

## Poetry Series

# Tony Pitman

- 2 poems -

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## People

Tony's stones.

At last the weather's looking fine,  
No more rain the earth will dry.  
Time to plough the field for spuds,  
But Duncan's tractor's rounding up.

Tony can't wait he knows his soil,  
Out with the tiller and get to work.  
Pull on the cord with strength and might,  
The motor will fire and throb into life.

Man and tiller march down grass path,  
The field gets ready to resist assault.  
Off they go along the first line,  
Wobbly and jerky as creation fights back.

What can I do to help in the struggle?  
I have not his strength to man the tiller.  
The need to share in his endeavour  
Is born from Tony's obvious pleasure.

Stones appear behind his big wellies,  
As he marches along the planting furrows.  
Big and small, round and pitted,  
They rise to the surface as if from sleeping.

Get a bucket and collect them up.  
Make piles of them along the edge.  
Back and fore the bucket goes,  
But on return there's always more.

Once started there's no stopping.  
The big man tills and the stones keep popping.  
The piles grow higher, will they reach the sky?  
What will Duncan think when he passes by?

What foolish venture have I started?  
What chance to move what God's planted.  
The stones are here for a purpose,  
But still I labour with my bucket.

Oh thank you God at last he's finished,  
The fight's over, Tony's the winner.  
I stand proud by my piles of stones.  
As man and tiller return to their home.

A cup of tea round the kitchen table,  
As Jenny applauds Tony's effort.  
"But didn't he do well collecting the stones? "  
"Look at the piles he's managed to gather".

I looked through the window as my heart swelled,  
Were the stones smiling back as they sank in the mud?  
Both had finished their work for the day,  
They and Tony had made me feel good.

Or should I say loved?

Signalman Joe

Joe sat across the table;  
Social chatter from his neighbours.  
"I'm sure I know you", Joe said,  
But couldn't remember where or when.

"Where do you live? " Could it be there?  
But no, perhaps shopping somewhere?  
Maybe its work or social event?  
Still no connection raised its head.

The topic was dropped without result,  
The general talk to carry on.  
Then Joe mentioned with a grin  
His experience of National Service.

Catterick was mentioned and the date,  
Immediately triggering memories.  
Joe was in my barrack room,  
Over fifty years since that had been.

All the images came flooding back,  
Funny hats and photographs,  
Square bashing and scrubbing floors,  
Orders barked by Corporal Dodds.

For five decades we'd gone our ways,  
Different lives, different worlds.  
For a few moments across a table,  
We relived a time that had drawn us together.

Strange how folk relate to life,  
Joe and I are quite different types,  
Unlikely there'd be mutual friendship,  
Why this feeling of natural affinity?

We'd met momentary when children,  
In a strange place of bewilderment.  
Was that the reason for this brotherhood?  
Bonds of adversity stronger than blood.

David.

I never even touched his face,  
Viewed from distance through glass screen.  
Tubes and equipment distracting my stare;  
Little chest struggling, gasping for air.

David was only to live thirteen hours;  
A lifetime for him in less than a day.  
A child born of my loins,  
Left to die on his own.

He should have been in my arms,  
To know that life can be more than pain;  
To feel the strength a Dad can bring;  
To experience love before he went.

I know not if, or where he lies,  
I was absent from his side.  
I left it all in the hands of others,  
A stain on my soul, not seeming to bother.

Many years have now passed by,  
Filled with laughter, sadness and strife.  
Little thought I gave to David,  
Almost wiped completely from memory.

No excuses to stand scrutiny;  
Man enough to father, my responsibility.  
Children are loaned for nurture and care;  
I missed the chance while my child was there.

Nearly fifty years since David died,  
No mention is made of his time;  
No anniversary marked with a tear;  
No sign to show he was ever here.

Forgive me my son, if you can.

Johnny Mig.

Johnny Mig's greatest wish,  
Have a family, wife and kids.  
Married life was his intent,  
Numerous girls he asked consent.

Wonder if the burning desire,  
Product of childhood denial?  
Johnny lived with his old mum,  
As far as known, only family.

Johnny did find girl to marry,

Ran Paper shop with his family.  
Augmented income with odd jobs,  
Chauffeur at funerals earned a bob

Did Johnny's dream materialise?  
Did family life meet his desires?  
Who best to judge the outcome?  
Perhaps a word from his grandson?

"He made the best porridge in the whole world".  
Just a little note on Johnny's death anniversary.  
A simple epitaph given in love,  
Yes Johnny, your dream came good.

The enemy?

Three young couples here together,  
Sharing the sun and holiday pleasure.  
Travelled across Asia to arrive at this place;  
Hail from the Ukraine, once a Red State.

Just like young people since time began,  
Frolicking and playing, having fun.  
At a glance they could be from anywhere;  
Just happy beautiful folk without a care.

Yet less than three decades ago,  
Their parents were seen as our enemy.  
Part of the Iron Curtain's Eastern block;  
A danger to our lives and security.

But these youngsters don't look a threat;  
They have no horns or feet that are webbed.  
How did we come to have the belief?  
They were monsters, menacing unseen

Of course we were fed misinformation;  
Time honoured spin psychology.  
Propaganda to create an enemy,  
The meat of battles between ideologies.

Even looking at these lovely people,  
I know we'll still not learn to question;  
Being convinced again of new enemies.  
Perhaps first we should observe them on a beach

Tom

Tom's funeral wake was in a pub,  
Snooker table spread with grub,

Beer pumped by hand from casks,  
Spirits from optics with mucky glass.

Small pub, low beams, little doors,  
Left unchanged on Yorkshire Moors.  
Built by rough hands with local stone,  
In terrace of houses on main road.

Family and friends who knew Tom,  
Gathered here to remember him.  
One man had drawn us together;  
Yet strangers also, one with the other.

Those assembled broke into groups,  
Similar interest by relationships.  
Common contact with the man now buried,  
Sharing knowledge by stories remembered.

Listening on the side, what a surprise,  
Man described not the Tom in my life.  
That Tom I'd known for many years,  
They'd seen quite different than my eyes.

But why astonished by new aspects?  
We're all comprised of many facets.  
Only real mystery to be solved,  
How we decide which one to show.

Little man.

Little man that life's passed by,  
Not in status, nor in size.  
Mind and spirit turned down low;  
Missed so much that was on show.

Eyes distracted by things of greed,  
Far surpassing his human needs.  
Ears blocked by noise and din,  
Drowning nature's whispering hymns.  
Heart just used for pumping blood,  
Closed down tight to feel what's good.  
Head accepting only things proven,  
Senses not tuned to all awareness

Judged eagerly in black and white;  
No sense of doubt or compromise.  
Only believed what was told;  
Blind to things not written bold.

Little man with pompous pride,  
Thought he understood life.

Little man so ignorant,  
Lived a life quite bare.  
Little man sadly missed the chance,  
Given to him in a life's span.

Tony Pitman

## Two men I knew

Two men I knew.

Once I knew two big men.  
One called Tony, the other John.  
Tony was Welsh and roamed about,  
John was Manch and didn't move out.

John never thought himself a scholar,  
Could enlist help without bother.  
Tony with much education,  
Taught and farmed with vocation.

Different as these blokes may seem,  
Both drew people as honey the bee.  
Young, old and children especially  
Felt the magnetic effect of their presence.

In our world of material success,  
Where wealth and position are the tests,  
What was it about these two men  
That made us sit up and look at them?

Was it their noses, both big and large?  
Seen at their best in side profile.  
Concorde was Tony's, ready to land.  
John's a hill ridge tipped on its side.

Is a person's appearance the answer?  
Or just a shell to display their ancestor.  
Do nature and learning have a bearing?  
Maybe only tools for man's working.

If you asked John what made him tick,  
All he'd say was "I don't know".  
Tony would smile and toss his hair  
Feel his shirt pocket for a fag not there.

Both are now gone, passed away,  
No more laughter, no more pain.  
We are poorer from their loss,  
Heaven is richer for its gain.

Now on reflection I need to assess,  
What made them special, why so blessed?  
What pulled us to them like moth to light?  
Why this great ache when I awake at night?

The answer may be they made us feel good.  
That brought us to them, our need to be loved.  
Both would laugh at such a suggestion,  
Both had their way of bringing affection.

Each saw the world as family and friends  
The needs of others before their own ends.  
A greeting from both, genuine and warm,  
Would light up the day to feel like home.

This was the measure of these two men,  
Big in stature, bigger still in sense.  
They knew what living was really about  
And thanked each day that God had sent.

We lost them both in just one year;  
No not gone, they'll always be here.  
Their essence is much bigger than death,  
How huge it must be now they're together.

Rest in deep peace John and Tony.  
You've walked the path, completed the journey.  
The world is better from the visit.  
You touched us all with your spirits.

Tony Pitman