat and even more apposite
You're rapidly losing the heart for the fight
You angrily kick out at the nearest wheel
But hurt your big toe, even though you cant feel

Anything in the rest of your toes or fingers
That numbingly cold sensation still lingers
Rub your hands together but still you miserably fail
To renew the circulation, its all to no avail

By now a full half hour has passed
Car still on the drive, patience running out fast
Best to give up now, set yourself free
And go back indoors for a nice cup of tea

Paul Gerard Reed

Cornthwaite Park

An English Sunday morning
With cricket pitch prepared,
Lemonade and frothy coffees
The hint of roast beef hangs in the air;

Over Sunday newspapers
An unhurried contemplation,
In the distance, faintly
Church organ and congregation;

Sun-dappled wooded hideaways
Quiet winding lanes,
Dog walkers and joyful dogs
Swings and climbing frames;

First hopeful rose buds swelling
Ladybirds engaged in tasks menial,
Cabbage Whites flutter past in pairs
Their flimsy beauty ethereal

A late spring Sunday morning
From pressures we disembark
To spend a precious hour
As we walk in Cornthwaite Park

Paul Gerard Reed

Crocus

The Spring is creeping out of his front door
Barred for so long, but not any more
No longer the crocus cowers and kneels
As the freshened wind makes loops and cartwheels

The treetops brush shoulders, then sway apart
As blustery rains play the wind's counterpart
Better days beckon to the weary drover
And the long road through the Winter is over

Paul Gerard Reed

Custard

What is it with top chefs?
They seem obsessed with presentation
A' squiggle' and a 'dot' here and there
Using double cream like embrocation

They put a small dollop of sauce on the plate
And gaze down as if they just drew it
Then they get a gnarly big spoon
And smear the thing right through it

The end result is horrendous
Enough to turn one to sobriety
Like something someone has stepped in
Of the dog and pavement variety

Custard is their worst malfunction
They smear a tiny bit on the plate
What I want is a steaming great bowlful
Or a separate jug- full would be just great

Custard was born to immerse things in
It's merits I genuinely expound
Give me a minimum three inch depth of the stuff
Chefs- don't tiptoe around!

Forget drawing fancy pictures with your dish
Give custard-lovers what they crave
Slosh on a gallon of runny custard
Go on, chefs - be brave!

Paul Gerard Reed

Cutting The Hedge

After the blackbirds and robins fledge
Its time for me to cut the hedge
An enormous beast, it has grown
Twelve foot high as time has flown

Extending ladders propped against the side
Up I get with no place to hide
Gloves on and hedge trimmer whirring away
The work takes up most of the day

To trim it back to reasonable proportions
And after taking all safety precautions
So, yes I think you're quite right to ask
It is indeed a gigantic task

One I used to carry out three times a year
When my hands used to move in a sort of a blur
Now, as age has extorted its price
I only manage to cut it twice

But when I'm finished I feel pretty good
Until I realise that feeling's a dud
For another task now awaits my attention
Sweeping up the cuttings not to mention

Bagging the lot and taking to tip
I feel like lying down and having a kip
To regain my strength and rest my patella
Next year I think I'll employ a tree feller

Paul Gerard Reed

Daffodils

Cowering with shy stems and gentle buds
Not yet opened with flames of yellow
To match the sun and defy the floods
To swagger as Spring's bedfellow

The whitewashed wall at your back
Your only defence against chilly spears
In the vanguard of Winter's attack
On the cracked mortar and crumbling piers

Calmer days await your disbelieving stare
And straighten your timid droop
Fresh breezes will embolden and banish care
Proud stance replace wind-blasted stoop

Paul Gerard Reed

Darkness Descends

The darkness descends but we burn our lights
To stave off the sorrowful swallowing night
Our lights only penetrate a miniscule of gloom
A fraction of the blackness that has the earth entombed

We know that if we hold hands and pray
That we will be granted another day
When night's enshrouding work is done
Dispersed by the coming up of the sun

Paul Gerard Reed

Darlan

The clouds seemed frozen in the sky
The sliver of moon hung its head
The world stopped turning for a moment
For the great Darlan was dead

As you raced over the town moor
Betwixt The Ruby and The Flame
You had no sense of what was to come
As you played your waiting game

McCoy so careful to shield you
From the head wind you ran protected
But tragedy stood foursquare ahead
The suddenness of the end undetected

Only the last hurdle to jump
The next step the hurdling crown
But that next step was to be your last
And to the ground you fell down

The excited shouts died in hoarse throats
Now only sadness to dwell upon
Racegoers trudged home in despair
For the great Darlan was gone

Paul Gerard Reed

Daybreak In Newcastle

Feet fall flat, echoes unheard
Shops 'To Let',
And woodpigeons in pairs
The silent central motorway I crossed
On a steel bridge and ramps
To a curling flight of stairs

I walked through Newcastle at daybreak
Advertising hoarding squeaking
And groaning as the wind blows
Samsung Galaxy, only seen by me
Young man lying in a doorway
Dead or alive, who knows?

Do I own this empty city?
As the sun glanced at dusty facades
And litter tumbled in gutters
Has the world died overnight?
And left only me
To stare at these locked-down shutters

I am all alone in my reverie
Amidst guanoed parapets and ledges
My mind drifting along on the breeze
In this world of rooks and starlings
Stalled cars and abandoned tin cans
City gates without their keys

Paul Gerard Reed

Delicate Threads

With delicate threads we are all bound between
Unseen ties ravelled around each thought and movement
And fear is held in check by such flimsy wrapping
Normality, bobbing like a lobster pot in choppy waters
Floundering but then recovering and righting itself
Again and again;
We pretend and dream to keep ourselves afloat
But we are not good swimmers;
And our lives sway and totter with each wave
Our skins, impermeable at first
With the authority of youth
Age and gradually let in the water
Which threatens to dissolve the precious gossamer binds
And submerge our sanity
We hang on and keep bailing out the blues
And with soundless fright
Reach for daylight from the night

Paul Gerard Reed

Denwick (The End Of Summer)

The August sun lay palely on your stone walls
Telegraph wires hung limp from post to post
The clouds like ragged tablecloths
Laid on the serene blue table of their host

Your hedgerows now gangly adolescents
Outgrown of their Summer flush
Self-conscious guardians of their neighbouring ditches
Providors of safe haven to chaffinch and thrush

The growing sense of it all being over
That this core of the year has to die
To be left with only a sad farewell
Haymaking's solemn kiss goodbye

Paul Gerard Reed

Doc Martin

He's a very convincing doctor
He doesn't like to mess about
Whether you've got hepatitis
Or even a spot of gout

If only more doctors
Were just a bit like him
None of this soft soap treatment
Better for life and limb

You get no conversation or flannel
Just your ailments diagnosed
No false platitudes or small talk
Or sympathy for being indisposed

No chit chat or blether
No paying service to lip
Just a blunt summary of whats wrong
Delivered straight from the hip

This type of approach from doctors,
Whilst we may be shooting for the moon
Would greatly shorten appointment times
And save the NHS a fortune

Paul Gerard Reed

Don't Grow Up

Don’t grow up
Although I know you have to
In life's ancient decree;
For if you grow up
Then I will be old
And I don’t want to be

Stay a while as a little one
Take in your learning
Of numbers and alphabet;
But don’t grow up
For I will become old
Don’t grow up - just yet

Paul Gerard Reed

Dunstanburgh Castle

I stood within your ruined walls today
Within roofless towers
Under floorless floors
And let the wind's harsh gash play on my face
Braved the chill
Through the slitted windows trace;
Defied the North Sea's blast
As if the waves had never rushed,
Decried the miserable past
As if time had stood still;
Stood where ancient feet had stood
And felt what had swayed the minds
Of those that stood on the same rubbed stone beneath
And struggled against the same binds;
Stood transfixed and rooted
Though your velvet sheep-dottled grass invited me to run
And hide within the scarred collapses
As searchlights played;
Stood and faced John of Gaunt
As if his gatehouse was mine,
As if I ruled that castle as surely as the swallows
Blazing past so near to the tumbled decline;
And then wanted to run away to the shore
And gather up sea shells
To hold tight within my hands
To remind me of my childish times
And this day spent in fallen lands

Paul Gerard Reed

Evening Serenade

The morning wrapped me with it's calm
When the blackbird arrived with insistent alarm
And shook the boughs of a leafless tree
What had broken his mellow reverie?

I was grateful to know it wasn't me
Who had caused his flight to that leafless tree
For the blackbird knew me as a friend
With respect for nature that will never end

I put out the grain and nuts and seeds
That empty bellies of hungry blue tits feeds
I cherish the thronging springtime hedge
Cradling the nest with those to fledge

So, blackbird ring out your warning call
I trust not directed at me at all
But to some other enemy that God has made
I will wait for your evening serenade

Paul Gerard Reed

Evey Year That Passes

In every year that passes
You add one to your age,
But Spring brings a fresh renewal
And the Winter’s scars assuage;
It lightens up the sombre skies
Puts energy into the bud,
Warms the chilly meadow
And cakes the squelching mud;
Makes the promising woodland path
Befriends the lonely hills,
Brightens the roadside verge
With thronging daffodils;
Scorns older steps that shorten
Brings the leaping new-born lamb,
Freshly cascades the rushing rivers
That strain against the dam;
Conducts the cheery birdsong
And bids them make their nests
With twigs that have been prised away
At the gnarly boughs bequest;
Chases away the driving rains
That fragile panes bespattered,
Gently rocks the daisies heads
Settles the blown leaves scattered;
Spring puts hope into sobbing hearts
Displaces the frost with dew,
Spring defies the aging process
By bringing us life anew.

Paul Gerard Reed

Faded Photographs

I placed the photograph of my father and me
In front where I could see
And the sun came out and shone
Across the powdered edges
And re-lit the scene;
Forty years ago
That place will still exist
But I will never go back
I am there now in spirit and memory

Then I looked this morning
At the picture of mother and me
On a grey pier
With hope in my eyes
But a resigned look in yours;

With chilling heart I realise
I hold you in separate places
When you were always together;
I hope you are together now;
For the faded and creased photographs
Have to the suns aging bowed;
And I know that they will not last forever
As with you that have both gone;
But I know that deep in my soul
My love for you forever lives on

Paul Gerard Reed

Family Tree

Through the misty shrouds of time
My lineage composed their rhyme
Unbeknown to me of course
As they straddled life's wild horse

My research led me to greet
Poverty and not enough to eat
As eleven cowered by Sunderland docks
Crammed into a little shoe box

The notion caused emotions to stir
If that situation were to re-occur
Could I survive and live a life?
Or be swept away by such strife

For the latter I reluctantly opt
For if my standards were so dropped
I couldnt keep my head aloft
On a backbone that was far too soft

But strength I will gather from my forebears
Amongst the luxuries of my current years
And realise as I from past histories flee
They made it possible for me to be me

Paul Gerard Reed

Firefly Hedge

Come and join me outside in the dark
When all that is left of the sun is a spark
And moonbeams from the night sky have fledged
And bright lights dance amongst the hedge

Come and join me in Tuscan twilight
Before we curl up in bed for the night
Come and look through my excited eyes
At the fireflies under Italian skies

Feel with me the coolness of the evening
That has left the sun's heat a-grieving
Come outside and let my wonder explain
Hold my hand and be young again

Paul Gerard Reed

Foghorn Requiem

The breeze rose and fell, wafting stalky grasses
Quietly but pointedly reminding the masses
That this event was weather-dependent
With wind and rain the superintendent

The grey skies cried briefly, but abating their sorrow
Held back their heaviest tears for the morrow
And deciding that the air should be no chiller
Relented and spared the exposed flotilla

Seats were unfolded and small tents erected
Dogs barked at the excitement detected
A fox, already frightened, scurried quickly away
Unsettled but unnoticed by the crowd of the day

Good friends met and cheerily greeted
Facebook messages were sent and tweets were tweeted
Then from the cliff edge the faint thrum arose
Of an assembled brass band blowing its nose

The hubbub of spectators was soon quelled
As the band struck up and trumpet blare swelled
Their proud notes drifitng eerily through the air
Lending sombre atmosphere to the whole affair

Then the first uncertain baritone note
Carried lonely from unspecified boat
Back to Souter lighthouse that historic morn
At last! the foghorn requiem is born!

On the grassy slopes we sat enthralled
As the horns blew and the seagulls called
Until with a heave, seemingly drawn from the past
The foghorn emitted a mighty final blast

Which reverberated across the land and sea
For what truly seemed an eternity
Then, like a dying man giving his last gasp
Let life gracefully slip from it's grasp

Paul Gerard Reed

For All The Days

For all the days you spoilt for me
For all the days you marred
You owe me good days in return
For making life so hard

For all the times that should have been joyous
The times you turned to sorrow
For all the days I spent in dread
Looking towards tomorrow

For all the evenings that should have been normal
But when you brought fear in the night
When I recoiled and had to retreat
You squealed with cruel delight

But despite everything you plotted
Despite your puerile grin
I still have my sense of humour
So you lose - I win

Paul Gerard Reed

Free Of The Past

The sun shone through slitted windows
A snail settled on a speck of dust
Everything ordinary returned from nowhere
A sense of ease rested over us

Sheep grazed somewhere on a hillside
The roads were filled with silent cars
The town hall bells pealed one o’clock
There was a broken tulip in a vase

The smile that says I am free of the past
Ironed clothes in a neat stack
The realisation slowly dawns
That the good times are back

Paul Gerard Reed

Frozen Fields

Train whooshing along snow-laden track
No stopping now, no turning back
Hurtling as if the destination could never be reached
Through the Winter's defences that cannot be breached
 A calm buzzing and sizzling overhead
The lines guiding us as sundry platforms fled
Through fields of green although grass never touched
Frozen stalks past whom the Spring has rushed
 Boughs and branches dreaming serene
Of their precious clinging cloak of green
Of sun-filled skies and perfumed breeze
When unburdened of this desperate freeze
 When the joy and hope the seasons bring
Will welcome unconfined the coming Spring
When the fiery arm of the golden sun wields
It's triumphant beam over frozen fields

Paul Gerard Reed

Frozen Willow

Twisted bark of frozen willow
The Robin’s only pillow
Worms no longer edible
Ground impenetrable

Defiant call of thrush and blue tits
Singing together as winter misfits
Bird bath frozen to the brink
No water to drink

Gulls and cormorants swoop low
Over the North Sea icy flow
Then huddle together in a flock
On Marsden Rock

Paul Gerard Reed

Go To B & Q

Why not go to B & Q
If the things you want to view
Include compost bags and hanging baskets
Rubber seals and neoprene gaskets

Low energy bulbs and garden sheds
Toilet seats and shower heads
Six inch nails and cross head screws
Mastics, adhesives, seals and glues

Paints, brushes and ceramic tiles
Hammeers, chisels, sanders and files
Grouts, mortars and quick-dry cements
Tins of creosote for your fence

So when next Sunday
You're at a loose end
Go to B & Q
For a ninety degree bend

Paul Gerard Reed

Golden Years

You dont know it now
But these are your golden years
When your children are young
And enquiring
When thoughts of Summer days
Dont occupy your Spring
And Autumn is known
But not envisaged;
But the peace of mind you have
Goes unnoticed
And serenity is only a concept
And memories not yet distant enough
To take on a glow
As they do when they were long ago;
There is no answer to this
The answer only becomes clear
When the question no longer applies

Paul Gerard Reed

Hairy Bikers Cook Off

Dave Myers and Si King have just taken stock
Of their programme of cooking against the clock
For their 'Cook Off' series has just ended
With many pans fried and mixtures blended

The studio audience gave it a blast
They howled with derision if contestants weren't fast
And shouted a little too loud perhaps
When the time limits were about to elapse

With celebrity chefs the fun levels rose
Cooking favourite dishes they had a few goes
But it was the families who strained and competed
Who added the edge as their fates teetered

On the brink of elimination, or worse
As their pans boiled over and they started to curse
As they realised they were going to be late
'We can only judge what you put on the plate! '

They were challenged to make a quick festive feast
They battled the clock but that was the least
Of their worries, as their faces turned glum
The '7 minute supper' was still a challenge to come

We saw undercooked rice and meat almost raw
Such was the pressure of time that knocked at their door
And Health & Safety wrote a letter not so tender
'Someone might lose their arm in a blender! '

But all emerged unscathed at the end of the day
The pots are washed and the pans put away
With not one accident over which to linger
Everyone still has all their fingers

So the next time you're in the kitchen remember
Forget the Bikers rush in December
Forget the clock and be ever so
Safe as you take your time and cook really slow

Paul Gerard Reed

Happiness Is Just Around The Corner

Happiness is just around the corner
Where sun-dappled streams tinkle like bells
And the morning breeze caresses the fells
Happiness is just around the corner

Peace of mind is just a thought away
Where the hovering lark talks to the sky
And the gentle rain lets its teardrops cry
Peace of mind is just a thought away

Paul Gerard Reed

Hartside

We stood atop the peak
And gazed out upon God's patchwork
Bounded by dry stone walls of unerring line
Stretching away beyond the horizon
And thought of all this as a green cape
Thrown down by nature to welcome us
And reassure us that greatness still exists
In field and vale

Paul Gerard Reed

Health

The body is full of things that can go wrong
Like heart and lungs and pulses not strong
Like parts that ache and shake and quiver
Like the fever you get and then the shiver

There are many components, all linked together
Doctors and surgeons don't really know whether
To disconnect them and try to insert new
Or leave well alone and see how we do

We're bombarded with advice and statistics
From the NHS and even from mystics
About Body Mass Index and things not to eat
Then three years later say we're not complete

Unless we fill ourselves with the very same stuff
That just previously they'd advised us as 'duff'
To jog very slowly when before it was 'run! '
To never eat more than five sticky buns

In a period of five consecutive days
Unless you also eat them with cranberries and Crème Anglais
In equal proportions but beware, even then
To lie down after you've eaten them and count slowly to ten

The consequence of all this, is that we've become nervous
About our health and the National Health Service
Should we all call the doctor, or just consult the web?
When we wake up and find ourselves at a low ebb

Should we go running through the casualty ward door
When our worries reach a peak and we just cant take any more
Or should we just lie down and put the blankets over our head
Then wait 'till the morning to see if we're dead

Paul Gerard Reed

How Long Is A January?

How long is January, you ask
Because it seems an endless wait till Spring
And the days when every little thing
Seems so much better;
How long can a month run on tired legs?
Some say thirty one days, no more
Eleven days and a score
Expressed another way;
Too long to the next pay day
When Christams has extracted its ravages
And like savages
We roamed around the shops
Blindly spending money we hadn't got;
But what the hell
Although our finances are on the skids
Christmas is all about the kids
And their turn will come
When they have to pay
For their kids and then find
Themsleves singing this song
January is much too long

Paul Gerard Reed

Humdrum Days

Give me some humdrum days
Where I can watch the time while away
Watch the river flow
It knows where to go
To the sea
Feel the breeze in my hair
And the day grow tired gradually
Without regret
The birdsong fill the morning
And the tide rise up the beach
Just out of reach
Let the days pace slacken
And the flood ease to a trickle
And sentiment so fickle
Get washed away

Paul Gerard Reed

I Am In The World

I am in the world
I was born today
Along with my brothers and sisters
Some black, some white, some grey

Into a world of water
I was crudely thrust
And instinctively swam to the surface
Where I spotted dust

That might just be food
Caught in the tank light's glow
But I was too vulnerable
To the older fish below

So I stayed hungry and swam lower
And hid in the greenery
And patiently bided my time
Whilst admiring the scenery

I grew afraid when after a while
A big blue scoop appeared
And swept me up and out
Into a safe net to be reared

Along with my thirty-odd siblings
And now we dart and glide
In a fascinating pattern
As we slowly find our stride

In this world of filtered water
And gradually gather our strength
Until we are of sufficient size
Sufficient breadth and length

To survive back in the big tank
Back amongst the bigger fish hurled
But for now it's enough to know
That I am in the world

Paul Gerard Reed

Influence

A gift is the chance
The lives of others to enhance
To tell a tale and sing a song
To remember what made the evenings long
To see eyes open wide, excited
As far-off lands are sighted
Tales not from a computer screen
But born from the thread between
To tell all that you have learned
When you got your fingers burned
But how you have since grown strong
Singing your wondrous song
So take the time and spread the glory
Of your unique and splendid story

Paul Gerard Reed

Jamaica Inn

We settled down in anticipation
Of a period drama that might grip the nation
We simply couldn’t wait for it to begin
Yes - Daphne Du Maurier’s ‘Jamaica Inn’

But the introduction seemed unacceptably slow
And someone had turned the lights way down low
Worse still, the dialogue was hard to make out
With everyone mumbling and shuffling about

What rubbish it was, this appalling broadcast
As our Sunday evening worsened so fast
Surely Cornwall had so much more than clouds that scud
Windswept hilltops and a load of mud

And no passing traveller could ever have craved
To stay at a place that looked like a cave
Dark and damp and no comforts to boast
With an aggressive hard-boiled smuggler as ‘mine host’

Devoid of interest and story, this so-called ‘drama’
Made it more thrilling to watch ‘Panorama’
Sorry, Ms Du Maurier, I have to give you a rap
Your book might have been good, but the film version was crap

Paul Gerard Reed

Lament For A Gerbil

Eyes shut;
No more to open
Whiskers still;
No more to twitch

Just a little life
No more to caper
Beneath the earth
Wrapped in kitchen paper

Day over;
No sun to shine
Cage still;
No wheel to turn

Just a little life
No more tomorrow
Beneath the earth
Wrapped in sorrow

Paul Gerard Reed

Lard

You never see adverts for lard on TV
I asked myself how could this be?
Lard, I know, is not a substance sublime
But still proved vital during the wartime

Now it seems lard is out of fashion
Since the scrapping of the ration
And now we are obsessed with all things 'low fat'
That seems to be the end of that

How about sponsoring a lard revival
After all it helped survival
During the dark days of World War Two
Without it there might have been no 'you'

So abandon silly phrases and no longer utter
That you still cant believe it's not butter
Instead lets play our high-fat trump card
'One of your five a day - a pound of lard! '

Paul Gerard Reed

Laughter

Laughter is the best medicine they say
Worth more than any wealth
Laughter is a wonderful tonic
Not available on the National Health

Laughter keeps us from growing old
And from senility premature
Laughter is a gift from our youth
When life was sweet and pure

Keep laughing as much as you can
To keep on an even keel
Dont take life so seriously
And see how much better you feel

Paul Gerard Reed

Leaves In The Wind

I read that Jimi was your hero
You searched in vain to emulate
All the time supremely unaware
It was you that was really great

Ever searching for a ‘sound’ like his
When there was no need at all
Instead, unknowing, your fingers touched
My soul with vibrato squall

‘Trouble on Double Time’ and ‘Woman’,
‘Mr Big’ and ‘Mouthful of Grass’
That big hole in the ground that you wanted to dig
Grew deeper as I watched the time pass

I still listen with adolescent shiver
To the piercing cry of sunburst Les Paul
I still walk in your shadow
From the garbage cans of the back street crawl

The unreachable high that you craved for
Carried with it too high a price
The heroin stream in your veins
Always the last throw of the dice

Much too soon you took that final flight
With wings that could no longer fly
With ‘Tons of Sobs’ you left me
No forgiving or word of goodbye

The last verse never to be played
A curtain that can never descend
Fretboard growing dusty and shabby
Wishes I can no longer extend

Perhaps you can still hear me play you
Through strings that know more than just sound
Heavy heart muffled but still beating
As that last flight touched the ground

Paul Gerard Reed

Let Us Laugh

Let us laugh
For laughters sake
Let us laugh
Till our bellies ache;
Let the tears
Roll down our cheeks
Let us laugh
For weeks and weeks;
Let us laugh
Till we can laugh no more
Let us laugh
Till our bellies are sore;
Let us laugh
With lack of inhibition
With happiness unconfined
With a joyous disposition;
Let us laugh
All night and all day
Let our laughter
Wash our sorrows away

Paul Gerard Reed

Let Us Not Be Dismayed

Let us not be dismayed
By the wintery things displayed
Whilst rigours and hardships abound
Beauty can still astound
Us with it's ravishing cloak of gifts
That optimism and spirits lifts
As we cast a mean eye aglare
Across the frozen meadows stare
The cold dew that has hardened to frost
Melts as if the Summer did accost
And leaven the burden of bare twig and branch
Of whitened fence and railings blanched
To restore in our private minds review
Glorious flower and skylark anew

Paul Gerard Reed

Lizard Point

Threads of grey
Etched over the horizon line
A wispy loom
Set behind the dappled dark deep
And under the great billows
That fathered the rain
□

Behind and beyond
Is the great burning ball
Unseen but waiting for its moment
Watching over the earth
And holding it
In slender fingers of fire

Paul Gerard Reed

Look At Yourself

Look at yourself
The one who tries to put a label on me
And direct me in their direction
I tread not in your garden
And shape not your future
I take no control over your affairs
And am respectful of your ways;
I dont worry about you
Or fret over you
But am mindful of your freedom
As long as it encroaches not upon mine;
I tread carefully my own path
Which transgresses not yours
My trees and branches grow carefiully
Inside my own boundaries
And do not block your light
My noise is quiet
And within my own walls
My voice is steady and belieinvg
But does not shout at you to follow;
I join in when asked
But dont ask you to join me
I share with my loved ones
And they share back because they love me
If there are any scraps left at my table
I share them with you
But do not ask you to share yours with me
I do not come to your door for help
Rather walking until I drop
We are all made differently
And I respect your differences
Look at yourself
Before you look at me

Paul Gerard Reed

Low Fat

Low fat diets
Now we are told
Are no good for you
And we have been sold
A misinterpretation
And a huge one at that
About how we should diet
And swerve the intake of fat
This is just another example
On an almost daily basis
Of misinformation we are fed
By so-called medical ‘aces’
Who tell you one thing one day
And another thing the next
But still enjoy bumper rewards
For their misleading pretext
Now sugar is the new enemy
Not to mention carbohydrates
But don’t blame me if you avoid them
And your health disintegrates
My advice would be
Enjoy a bit of what you fancy
But exercise moderation
To keep your inner vibrancy

Paul Gerard Reed

Marks Out Of Ten

Why is it we mark ourselves out of ten
We should give ourselves a bit of slack now and then
We rate schools and hospitals and old peoples homes
Holidays and airlines and even best seller tomes

Utilities also come in for a fair bit of flak
Water, gas and electricity all under attack
Then on the 'X Factor' we try to rate the singers
We even historically rank the Wild West gunslingers

Maybe the whole human race should stand in a good light
And someone come and arrange us in order of height
If they actually did it, and I don't know when
I should be OK as I'm five foot ten

Paul Gerard Reed

Marsden Inn

As the top of the hill is breasted I see
Icing sugar crests set on the surface of the swell
The Marsden Inn standing proudly in the gales
Sundays clothes drying for a spell
Until the next crazed wind-blown shower.

Descending the slope and I meet the Leas
With larks defying the stormy skies
Hovering over the rich green sward
And fleeing from my searching eyes
Shrilling the promise of the coming Spring.

Paul Gerard Reed

Mountain Stream

Arrows of sunlight splitting the blinds
Fading photographs and chastening minds
Lighting the corners of a forgotten dream
Thoughts tumbling down a mountain stream

Sunday slides away gently, unobserved
Leaving a dusk with purple edges curved
Clinging to the horizon with gluey grasp
Setting night's padlock on the day's hasp.

Paul Gerard Reed

Mowbray Park

The Sunday afternoon was drifting by
As we trod paths past arbors and nooks
And found shade under trees
Stood by lake and rippling stream
An ice cream van with no ice cream
Wondered about visitors from the past
In old creased black and white images
And how they spent their Sunday long ago
When the empty air would have reverberated
With their words and laughter
And their stroll back home after
Could they see us now retracing their steps?
The dainty feet of happy grandsons
Unfettered by such thoughts
Climbing wooden ladders and sliding slides
On dizzy roundabouts and park rides
With pigeons busily fretting around
Mallards dipping beaks but making no sound
And over us hung the Sunderland sky
With all those memories of years gone by

Paul Gerard Reed

Mrs Gerbil

So strong were you in your disguise
In that little world behind your bars
But you spoke to me without words
Because I took the time to listen

You waited for me and eagerly met;
Your escape from prison for fleeting seconds
You tasted freedom and safety and love all at once
Daring to explore but wanting to be cradled

Trust gained is never lost;
You trusted me eternally thereafter
Believing the bounds were the worlds edges
And not of my making

So passed the days until you grew old
And no longer wanting to be free
You slipped into your own nether world
But still a part of me

Paul Gerard Reed

Never Hold The Phone Like That

Never hold the phone between shoulder and neck
You'll do it for ten years and then say 'O Heck! '
Your neck will go into spasm and you'll be in pain
And you'll swear you'll never do it again

The problem then is that the hurt wont go away
And you book in for physio the very next day
He asks 'How long have you been holding the phone like that? '
You say 'a few months' and he soon smells a rat

'I bet its more like ten years you've been using your shoulder
To support the phone and as you get older
The neck vertebrae get tightened and it's a cinch
That the nearest nerve ending will feel the pinch'

The discomfort goes on and on and you can go
For six months, even with regular physio
In total agony, and of yourself you demand
'Why the hell didnt I hold the phone in my hand? '

Paul Gerard Reed

Newcastle Central Station

The morning has arrived to settle it's scores
Down-and-outs sit lotus in shopfront doors
Raindrops gather in gutters with others
Then are rushed along by their brothers

Night has gone with it's LEDs and whores
Released from darkness the sky downpours
The heavy clouds blind the weak daylight
The city still with a sense of stagefright

A lonely placard announcing 'Real Estate'
Flaps on a building not knowing it's fate
Dark-circled imbibers of rough caffeine
Murkily appear on the scene

Collars turned up with shoulders hunched
Pavements splashed under foot and gravel crunched
Black and multi-coloured umbrellas in equal number
Heads under dry but still half in slumber

Within the cold husk of the Central Station
The dry concrete receives approbation
From feet wetted by rain and puddle
As departure boards settle the muddle

Of travellers in groups with nervous laughter
Thronging under cast iron rafter
Or standing alone trying to look relaxed
And not betray worried minds overtaxed

The weary prospect faced of steel on steel
As miles ground out under the wheel
Until at last their destinations reached
And the gloomy morning has been breached

Paul Gerard Reed

Now That You Have Left Us

Now that you have left us
In the autumn of our lives
With youth all around
As our old age arrives;

Now there is no-one left
That was there at the beginning
How strange it all feels
To be losing a race we were winning;

Can we ever meet again
Or does eternity our lives sever?
How strange it all feels
To be cast adrift forever

Paul Gerard Reed

Ocean

Rain-spattered salty air
Harshly flecks face and eyes
Churning, grey vast solitaire
Boiling cauldron on the rise

Squall and spume disputing
Ancient rocks uprooting
Tears and teardrops distending
Tides and time never ending

Created in his glory
Land and sea side by side
Eternally receding
Then returning
Crashing the incoming tide

Paul Gerard Reed

Portillo On The Rails

Michael Portillo's his name, he's a nice chap
Always has Bradshaw's guide on his lap
As he travels up and down the track
Asking questions, getting answers back

When he gets off, he tightens his laces
Then stays in some really strange places
His quest - to see Britain by train
Then probably go back home again

Paul Gerard Reed

Rainfall

Slithering between the green soldiers
With fastidious precision
The rain inveigles the tiny spaces
Like fastening minute bootlaces
Between each blade of grass
And enters the soil;
With further toil
The dampness penetrates lower
And refreshes deep roots
Who, with dry boots
Had been parched until now
Set free, they drink thirstily
Stiffening the bough
And quenching the leaf
As minerals are captured
And the earth, enraptured
Is restored once more

Paul Gerard Reed

Ravensbourne

Closely gathered doors off the hallway
Is how I remember home
A kitchen for baking
With bread dough rising by the fire
And a bedroom of books and toys
And football strips and posters
A mass of bricks and tiles that was a castle
And a haven to hide in
With the view down the Avenue
Paul's Scarlet Climber nestling safe in the front garden
The back garden fleetingly Wembley, then Wimbledon
Then anything at all
That a young mind could fill with his imagination
A rotting greenhouse but still stood proud
With aromas of tomato plants
A vegetable plot with frost-bitten sprouts
Gathered on a Sunday morning for lunch
From the rich and fertile soil
Who could have wished for a better place?

Paul Gerard Reed

Rear Window (Starring James Stewart)

Rear Window

It was directed by Hitchcock
And he hardly ever blew it
So I looked forward with relish
To this film starring Jimmy Stewart

Perhaps not his most famous role
When you look at his acting past
Sat the entire length of the film
With his leg in a plaster cast

Starring opposite him in a classy frock
Was the stunning and delectable Grace Kelly
Yes, the one from High Society
Another great film off the telly

But this one, set in a New York courtyard
Apartments overlooking all angles
And Stewart found himself fascinated
By people from their windows dangled

Incapacitated and with nothing to do
Stewart looked out through his 'binnocs'
At the strange antics of his neighbours
In the opposing apartment blocks

But the thing that really struck home to me
Was how readily Stewart dismissed
Kelly's sustained romantic approaches
Remaining impervious to being kissed

Surely he could have grabbed his chance
To stop being an overt 'peeping tom'
Abandoned his restrictive plaster cast
And got it on with that blonde sex bomb

Then Stewart could have cut another notch
On the post of his old bedframe
And conveniently forget for a few minutes
The injury which had made him lame

The other point I wish to make
Is why did all those '50s New Yorkers
Never bother to draw their blinds
And flounce around starkers like porkers?

Did no-one have even the slightest sense
Of maintaining a little privacy?
Were there no discreet people in New York
Who drew their curtains before having their tea?

Hitchcock must have been eternally grateful
For such laxness in staying low profile
For without it his film would have been sunk
And Stewart, even if more agile

Would have had nothing intriguing to spy on
As he reclined in his high-rise lair
And Grace Kelly might have had more of a chance
Of getting laid when she climbed up his stair

Paul Gerard Reed

River Swale

The steps down carved in dried mud
With edgings of timber
Tree roots laid bare
Ready to ensnare unsuspecting ankle;
Under dappled shade we threw stones
Aimlessly
And collected others
The two brothers alive with excitement;
The river had seen it all before
And knew more than them;
We bade farewell to a branch
Dislodged from the riverbank
And now with no time to thank us
On course for a new life
Who knows where?

We knew we too might never be here again
And breathed in the sweet air of the moment
Listened to the tranquil rush
Of the waters
And unconsciously marked this day
In our memories

Paul Gerard Reed

River Tyne

Drizzle spattered the dark Tyne
Running its evening course between waterside lights
Jetties and ferry landings
The last place of safety before the vast North Sea
No more a powerhouse of shipyard invention,
Riveters and platers;
Colliers long since rotted
Coals turned to ashes
The red glow extinguished by cold modern times;
Apartments now stand rigid by your banks
With slivers of light through blinds
And muffled TV sounds;
Fishermen still stand on wooden decking
Leaning on rails and talking
Straining their eyes against the twilight
Water lapping beneath their feet;
Tug boats still ply now and then
And cargoes meander without urgency
Life still goes on;
But the Tyne remembers more exciting days
And yearns for their return

Paul Gerard Reed

Roker Park

We wandered by the boating lake
On a Sunday afternoon
With crocuses fringing pathways
For the daffodils just too soon
And felt a calm tranquillity
As the sun slipped ever lower
The ducks looking for bread and scraps
The grass yet to see a mower
The happy yells of children
In sand, on slide and swing
Holding hands and daring
To feel the coming Spring
We were happy for that half hour
Spent in the deepening dark
To let the afternoon slide idly by
As we walked around Roker Park

Paul Gerard Reed

Roker Pier

You lay there, waiting for us
In the tranquil sun-sparkled water
Sleepy and embedded
In your stoney hauteur
Sunday morning spilling over you
In all of it's glory
Ice creams and coffee
And a chat and a story
or two:
Worn stones and pebbles
To be collected and prized
Remnants and debris
Which time has devised
Should lay on the beach;
A chocolate labrador
With close spaniel friend
Rusted balustrading
Reaching all the way to the end
Of the pier;
Steps chained off
Fishermen by their rods
On their folding canvas seats
Waiting patiently for a codling
Or two;
With bait tins and radios
Swopping earnest tales
Of harsher spumy days
And blistering gales;
A gentle lapping at your sides
Green seaweed bobbing in the foam
The harbour a temporary haven
An uneasy home;
Guardian of the 'cat and dog' steps
Memories draped along the coastline
Like Grandad Reed sat on the beach
On a long lost day, equally fine
In a black and white photograph
All of those Sundays ago
Before I was born
Before time washed slow
And smoothed the pebbles

Paul Gerard Reed

SatNav For Beginners

'In 300 yards turn left' she said
I wasn't used to being led
But I wanted to keep on the right track
I trusted SatNav to get me there and back

All went very well at first
Followed her instructions, developed a thirst
So stopped off at a cafe for a drink
And gave myself a little time to think

Did this woman never get tired
Was my own brain no longer required?
Should I drive unquestioningly across the borders
Like a foot soldier following orders

I must have relaxed and complacent I got
And before you could say 'SatNav' I'd overshot
The correct turn-off, now several miles past
I drove on quite alarmed and somewhat aghast

'Take the next exit on the right' she screamed
I thought it should be a left but maybe something I dreamed
The pitch of her voice seemed to be creeping higher
As I rapidly found myself in the mire

Then, in something resembling the RAC rally
I ended up in some god-forsaken back alley
The woman's voice started to break up and churn
As I executed a rather impressive handbrake turn

I headed out of the city and away from the streets
And sped towards the countryside's treats
But the SatNav's fate was finally sealed
As my car ploughed into a farmer's field

It's back to the old-fashioned way to keep sane
Forget the SatNav and use my instinct again
Rely on my own built-in compass, like a lamb to the slaughter
And dump the SatNav in a bucket of water

Paul Gerard Reed

Saturday Night Storm

Echoey black darkness with winds rushing through
Litter picked up and dropped, then picked up anew
Whooshing gales kiss then press hard against the glass
As rattling gates and creaking stiles let the air pass

Rolling cans and tinkling bottles lend their sound
To the symphony of bin lids slapping and flapping around
Roof masts bend and doorknockers knock
Invisible hands stretching out the wind sock

Behind our defences we huddle together and pray
That the storm will surrender and soon melt away
Leaving us safe with not a vestige or trace
Of the wind-blown ghosts that swept the earth's face

Paul Gerard Reed

Save A Moment

In the helter skelter of life
As things move so fast along
Remember to save a moment
Stop and listen to the blackbirds song

Paul Gerard Reed

Silk Is Finished

‘Silk’ is finished
Absorbing drama!
Better by half
Than Panorama

Paul Gerard Reed

Sirens

The silence clings to the walls
Broken only by the trumpet of an exhaust
From the car park below;
Windows still ajar
The quest still far
From its conclusion;

A siren comes now, in the dim distance
Unable to carry it's urgency
Through the miles between
There and this complacent scene;
Dissolving in an eerie whistle
Rather like calling a dog home
And nobody hears

Then more sirens in a tinny symphony
They call persistently
But still no-one hears.

Paul Gerard Reed

Sneeze

Some have a long build-up to it
With others it arrives unannounced;
Some try to mask things with their hands
Others don't mind it being pronounced;

Some emit it like a gunshot
Like a crack of a high-powered rifle;
Others squeeze the end of their nose
In order the noise to stifle;

With some it is a distinct two-stager
With the 'Aah' split from the 'Tishoo';
Others do it without a pause
In one note like a cow's 'moo';

Some desperately search for a Kleenex
Or a hanky to cover the roar;
Then take them home to have them washed
And replace them with new out the drawer

I wonder if your way of sneezing
(Whichever you think most merited)
Has been developed as you grew up
Or was your style inherited? ;

Whichever way you sneeze
Whether you're a 'stifler' or a 'blaster'
Just remember to aim away from me
And prevent a sneezing disaster

Paul Gerard Reed

Souter Bay

Shimmering sunlight
Bejewelled the crystal water
Which peacefully raked the rounded pebbles
Washed inwards and then outwards with the tide

We sat on a rocky ledge
And dangled legs
And thought about the future
Behind us a gouged-out cavern
It's layers of time exposed
By the waves of yesteryear

And all was calm and serene
No troubles entered that space
We knew we could only inhabit
For a few moments
Until returning to the world
And all of it's cares

Paul Gerard Reed

Statins

Let's all start taking some statins
They say they're good for Asians or Latins
Their benefit is clearly not a hoax
They do prevent you having strokes

Statins also have the knack
Of preventing the dreaded heart attack
At fifty, sixty or older still
They're an incredibly useful pill

Imagine a rotten football side
With their goals tally on the slide
If you slipped a statin in their half time tea
They'd be sure to go on a goal-scoring spree

Why not try them on the animal race
They live life at too fast a pace
Their problems we can easily stem
Nine out of ten cats said they liked them

Why not bung them to your aged parrot
Or your pet rabbit with his carrot
Or stick them in the goldfish bowl
And feed daily to your mare in foal

Statins might also be of use
To rhinoceros and hairy moose
And the lion we should not deprive
Statins could keep him alive

Don't stop there, remember the dog
Ferrets, field mice and the shy hedgehog
They all need a daily statin dose
To put an end to their cares and woes

So hats off to this new wonder pill
Take them till you get your fill
A cure whether you're poor or wealthy
Feeling great or so unhealthy

Wash them down with a glass of water
Give them to your son and daughter
Hand them round to colleague and friend
And watch as their lives extend

They'll survive for a few more decades
With their dentures and their deaf-aids
They'll sing as they let their ancient cat in
'He owes it all to the humble statin'

Paul Gerard Reed

Stay Forever Young

Stay forever young
Not a decrepit trooper
Or steadfast party pooper
Like me;
Stay innocent and unbowed
Undiminished and proud,
That's the way that you should be;
Stay with wide eyes,
Laughter and cries,
But never filled with pain;
With a sense of wonder
Not a temper like thunder
Where bleary skies chase the rain;
Stay spring-heeled and dancing
Skipping and joyously prancing
Where no shadows ever roosted;
Your sun never to set
Or memory to forget,
By youth forever boosted;
Transfix time on the dial
Turn to inches the mile,
Your song always to be sung;
An oak that will never splinter
Spring never turn to Winter
Stay forever young

Paul Gerard Reed

Summer Has Gone

We trod with muddy shoes
Amongst autumn's new-won hues
As the slate grey sea boiled and churned
Clover and thistle at our feet
Had replaced buttercup sweet
'Alas! the frail Summer has turned'

What hopes we had for tomorrow
Now washed through with sorrow
Swept away by the frothing waves
When did the cup leave the lip
The pink rose turn to hip
And leave us as fortune's slaves?

In the middle of the day
The pebbly cove our hideaway
As in crashed the impatient tide
But when did the road bend
The Summers day come to an end
The golden rays diminish and slide?

What bespeckled and gnarly hand
Redrew soft meadow land
Instead had the stubbly hay-field hewn?
Which devious and conniving mind
Drew down the autumn's blind
And left our dreams scattered and strewn?

We dragged feet as we trooped
Our thoughts burdened, shoulders stooped
No longer the hedgerows thrummed
The twigs bare and stark
No more the sky cradled the lark
The pastures left silent and numbed

Huddled together in our cove
Our thoughts started to rove
To the time when birdsong will ring
When the chill has lifted and flown
Gentle breezes chase wind's moan
And the dewy grass heralds the Spring

Paul Gerard Reed

Sunset At Whitburn Lodge

The evening sun flashed fire across the sky
Tongues of flame interlaced the clouds
Dappled grey pools of mournful light
Hid sullen rays amongst the crowds

That last orange embrace of the noon
Turned ripe as pod spilt seed
Hung ponderously over the darkening grass
Lit with white-trumpeted bindweed

Vapours trailed all forlorn and lost
Within the magenta and slate bedazzled
The sun's heat all cooled and dispersed
The earth's crust no longer frazzled

Suddenly the dark swallowed us up
The canvas all frays and tears
Soundless feet tiptoed through shadows
Dewy creatures emerged from lairs

No more the strolling easy vista
To dwell and gaze wondrously upon
Time to retreat behind firm doors
Night is here; the evening gone

Paul Gerard Reed

Sunshine

I ambled back next to green leaves
Which the breeze could barely reach
Calmness flooded through my mind
I had spent a day on the beach

I had stood at the waters edge
Blue horizon stretched out in front
The steep cliffs for once at rest
With no tidal edge to blunt

Toddlers standing ankle-deep
Fathers with trousers rolled to the knee
Three girls tumbling and crashing about
Splashing the benign face of the sea

Joyous shouts and shrieks
Sand castles built and washed away
Lazy waves had reached the shore
The gift of this sunny day

For all of the winter’s ravages
That had bared tree and left souls dark
We now had nature’s sweet recompense
Happy children’s cries and dog bark

For this was a celebratory day
To sweep away the short days with nights black
We have the beginning of summer
We have the sunshine back

Paul Gerard Reed

Take Off Your Vest

How good it is to take your vest off
When the Summer does begin
It makes you a lot cooler
And its one thing less to tuck in

Paul Gerard Reed

Technology

Technology exists just to defeat us
No matter how hard we try to grapple
It will always emerge the victor
Like gravity taking on the apple
We desperately left-click and right-click
We press control-alt-delete
But no matter how many buttons we press
We will always taste defeat
Whenever we learn a new technique
To get over a new problem we've found
Technology invents a newer problem
To bring us back down to ground
'Switch it off, then back on again'
Is their oft-heard advice
To solve all of your technical ills
On almost every device
But eventually even that doesn't work
The screen 'freezes' and 'locks'
Your equipment is gripped in a malaise
And needs a complete detox
Or maybe a major defragmentation
That sounds like it might do the trick
But after you've waited about 24 hours
You find your PC is still sick
'The emails are down'
Is another sorry statement we hear
All messages are stuck in the ether
Lets go to the pub for a beer
How did the technology geeks
Manage to become billionaires
And leave us with this bundle of problems
By downloading all their cares
Onto the likes of poor you and me
Who struggle to sort things out
But lets face it, everybody
We're on the wrong end of a rout
We bandy about acronyms
Like PDFs and HTMLs
As if we knew what they were
But it still doesn't ring any bells
Because we are mere pawns in the game
Clicking and typing away
We have all been bamboozled
By the 'technos' of the day
We are now slaves to a technology
That doesn't even work properly
And by the time they sort out the problems
We will all be grey and elderly
So my advice to you at your keyboard
Or waving your phone in the air
Is get yourself off to the pub
Give me five minutes and I'll join you there

Paul Gerard Reed

Ten Years

I know it’s just the blink of an eye
Ten years will come and just pass me by
Just as the last decade I now gaze upon
Ten years will come and soon be gone

I think back to the start of that era
Millennium dawning, happiness seemed so nearer
Settled, at peace and not care-worn
Beloved Hawthorne and Ravensbourne

Now they are both lost in clouds and rain
I can never walk though their doors again
Lost, to me the warm summer breeze
Rustling through Dad’s apple trees

Lost to me, amongst a thousand other things
Swamped by new places and wedding rings
Faces and places that have changed so fast
Ten years only, but so far in the past

Paul Gerard Reed

The Answer

What is it, this death
That we are so afraid of?
That we should never see our loved ones again
That we should be so utterly alone
That there is only a nothingness
Orbiting our own minds in a whirlpool
Of complete emptiness;
Flying to a destination that doesn’t exist;
Passing by when there is none to pass by
Nothing to see or feel
No-one to hold;
When even our inner soul floats, abandoned
In the sea of time
When hearts that were joined are now severed
Memories and comforts torn away
And all is lost.
But how can all be lost when I have you
To carry on and bear the torch
To pass it on, again and again and again
Until the flame, so kindled through generations
Refuses to die
And will not recognise fear
That is the answer

Paul Gerard Reed

The Autumn

So Summer has left without farewell
The daylight no more to dwell
In lazy afternoon hammock and swing
No more cut flowers indoors to bring

So now we have the Autumn's dawn
With thermal curtains firmly drawn
With hay stubble and withered sheaves
Burst bubbles and drifting leaves

What prospect awaits us, the lonely view
Of grimy mornings and frozen dew
The fight for survival in leafless wood
Forgotten glory of blossoming bud

Forgotten the blaze of midday sun
Sand castles and beach-day fun
Instead we are left beside the fire glow
With rain-spatters and chilly blow

Autumn, take this as my true word
Spoken out loud and not inferred
Take with you your red and gold
Your drab evenings and shivering cold

Give Winter too my heartfelt greeting
But tell Him also to be fleeting
Bring me Spring and and a Year that's new
With hedgerows green and bells of blue

Paul Gerard Reed

The Beginning

We breasted the rise and plotted our course
Along stony paths amongst yellow gorse
The sea so vast and glinting its eye
Shimmering backcloth to the herring gull's cry

Sparrowhawk hovering in chesnut and grey
Falling like a stone on unsuspecting prey
Skylark overhead on an invisible perch
Lest his landing the ground besmirch

Life rising slowly from amongst grassy tuft
Daisy and buttercup stems intertwined and cuffed
A raising too of spirits within human breast
Where no longer shallow thoughts and drear infest

An unfurling that Nature alone explains
Bringing vibrancy and blood-surge through the veins
This is when Spring replaces Winter's sins
This is the moment when hope begins

Paul Gerard Reed

The Butterfly

In the tranquil arms of a Sunday morning
Over the grassy hills there
The first warbling song of the skylark
Hung sweetly in the air;
The first Peacock butterfly
Gazed sightlessly from eyes of blue
No longer shielded under dreary wings of black
That have been closed all winter through;
Resting for a brief passing moment
To take in the world serene
On green stems now tangling and thrusting
Through the dead straw in between;
Knowing that your time has arrived at last
Your patience to reap it’s reward
As the gentle Sunday breezes rustle
Your hiding place in the sward

Paul Gerard Reed

The Case Of The Lost DVD Remote Control

It was there one minute
But the next it had gone
And nobody knew who'd lost it
They all put that certain face on

The one that says 'nothing to do with me'
Accompanied by a shrug of the shoulder
Then several months went by
And the nights grew darker and colder

Each time we wanted to use the DVD player
We had to use the manual buttons and wait;
We couldn't view episode 9 of 9
Until we'd watched the other eight;

We dreamed of those long-lost golden days
When, as long as you were within range,
We'd just pick up the remote and point it
To make menu and programme change

Then, one day out of sheer frustration
I embarked on a frenzied search
I moved all the furniture around
And, as part of my research

Lay flat on the ground and peered under
The bottom of our sofa (a three-seater)
And, reaching into the hidden recesses of faux leather
Experienced a feeling that could not have been sweeter

Tucked away in an almost inaccessible spot
Was that little black magical box
Along with a marble, a ten pence piece
And a pair of discarded socks

I gleefully snatched the thing up
And shoved on the first DVD I could find
And, purely for gratuitous purposes
Watched episode 7 of 'The History Of Mankind'

The moral of this tale is clear
If you ever lose your remote for the DVD
The first place that you should be looking
Is under your three-seater settee

Paul Gerard Reed

The Colour Of Cars

Cars parked in metallic rows
Like words stacked up in prose
But only blacks and reds and greys
Not many colours to choose from nowadays
No greens or blues or yellows
Or stark, garish or outlandish fellows

Who would have thought say ten years back
That a popular colour would be black
That I could write into this verse
That most cars would resemble a hearse

I wonder what the trend will be ten years hence
Maybe cars painted with Cuprinol just like a fence
Or maybe there will be some other types
Painted in polka dots, stars or toothpastey stripes

Whatever the trend it should hold true
That people will still pick their favourite hue
And adorn their cars be they Honda or Ford
With stickers that say ' Beware - Baby Aboard'

Paul Gerard Reed

The Day The Ceiling Came Down

The whole thing seemed to happen in a flash
The dining room ceiling came down with a crash
Plaster and bricks and narrow timber lath
Rained down from underneath the bath

The ceiling was wet you see from a recurring leak
Over a period so long you'd term it antique
But we thought we'd solved it with some silicone
Installed by a fella we'd reached on the phone

No such luck - we now have a mess
And difficult to fix I have to confess
We reached for trusty sweeping brush and pan
And decided to place a temporary ban

On anyone walking underneath the scene
In case something else dropped down between
The joists, the size of which by the way
Is seven by three (larger than their counterpart today)

Now Tommy arrived to give us a quote
And, short of suggesting we buy a boat
Said it was safe to continue to shower
And there was no need for a scaffolding tower

He's coming back in four weeks time
To fix it all up and clear the grime
Then we'll have a warm and satisfied feeling
As we gaze lovingly on our new plaster ceiling

Paul Gerard Reed

The Endless Surge Of Time

We stand in a long line as we grow older
All pointed towards the exit door
Watching people joining the end of the queue
And glimpsing the ghosts that went through before

Paul Gerard Reed

The Falls O'Clyde

You crawl ‘neath grimy bridges
Of your beauty we see not even a trace
Rub shoulders with concrete walkways
But you hide a fairer face

For in your upper reaches
Away from coast and tide
You crash down in sparkling splendour
As the mighty Falls o’ Clyde

Explosions of crystal water
Beyond Lanark where you start
Where otters hide under tree boughs
And blue Kingfishers dart

This is your spectacular origin
Lesser known and hidden away
Pouring relentlessly toward Glasgow
On this September Sunday

Paul Gerard Reed

The First Daisy

You caught the corner of my eye
Snuggled away in frosty grass
Hiding amongst your green brethren
Under the feet that pass

You must have lifted your head
As the chill winds blew hard and surly
And wished you could have retreated
For Spring you were much too early

But can I tell you, little daisy
That to us you are a gift
The first sign of better days
Your task our spirits to uplift

How soon the crowds will forget you
Despite your proud and hardy poses
When they are engulfed in the scents
Of the midsummer roses

But this day belongs to you, sweet friend
You have beaten them all to the punch
Your loftier pals the daffodils
The cut flowers by the bunch

Still have their wares to display
With Winter still their shroud
But with your sunny central beam
Stand higher and oh, so proud!

Paul Gerard Reed

The Five A Day Myth

They tell you that you need five a day
Of fruit and veg such as cucumber
But there's no science behind it at all
Five is just 'a nice round number'

Four would have been too square a figure
So the experts thought up a marketing ploy
Give the public a number they can easily remember
When they're eating their radish and Bok Choy

So don’t count as you eat your peas
Or enumerate the carrots you digest
Five is just a nice round number
Forget the maths, it's best

Just to chomp away on things you like
As long as you have a few
If its four or six it doesn’t matter
Good health will still ensue

Paul Gerard Reed

The Future

Uncork the day as you rise from your slumber
Not knowing what's next, forge forward and plunder
Take today in your embrace and wonder
Why is it that my heart keeps beating?

The next moment is like the last, surprising
As rivers burst their banks and seas uprising
Always the unexpected walks next to us, despising
Man's supposed knowledge of the future

So take the next event at it's face value
Don't analyse, and ponder, and re-write the past; you
Instead should wonder at the unpredictability of it all
That's life's great mystery for us all

Paul Gerard Reed

The Good Old Days

What is it about the good old days?
The good old days long gone
Something you can't quite recreate nowadays
Something you can't quite put your finger on

But today doesn't have the same allure
Is it purely down to ourselves?
That yesterday had a kind of magic
Despite dust gathering on the shelves

Sifting through an old shoe box
The old photographs are faded but betray
An inner peace and contentment
That is no longer here today

Is it just the loss of youth
A descent to life's last fling
Were the old days really better?
After all the birds still sing

We can still be uplifted
By the wonders of the world around
So why does yesterday seem greater?
Why are we still bound

By the ties of days that have fled
By the far-flung echoes of the past
If only we'd kept the magic in a bottle
We'd drink it now and hold fast

To those rosy memories as we sat
On the banks of the river of time
And feel the warm sun on the grass
In the days that were sublime

Paul Gerard Reed

The Good Times

I once knew the blossoming of life
When the horizon ran on for ever
When there was no necessity
To sacrifice or joys to sever;
There is only a limited time now
And waiting no longer attractive
I want the good times back
For a finale hyperactive;
Not for selfish purposes
Although it would give me pleasure
To give gifts to loved ones
Share times relaxed at leisure;
To have known things once
And then have them removed
Seems a cruelty to have to bear
Of which you would not have approved;
I want the good times back
Although not what I deserve
It would be a chance to live again
And the glowing memories preserve.

Paul Gerard Reed

The Greenhouse That Blew Away

Doing my best to follow the directions
I joined together all the plastic connections
I covered it over in pvc sheeting
As a work of art it took some beating

I anchored it down with metal hooks
By now I was getting some funny looks
Undeterred, on went the guy ropes, nice and tight
I have to admit, it was a beautiful sight!

It looked lovely there, glinting in the sun
But I knew deep down my work wasn't done
Because a slight breeze had just arisen
Which might detach the mainsail from the mizzen

So, with trepidation, I went indoors
And noticed in the instructions the disclaimer clause
'This greenhouse will stand up to all sorts of weather
Except strong winds as it's light as a feather'

The breeze started to become a bit stronger
The guy ropes seemed to be getting a bit longer
The frame was easing right, then left, then right again
As the winds blew harder and it started to rain

The plastic sheeting was taken a battering
Billowing in the gales and under the rain's spattering
Then, all of a sudden, one of the guy ropes lifted
And across the garden the greenhouse drifted

It rose quite gracefully, a bit like a bird
As it cleared the fence, and the latest I've heard
It was spotted over Glasgow at three thousand feet
My wonderful greenhouse, and three bags of peat

Paul Gerard Reed

The Human Race

The human race over-estimates it's importance
From mountain top to jungle glade
We think we own this earth
As we wear our mantle self-made

Our shining crown of supremacy
Is worn with self-illusion
We have an explanation for everything
But just drown in our own confusion

We announce our own cleverness
With self congratulatory prizes and gongs
Place our intellect on a high pedestal
Not in the place where it belongs

We know nothing at all
As in our infancy awaking
And all of the troubles on this earth
Are of our own self-making

Paul Gerard Reed

The Kite

The kite struggled out of our hands
And gave soaring flight to our hopes
Higher, higher above the land
Mocked at the hilly slopes

Fluttered and darted in the breeze
As if the sky had given it birth
Released from our leaden unease
It danced above the earth

Set sail across the blue expanse
Flirted in it's lofty domain
Put the clouds under it's trance
Tugged at the twine under strain

Flew defiantly across the sun's beam
As we shaded our eyes to squint
But, as if to improve the gleam
Took the sun's hellish tint

And shone it boldly right through
It's canvas stretched so taut
Tried to hold the flames as they spewed
That never could be caught

Having held sway for just that second
The kite floated gently down
But for that fleeting moment had reckoned
To wear the sun's blazing gown

Paul Gerard Reed

The Last Day Of June

So, June, you come to an end
But as you leave I send
My very best wish and thought;
For your bee and firefly
For green of leaf and blue of sky
You truly owe us nought;
What could ever be exchanged
Or contemplate being re-arranged
For a last day such as this?
English summer sun on lawn
New ambition and hopes born
Wimbledon's first week bliss;
Pavements hot underfoot
The scent of grass cut
Plastic paddling pools filled;
Strolls along riversides
Sleepy hilltops and still tides
White wine glasses chilled;
Bring on sweet July
For you and for I
Let summer play it's tune;
But take a moment to collect
This months glories, then reflect
How wonderful was sweet June

Paul Gerard Reed

The Midnight Bell

I stood within the darkness
For a while
And watched as fluffy clouds
Moved silently through the night
Engulfing the moon
Until, almost bored
They glided past
And the silvery glare was restored;
Their passage subliminal
Threw shadows in the deep corners
Their destiny supraliminal
Shapes never constant
Ever-shifting plumes
Lighter than air;
Night-time drifters
Their journey frictionless
Soundless and friendless
No-one watching but me;
No-one to bid them farewell
As with imperceptible grace
At the midnight bell
They slid from view

Paul Gerard Reed

The Milky Way

Saturday morning
Refreshed by the rain
The gulls wheel and whirl
The air swirls with a pallid face
And the world with its human race
Stands for a moment on this ball
Floating along;
As we peer out, blind-eyed, toward the Milky Way
Try to find why we are here
And are we near
To destruction;
This is the shortest day
We soak up the daylight
And bathe eyes and mind;
Who knows what we might find
As we look at the Milky Way
On this becalmed morning
On a Saturday.

Paul Gerard Reed

The Missing Piece Of The Jigsaw

We did a jigsaw
You and me
One afternoon
Before our tea

We sorted out the pieces
Into middles and edges
We stacked separately
The flowers and the hedges

We concentrated hard
To find the bits that would fit
We turned them around
And scratched our heads a bit

At last we were nearly finished
But one final piece we sought
After all that time and effort
We were still one bit short!

Paul Gerard Reed

The Moment

I know now what the weekend was about
I think I knew it in my bones;
It was all about a single moment
That you granted to me
One that took me back to ’73.

There was no victory in store
That outcome not pre-destined;
But you had a sweet special time
On Sunday afternoon to unveil
For the heights my heart to scale.

Just like then I sat
With pent-up eagerness and hope;
Then full of youth, now with pride
Then, when the second arrived
Events melted together as you had contrived.

I leapt in the air
Heart brimming over with triumph;
As I landed back on the ground
Thinly, through my excited furore
Came the truth that there would be no more.

For our lives are a series of moments
Of sweetness, despair and joy;
Such emotions do not linger
Far better their fleeting nature to recognise
And let the stars fall from our eyes.

I sadly turned and left the room
And tasted the gentle fresh air;
Revelled in the moment you had granted
And stored away my second’s pleasure
As just a memory to always treasure.

Paul Gerard Reed

The Old Familiar Walk

The old familiar walk
We took again today
Down the hill, across the road
By terraces built to stay;
The long, slim gardens we admire
Although now wintery and forlorn
But renewed when Summer comes
With bright border and trim lawn;
You have learned to walk steadlly
Along the low brick wall
Finding your feet, as in life
Growng up, now not so small;
At the end I lift you down
Afraid of stumbles and trips
Then past the prickly hedgerow
Where we collect rose hips;
Now we race on separate paths
Your new shoes clatter and din
At the finishing line you stand triumphant
Not knowing I let you win;
There will come a time, of course
When my defeat will not be feigned
When your feet are swifter than mine
With all my energy drained;
We dance through the underpass
Our voices echo and amplify
Where the rainstorms cannot reach
Or wet clothes undignify;
The end of our trail is reached
And we take a kindly look
At a building of which we are fond
With its row on row of books;
Will all that we see now be gone
When a hundred years have passed?
Our footsteps just fade away
Because nothing can ever last.

Paul Gerard Reed

The Other Side Of The Earth

The sombre time when daylight starts to fade
When the day has outworn its uplifting parade
And the high-pitched songs of the raucous morning
Have slipped fron the embrace of the hopeful dawning

How can the other side of the earth still have day?
When ours has so surely dribbled away
How can our joyful hours have taken flight?
And be mere shadows when so recently bright

How can others be lifting their heads?
From the sun-drenched pillows of their beds
And be yet to entwine with the midday bloom
Whilst we are submerged in foreboding and gloom

Give me an earth wrapped around in glorious sun!
Where the course of the day can never be run
When the darkness can no longer make us forlorn
Where the ending of the precious day is forsworn

Paul Gerard Reed

The Passage Of Time

Today will soon be a yesterday
As we take the wrapping off tomorrow
Diary pages are thumbed and then turned over
As the days become the weeks that follow

Weekends come and go with bright intervals
And intermissions of better things
But the months end still approaches
Calendars are slid over their binding rings

Autumns golden hues become the white of stark winter
And the sun struggles against the cold
But when the spring finally arrives
Crocuses and daffodils unfold

Rich pastures emerge in the summer
With the tranquil buzzing of bees
The sun shines down contentedly
Gentle breezes rustle trees

Then, as in a full circle
The year has passed us by
Autumn reappears before we know it
In the blinking of an eye

Paul Gerard Reed

The Pile Of Stones

You collected and made a pile of stones
And excitedly invited me outside
To view this gravelly incarnation
Which you looked upon with pride

This product of youthful imagination
Heaped rather sorrowfully in wind and rain
But to you it was a magic castle
For your eager mind to explain

To me, the hard-bitten adult
With no wonder left in my bones
Just the cares of carving a way forward
No time for those grubbed-up stones

But seeing your wondrous cairn now
After you have gone back home
Reminded me of your excitement
In building that stoney dome

And how I should have joined in
But for the ingrained woes of the day
And how I should have freed my mind
To let the adult play

Paul Gerard Reed

The Pit Pony

I found out with sadness about your plight
Your life lived in perpetual night
An underground stable was where you roomed
An innocent life entombed

You were so trusting and willing
You must have dreamt of fulfilling
The wish to be back above ground
With green fields and trees all around

For fifty weeks a year this was your cell
With hot grimy air and sulphuric smell
Until that wonderful liberation
That exhilarating rising sensation

Of the pit cage approaching ground level
With you on board about to revel
In the freedom of the new fresh air
With pastures around you everywhere

Behold for a fortnight at ground zero
This doughty and unsung equine hero
Far from Epsom and the thoroughbred race
Whose life was entwined with the black coal face

Paul Gerard Reed

The Ridge

We are sitting on the ridge
Looking down at our youth
Which lies forlorn in the valley;
We have burnt each bridge
In search of the truth
For our spirits to rally;
Each one of us a sepia image
Transfixed in time
Thoughts no longer golden;
Hurled by the world’s scrimmage
We have lost the rhyme
Our pasts in trust beholden.

Paul Gerard Reed

The Siege Of York

Sixteen forty two was the year
Canoneers and gunners alike
Thomas Coatsworth and others of his ilk
Employed musket ball and pike

Lord Fairfax and his army were in York
Some of whom were from Hull
All gathered there to lay siege
With gunmetal glinting or dull

Blood letting was the aim
Of many a maniacal mind that day
To force the result by arms and swipe
Brave soldiers flesh to flay

Centuries later mass graves were found
And the common notion laid void
Men who died not of battle wounds
But laid low with virus typhoid

So instead of dying with battle honours
And Royalty flag to seize
These men simply laid down and died
Not slain but from deadly disease

Paul Gerard Reed

The Snowdon Lily

It's delicate white face only fleetingly seen
In unlikely places for hope to fledge
Vaunted high above in mountainous scene
Precarious home in crevasse and on ledge

No tales to tell and no tears to weep
But survival it's merry theme
In rocky terrain it's roots to creep
Clinging high under cold sunbeam

For the Snowdon lily this lofty setting
Where tired feet arrive and then depart
With climber's backward glimpse regretting
The leaving of this brave white heart

Paul Gerard Reed

The Start Of The Day

We lay together
As grouse crouched in the heather
As crows argued in the trees outside
As the milk float's brakes were applied

We watched the light creep through the blinds
As the night released it's binds
As the gulls swept through the air
As the fox settled in his lair

We listened as the noisy replaced the hushed
As teeth were brushed
As horseshoes trampled the downs
As faces remembered their frowns
As the blackbird began his song
As the crowd became a throng

We fried eggs in a pan
As the day began

Paul Gerard Reed

The Strong and The Weak

It was long ago in cold winter days
That I learend the solemn truth
That the fast out-ran the slow
On the muddy pitches of my youth;

It was long ago in lamp-lit streets
As the moon wrapped the night in it's gown
I learned that the strong overcame the weak
And brought them crashing down;

I can still see these things
Through the shroud of time's haze
Being trampled in the mud
Out-fought in those long-lost days

Paul Gerard Reed

The Sum Of All My Parts

I am the sum of all my parts
All of which were gifted to me
Do not look a gift horse in the mouth
Don’t change what was meant to be;
For if I think a part is faulty
And you promise me a replacement new
I will no longer be me any more
And you, no longer you

Paul Gerard Reed

The Voice

We are all comfortable in our red high-backed chairs
Our judgement respected, which nothing impairs
We listen intently to the loud faceless voices
As we consider who shall become our choices

We sit ever tighter and stroke our reputation
We even compare notes without affectation
For straining and errors we become glutton
As we implore the others to push the red button

We think “that’s a great voice” but our seats still don’t turn
And then a shameful feeling inside starts to burn
We can hear the yearning and can hear the passion
But are our selections determined by fashion?

If we picked that person would it make us uncool?
Might young people think us old fools?
We’d better just leave that button alone
Wait for a ‘hip’ voice to woo with it’s drone

So our advice to you singers with tones magic
Avoid this pre-ordained brush with the tragic
Don’t try and adapt to be in the vogue
Signed Will.I.Am, Wilson, Jones and Minogue

Paul Gerard Reed

The Wind Blew

The wind blew it's hardest
Helping the rain's lashes
Blowing through balustrades
And gaps in window sashes
Upturning wheely bins
And bottles of milk
Displacing hats
And billowing silk
Howling over hilltops
Blasting over the ridge
Causing traffic chaos
Closing the Forth Bridge

Paul Gerard Reed

The World As It Used To Be

I saw the world as it used to be
Glimpsed through the tent's open flap
Sun-warmed daisies in a carpet of green
Dog's paws stretched out and taking a nap

The smell of Sunday dinner cooking
Lawnmowers whirring their busy sound
The way I used to feel returned
When contentment was all around

Safe in the tent we played with trains
And the thought then occurred to me
This is the world now for my grandsons
Just like it used to be for me

Paul Gerard Reed

The World Moved An Inch

Were these words ever to mean anything to anybody
The ingrained meanings ever held up in the future
An importance to be attached to them
Or with a reverence with which men treat such things;
That my life might have meant something to somebody
That my desires and wishes were unselfish
That I would be missed when I was no longer there
That someone might have loved me;
If in the tumult of mankind I could be recognised
As not a warrior or a fighting man
But to have owned a quiet courage and determination
And was proud to be myself and not another;
If it could be seen that I would never hurt anyone
Rather to absorb and treat that hurt inwardly
That my home was a place where others wanted to be
To share what was there;
That an invisible statue could be erected in my dreams
To set out what I stood for
And that the world moved an inch
Because I existed

Paul Gerard Reed

The Wren

Stepping warily into a grey morning
With mist shrouding the hedgerows
Damp pavements and frost-bitten walls
Thick socks on to protect the toes

All seemed lifeless and a little forlorn
The way things feel now and then
Until uplifted by a crescendo of sound
The defiant song of the wren

He was perched high on a tree branch
Like a little ball of string
And looked down at me enquiringly
As he reached into his heart to sing

I stood enthralled and listened intently
To his optimistic shrill
Transfixed, I gazed upward at him
And marveled at his will

Which had defeated the winter
Without hat and coat to don
I raised my eyes again to see him
But in that moment he had gone

Paul Gerard Reed

This Place

This place has everything;
The air moves more easily over the land
Uplifting fluttering streamers and kites
And drifting the reluctant sand

Everything is laid out in front of you here
A space to roam and breathe and run
The horizon line seldom obscured
And no clouds over the sun

Here in Spring amongst grassy mounds
The skylark's precious eggs are hidden
Wherein life to songstress is granted
Then from earth to heaven bidden

This is a place to sit and reflect
On life and it's queasy embrace
A chance to feel at one with the world
A chance to feel at one with this place

Paul Gerard Reed

Thomas Gainsborough

Your oils lie on canvas
Now over two centuries old
But then, so deftly and quickly painted
With brushstrokes skilfull and bold

The magical blur from your hand
More deceptive than thimblerigs
We still draw breath today
At 'The Blue Boy' or 'Girl With Pigs'

Were you ever given to dream
That your works would still draw eyes' gaze
Under a hundred thousand dusts
And setting suns to end the days

Paul Gerard Reed

Thrill

With perpetual cycle, we seek peace
When it arrives, we seek thrill;
We tire of that and long for normality
Grassy riverbanks and waters still
We languish, semi-contented
Innocuous days start to bore
With heavy hearts we turn again
To seek the thrill once more

Paul Gerard Reed

Through A Filter

Seeing the world through a filter
A prism that deflects the light
Put up a fight;
Dont give in, for givers-in never win
Fight back;
Dont lack courage
Take the next breath and dig right back in
Go back to the beginning if you have to
Remind yourself of the things you love
And rise above the gloom
Let optimism bloom
Let hopes take flight
And defeat the night

Paul Gerard Reed

Traffic Jam

Winding rivers of red tail lights
Winding away into the night
All stuck in a jam and having regret
No land speed records being set

Audi, Fiat, Honda and Ford
All in a queue and getting rapidly bored
Did car manufacturers ever know
That 'Gran Turisimo' would mean 'so slow'?

Late for concerts and supper dates
Late for meetings with your mates
Late for getting home and watching TV
Late to put the oven on and make the tea

But wait a minute! It's not all sour!
We're moving again at 5 miles per hour
But don’t go ordering the celebration cakes
We've had to go and stamp again on the brakes

We're in a jam and ground to a halt
Is it really anyone's fault?
Not mine, for certain, so don’t blame me
I'm only trying to get home for my tea!

Paul Gerard Reed

Train Ride

Rolling stock metal-on-metal glides
Cutting a swathe through English countryside
Measuring relentlessly the length of our land
Day diminishing unspoken under God’s hand

We sit, facing each other but not speaking
Carriages grinding and dry brakes squeaking
Rhythmically topping sleepers set under the track
Sun setting quickly as the day turns it’s back

Porters staggering and lurching, replenishing our cups
Spying from the window, cables looping up, and down and up
All dreaming of home; the journey’s highlight
Viewing in fast forward, England in twilight

Paul Gerard Reed

Trow Quarry

The grass seemed reborn in it's green
Having been warmed and defrosted
By the midday sun and now in a scene
That the ice no longer accosted

The eerie call of oystercatchers rang
Round the gnarled and bleak quarry sides
But only a fleeting gift to my ears
Before drifting away with the tides

Oft times before my feet imprinted this grass
With faithful dog and hopes set too high
But time since fleeting in it's swift pass
The dog in heaven and my hopes all awry

Strange, how the ghostly memories still hung
As the North Sea lay remorseful and dull
How yesteryear's dog barks still rung
In the quarry's ethereal lull

I stood there briefly emboldened
By the greatness of the space beyond
My warm escaping breath fast coldened
By the winter's chilling magical wand

The sky looked down, no longer brightened
As the modest sun started to slip
Below rooftops and the grass again whitened
In frosty hands with their bejewelled grip

Paul Gerard Reed

Undo

Undo everything done to date in it's order
Dig up 'Mrs Simkins' from her place in the border
Unpaint the fence with each brush stroke undone
The wood left parched under the rays of the sun

Unprotect all the honours so stoutly defended
Unspend all the precious monies expended
Unmake all the critical decisions made
Replenish the wine glass with flat lemonade

Quench the fires that burned by and by
Make drab the brightness of the morning sky
Cheat the game played and rigid laws flout
Unsing what your heart once poured out

But where would it get you, this undoing dream?
Be left forlorn by the banks of the stream
Unfulfilled by the sorrows absorbed
And poorer forever in the eyes of the Lord

Paul Gerard Reed

We Got Through

Now that the blackbird greets the dawning
And evenings have a twilight haze
I think back to the depths of Winter
And how we got through those days;

We kept our hopes alive with laughter
With brave thoughts and daring to dream
We thought of the freshness of the meadow
And sunlight glinting on the stream;

We baked mince pies and Christmas cake
We toasted the season with sherry
We remembered the loved ones lost
And determined to be merry;

We braced ourselves against cold mornings
We put on two pairs of socks
We rubbed our cold hands together
Our scarves flapped like windsocks;

We visited outdoor winter fayres
And tasted warming ales and cheeses
We braved the severe winter gales
And dreamt of Summer breezes;

We looked out through misty glasses
And watched the frost sparkle and harden
On the grassy tips with no daisies between
And wished they would adorn the garden;

We gazed out at the cold black sky
At the shimmering moon above
And waited calmly for Spring to arrive
With our hopes and dreams and love

Paul Gerard Reed

We Were There That Day

People standing high on the cupola, unseen
Under the blue skies of Florence
Behind the alabaster screen
Looking down on us
As we made our nervous way;

The sun was warm on our backs
But we had a train to catch
And we couldn’t stay;
We could only slurp hastily
At the offered cups of history and culture
Scattered through the streets,
Our mark only transient footsteps
In submerging sand;

Our little band of adventurers
Not chic,
Not sophisticated,
But not weak
And dedicated to one another;

The Ponte Vecchio bore our weight
And along narrow footways we edged
The setting almost too great
To take in;
The swift afternoon hours our only possession
Which quickly slipped away
But we were there that day

Paul Gerard Reed

Weather Forecast

The sun shines
But then the wind blows
Bringing the clouds
And then it snows

Breezes ruffle the hedge
But guess what then?
They turn nasty
Becoming gale force ten

Paul Gerard Reed

What Do We Know?

We think we know what makes the grass grow
We think we know what makes day and night
And what creates the sunlight

But then we find out a little bit more
Which disproves what we thought we knew before
So really we are wide of the mark
We're just groping around in the dark

So the next time you hear about warming of the globe
And to compensate you start to disrobe
Remember that temperature isnt necessarily subject to inflation
Because now they think the sun's gone into hibernation

Paul Gerard Reed

What If

What if it all came to nought
And there was no silvery tomorrow
What if the future could not be bought
And everything ended in sorrow

What if all the binds and ties meant little
As if we never held hands at all
What if all we thought solid was brittle
When we have to answer the call

What if there was no hope or laughter
As if no tears had ever been cried
What if there was nothing to follow after
And it had all been a meaningless ride

What if it was all just a magic delusion
With life a trick of the light
What if all that existed was confusion
And a dreary never ending night

But ask me to give up my vision
And place optimism on sale or return
That would be asking me to give up my spirit
Which still so fiercely burns

So whether or not there is another day
On which my hopes are pinning
What matters is thinking that I'll find a way
And view the end as just the beginning

Paul Gerard Reed

When I Look Back

When I look back on the olden days
Albeit seen through a rose blossom haze
It occurs to me that it's a shame because
We didn't realise how great it was

At the time all the troubles and woe
Overshadowed the warmth and the glow
Of those days on a reliable track
But you only see this when you look back

Now in these days of turmoil and change
It's seems very hard to rearrange
Emotions into an orderly state
For thinking back to the days that were great

Paul Gerard Reed

When I Retire

When I retire
(if I ever get there)
I will run round in circles
Jump up and down in the air;
I will do handsprings
And a crazy loop-de-loop
Sing at the top of my voice
Let my inhibitions droop;
Turn cartwheels and climb trees
Dance merrily down the street
Attract the attention of the crowd
Forget about being discreet;
Behave ostentatiously
Wear silly clothes and look flash
No longer melt in the crowd
Act outrageously and rash;
Do all the things I didn’t do
No longer the issue shirk;
Take hold of my own life
And stop going to work

Paul Gerard Reed

Wogan's Answer

Wogan was asked by the Pastor
If he believed or not
He had to answer in the negative
Though his collar got a little hot

Due to a a certain discomfort
On being asked such a direct thing
It made him stop and think about
The lucky life he'd been living

To what did he attribute
This wonderful life so great?
He paused for a moment then replied
That it was purely down to fate

The Pastor persisted with his questioning
And asked what would Wogan say
To St Peter at the Gates
On the judgement day

Wogan cast his eyes heavenward
And jutted out his chin,
And in an apologetic voice whispered
'Can I still come in? '

Paul Gerard Reed