



# SAGA OF SABAH

*And*  
*Other Sagas From The Sea*

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# Dedication

To all those who served in Borneo  
Those who served the Commonwealth, Indonesia and Kalimantan.

This year is the Fiftieth anniversary of the undeclared war known as the  
“Indonesian Confrontation”. As a veteran of that conflict I submit these  
attempts to describe the emotions and not the history of a war.





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## SAGA OF SABAH

### Author's Foreword

The first set of verses that I wrote on the subject of the Indonesian Confrontation was called “The Pools by the Shore”. Some of those verses are incorporated within this work.

I chose the fourteen-line stanza form as I thought that would consume more time. It did not. I have not written history here. It is a set of emotional cameos and impressions. The term “friendly fire” was not in the language at that time. We never heard of any friendly fire incidents at that time. We did hear men say “Oh, no, not another bloody balls up” but no doubt that had a different meaning.

My memories of events and sequences are poor. My memories of emotions are vivid today. It is sometimes as if these things are still about me.

I was a minor cog and not particularly good at the job I did. My head was in the clouds and not always with the task at hand.

British armed forces are good at what they do. The following part of a stanza belongs in a work yet to be written down and is on the theme of the logic of war:-

There is no point in war save but to win,  
No point in all the chaos, save that one;  
To kill may be a foul and awful sin.  
War's only worth the strife where war is won!

I cannot really finish this work as events and consequences resulting from the “Confrontation” continue to unfold. The rain forests of Sabah have been mutilated and desecrated by human greed and foolishness.

The populous nation of Indonesia is going through change. The future for them can hardly be worse than the past. They are a people who deserve some better times. Fighting against the British is never the wisest decision. We do make a foe of considerable fortitude. It is the hallmark of the ordinary





British serviceman. I know fortitude is seen as a virtue and obstinacy is seen as a vice. What I am never clear about is where the one ends and the other begins. I think, maybe, not being clear on this is part of what it takes to be a Tommy or a Jack. Bless them all.

I think of those times still sometimes over a cup of tea. For some years they were in my dreams but those dreams are fading now as I myself must fade as well.

Trevor Morgan, Rockwell Green, 2005, revised 2010, 2013.





## “Confrontation”

So all along the shore a war was fought  
In action after action won and lost  
The forces of the Crown would stop at nought  
Determined there to win and bear the cost  
With bold moves they thrust deep and far inland  
The fight they always took right to their foe  
And mostly things would seem to be as planned  
Small blunders may be made, but who's to know?  
Reports are written up on most events  
Explaining all the outcomes of each day  
In later times there may be sad laments -  
Who listens to what veterans may say?  
Old men may well feel sad about back then  
For wars are won by slaying other men

The rivers of Sabah soon rush to flood  
Large trees are carried down within their flow  
Much of the shoreline there was treacle mud  
Such places aren't the safest place to go  
Mosquitoes dine on men the whole night through  
Diseases may be there in each small bite  
For all about wherever man may go  
Lurked death but it was never there in sight  
There is no point in war save but to win  
No point in all the chaos save this one  
To kill may be a foul and awful sin  
War's only worth the strife where war is won  
Grey haired men may feel sad about things then  
Yet wars are won by better stratagem



The men on either side had different views  
The Commonwealth brought its best to this fight  
Back home there was not much said in the news  
Nor much was thought in terms of wrong or right  
Professional men were experts at this trade  
And did this work that was their job to do

A quiet task not driven by tirade  
The fighting of each war was nothing new  
This “confrontation” was an empty boast<sup>1</sup>  
The “liberation” fighters were less skilled  
Where ideals are a driving force for most  
Enthusiasm leads men to be killed  
Old fools may lead their people to defeat  
But killing their young men is not so sweet

---

<sup>1</sup>By the ruling elite of Indonesia



## Landing

The craft all lay out from the bay  
Filled with men prepared for a fight  
They'd stayed there all yesterday  
And rode the waves most of the night

Their crews were well used to the swell  
And waited for orders to come  
Soldiers were feeling unwell  
Seasickness had left them all dumb

The craft slewed and reared in the swell  
White faces were wet with the spray  
Of their thoughts no one could tell  
As craft lay off the far shore

When crewmen ate up their ration  
Some soldiers had puked on the deck  
Faces so grey and ashen  
Each had his equipment to check

The diesels had thrummed through the night  
As craft lay off the far shore  
Throttles were opened with might  
And thrums had turned to a roar

The craft slewed and reared in the swell  
White faces were wet with the spray  
Each in his own secret hell  
And tensed for the work of the day

The craft all as one made a turn  
Bow waves churned up to white crests  
Their wakes made great plumes at the stern  
And their hearts beat hard in their chests





The tracers lit up the east sky  
And star shells burst over the shore  
Yet none of them there asked “why?”  
The diesels continued to roar

The craft slewed and reared on the swell  
White faces were wet with the spray  
Each seemed to be in a spell  
As the craft sped in to the bay

The craft careered on at full speed  
Adrenaline started its flow  
The fear then seemed to recede  
We were there to “give a good show”

Crafts full of young men in their prime  
Each checking equipment once more  
This eased the passage of time  
As diesels continued to roar

The craft slewed and reared on the swell  
White faces were wet with the spray  
Our fate no one could foretell  
As we raced on in to the bay

On the great scheme of things of course  
There’s nothing of worth on those shores  
Radios crackled some Morse  
And bow men stood by the bow doors

As mangrove trees loomed into sight  
And young hearts beat fast out of fear  
A stern dawn’s eerie first light  
The sounds of some gunfire seemed near





The craft slowed and rode a slight swell  
White faces still wet with the spray  
There seemed a flatulent smell  
As we neared the shore of the bay

Propellers churned up a grey froth  
Through mud of the marshy foreshore  
The mud like flames to a moth  
Stuck us fast and we moved no more

The bow doors slapped down on the mud  
The first men sank in far too deep  
Terror then froze in their blood  
Stuck there for the reaper to reap

The small craft brought us to this hell  
Such places can trap men as prey  
Their plan was to charge pell-mell  
But this mud here had blocked the way

They strained as they fought with the ooze  
A battle with men they could win  
This fight with some mud they'd lose  
The diesel roars made a loud din

Then tracers etched through the dawn sky  
As shells burst beyond the shore line  
Minutes then slowly dragged by  
In the mud, the muck and the slime

Our craft too were stuck in this hell  
And the crews were trapped in the bay  
Shellfire still clattered its knell  
And quagmires of mud blocked the way





As diesels churned up a grey froth  
Men slithered in mud to the shore  
They raged an undignified wrath  
They wallowed and sweated and swore

The engines then eased to a hum  
The boat crew had failed though they'd tried  
Though mud we could not overcome  
We could well float free with the tide

The craft was then stuck in that hell  
And we had to get to the shore  
Shellfire still clattered a knell -  
Mud beckoned beyond the bow door ...





## A Strange Shore

The mangroves on the shore blocked land from view  
While helicopters flew ahead in land  
Boat crews knew landing troops was hard to do  
But tides and flows good seamen understand  
Control of open seas gives space to fight  
Darkness of night may cover what's to be  
Sound strategies are better than bold might  
No shore is safe from men who know the sea  
To move along a shore, to pick and choose  
Where to assault and where to feint a blow  
Helps to ensure an enemy may lose  
Where victory is the only thing we know  
Yet old men may feel sad now and again  
About an old friend who died young back then





## The Shore

The shoreline was muddy and flat  
Trees seemed to grow out of the sea  
He sniffed at the stench and he spat  
    This was not where he wanted to be

The strange roots all gnarled and knotted  
Arched upward beneath every tree  
All hope in his soul had rotted  
    This was not where he wanted to be

We'd squelched through the muddy foreshore  
When we'd landed here from the sea  
Hauled boxes and sweated and swore  
    This was not where he wanted to be

Crabs scurried about us right there  
He'd wallowed ungainly by me  
His eyes had a strange glassy stare  
    This was not where he wanted to be

Somewhere he lies buried near there  
For too soon his soul was set free  
Whilst he's not the one with the care  
    This is not where he wanted to be



## Learning a Craft

Yet all along that shore a war was fought  
A treacherous fight where little could be seen  
Those who did not learn fast were never taught  
But fell beneath a lovely tropic scene  
Upon that mud where crabs and fishes fed  
Or others “helped”<sup>2</sup> them yet their deaths were slow  
But care did not stop them from ending dead  
Sometimes that is the way that things must go  
Some deaths were hapless and of no great note  
Sometimes a life was lost so other men might live  
Some floating bodies would soon swell and bloat  
In humid heat few would care to forgive  
Some old man may feel sad about back then  
For wars are won by slaying many men

---

<sup>2</sup>This refers to first aid held given on one occasion that only seemed to make a death slower and more unpleasant for the young man concerned





## Retrieving a Body

We found him half under the water  
Where the crabs had started to dine  
It was the day after the slaughter  
The weather was splendid and fine

The state of him gave us a shock  
For he was so clammy and cool  
We hauled him out onto a rock  
And crabs ran back into the pool

Yet no one could raise to a rage  
For his skin was waxy and blue  
More crabs came out of his rib cage  
Where the round had drilled him right through

Yet vengeance was not mine or thine  
His killers were already dead  
Some lay there by that shore's tide line  
Where more crabs were now being fed



## Dead Cargoes

Some boat crews were like undertakers too  
The dead they ferried back out to the ships  
Upon those tropic seas so wond'rous blue  
Some prayers were said through barely mumbling lips  
As coxswains steered their boats back out to sea  
Returning back there in the clear bright light  
With what is left when each soul is set free  
From men who'd come here in the dead of night  
Now bodies soon decay in tropic heat  
Their stench is carried far upon the breeze  
An odour partly sickly part quite sweet  
Its recall leaves the soul still ill at ease  
In later days an old man slit his throat  
His blood blocked out the words upon his note



## Returning a Body

The shore was to the lee  
The engine's revs were low  
Our progress to the sea  
Was dignified and slow  
He lay there on the boards  
An ensign covered him  
Flies gathered there in hoards  
And he stank something grim





## The Hymn

The sailors hymn was sung with reverence sweet  
As funerals at sea were carried out  
Then ensigns stowed away all folded neat  
And men got on with tasks they were about  
There's little sentiment on men of war  
Assault ships are kept busy out at sea  
But funerals can't be seen as a chore  
As bodies slide from boards out to the lea  
All sewn and weighted then dropped in the deep  
With reverence due but never overdone  
It's not seemly when men are seen to weep  
With feelings hid close friends may feel quite numb  
Some old man may feel sad about back then  
When wars are won we always lose good men.



## Burial at Sea

There under the ensign he lay  
As the prayers and sermon were said  
I heard a voice inside me say  
“But surely he just can’t be dead”

Yet under the ensign he lay  
Sewn in canvas with a large weight  
The knowledge I have to this day  
Still tells me it was just his fate

As we listened to the last post  
The trumpeter played the last note  
There off of that tropical coast  
A lump seemed to choke in my throat

His mangled remains were well hid  
Sewn in canvas with a large weight  
Then from under the ensign he slid  
Like others we had seen of late

Yet somehow things didn’t seem right  
I just wasn’t able to weep  
I saw as he sank out of sight  
Sharks follow him down to the deep





## *A*ble Seaman White (dec'd)

*A*s the stars in the firmament gleam  
In the arch of the sky of the night  
There comes the repeated sad dream  
Of a dead able seaman called White

*I* sat up with a jerk in the night  
Saw a man that I'd seen long before  
The ghost of the seaman called White  
Who died by a rock pool by the shore

*A*nd he called me again by my name  
Like he'd done many times here before  
The same words he then said again  
He had said before going ashore

*"I* must thank you for what you have done  
Because really it does mean a lot"  
He'd wanted to walk in the sun  
And he just didn't know he'd be shot

*A*nd his star in the firmament gleams  
In the velvety darkness of night  
For he still exists in my dreams  
Does that dead able seaman called White

*A*t long distance there through a gun's sight  
He was seen as he stood by the shore  
A bullet was launched on its flight  
And he felt a slight jar - nothing more





The sensation was then receding  
Though all seemed like it had been before  
He wondered who could be bleeding  
All that blood by the pool by the shore

Now in life he had drawn the short straw  
There was little more of him to tell  
Red coloured the pool by the shore  
As he lay where he staggered and fell

Now the stars in the firmament gleam  
In the inky dark blackness of night  
For he's long sapped my self-esteem  
Has that dead able seaman called White

Sun was bright as his day had grown dim  
When he lay there in its bright light  
As darkness closed in around him  
And his day had been turned into night

Remember that man here before  
How he fell from the shot of a gun  
Right there by the pool by the shore  
Where he died in the tropical sun

Remember the man of his name  
Swapping duties with me just before  
A gunner had taken his aim  
Where I should have stood by the shore





And his star in the firmament gleams  
As his ghost comes to visit at night  
And he talks to me in my dreams  
That forgotten dead seaman called White

Yes in life he had drawn the short straw  
But his story is being retold  
Red colours the pool by the shore  
In the dreams of a man who's grown old

He says "Thank you for what you have done  
And I swear that it does mean a lot.  
That I have now got me someone,  
Yes - got someone - who has not forgot."

Now the night's long and sleepless once more  
All the stars in the firmament gleam  
Waves lap by the pools by the shore  
When not sleeping I don't have to dream



## Trauma

Though time may pass the pain remains the same  
For some bad memories linger on and on  
And loss and shock may both then share a name  
For **Trauma's** there when hopes are fled and gone  
Its darkness stays like some unwanted guest  
It visits in the dark through troubled sleep  
With nightmares and mad dreams sleep-times are blessed"  
As sometimes for no reason men may weep  
And sob about what happened long ago  
Or talk to ghosts of men who are long dead  
Some secret fears some men may never show  
But who's to listen to what may be said  
Are ramblings of old sailors merely quaint  
Or symptoms of a soul that feels a taint?



## “A Short Action”

An action by a bay may have been short  
And may have only taken those few days  
An enemy's advance some men may thwart  
In very many short and fast affrays  
Repulses were repeated by that shore  
Well aided by bombardments from the sea  
None asked what all of this may have been for  
It's like all this was simply meant to be  
This is the work professionals must do  
And do it well without the slightest qualm  
With sky above a lovely pastel blue  
And water in the bay so wond'rous calm  
When enemy assailants were all dead  
Some mud about the bay was coloured red





## Waiting

Above us branches shattered  
By bullets overhead  
We lay there mud bespattered  
And waited to be dead

As we cowered in the slime  
There seemed an end to time

We lay there badly battered  
The mud was turning red  
And those crabs pitter-pattered  
And waited to be fed

There lying in the slime  
There was an end to time

Now the scene is always there  
Though not a word is said  
While older now and elsewhere  
It's still there in my head

Still stuck in all that slime  
The mind is trapped in time



## Faceless and Dead

Around and around there clattered the sound  
Thuds vibrated through the ground  
Ripples ran out along the mud  
As terror drained the face of blood  
Then stagg'ring by there in that place  
A living man without a face  
He writhed about there by the shore  
Then quietly passed out through death's door  
Just another number and rank  
And with that my weak faith then sank.





## Small Blunders

Some blunders may be made that aren't that great  
The odd stray round may not be fired quite true  
Some may see this as just the hand of Fate  
It's all a part of what some men may do  
Perhaps sometimes a dozen rounds or more,  
Some small mishap may mean their aim's not right,  
As they then rake the wrong part of a shore  
They may remove a close friend from your sight  
But this is all a part of fighting war  
A part of all the chaos of events  
And after all it's what the Fates are for  
For Fates control what is the consequence  
When friendly fire<sup>3</sup> has left a friend quite dead  
Some mud about the bay is coloured red

---

<sup>3</sup> Not a term in use at that time.



## Pilots

The pilots of the planes directed in  
Were trained in technocratic ways of war  
Like Cain they carried out a likewise sin  
But unlike Cain they killed so many more  
Phosphorous ignites within the flesh of men  
And burns the living waters that give life  
Its sickly stench acts as some cruel omen  
Of all the hell that comes with human strife  
But pilots never smell this stench from flesh  
Nor gunners in their turrets out at sea  
But hapless souls caught up in Satan's mesh  
May never from these horrors be quite free  
Some young men who have lost the will to cope  
May seek sweet solace swinging from some rope<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> On returning home from Malaysia there was a suicide on board that came as a total surprise to me. It was all over and we were going home and yet this man chose to kill himself?





## Sorties away

Carriers turned into the wind  
In distant deep wide seas  
And now because some fools had sinned  
The world is out of ease

And sortie after sortie went  
To deal a hammer blow  
With a resolve that won't relent  
They're sent to cause more woe

The carrion of the deep will feed  
Upon much mortal flesh  
The madness will not yet recede  
We're all caught in its mesh

Carriers turned back on their course  
Their sorties are away  
But actions done without remorse  
May cause yet more dismay



## Gunners

On turrets of the ships far out at sea  
Men toiled to keep a constant rate of fire  
The Fates it is dictate all that's to be  
And who will end up dead in mud and mire  
And who will walk away at end of day  
And who is left to weep and who to rage  
Whose trauma may not ever go away  
And who's to be the poet who the sage  
As shells arc upwards from each barrel's end  
Trajectories they cut across the sky  
And whether they will hit a foe or friend  
The one intent's to see that men will die  
Some old man may feel sad about back then  
But wars are won by killing many men





## Trudging through the mire

As we trudged through a slimy mire  
    We saw so far away  
        Flashes of some distant fire  
    And that would make our day  
        The mud erupted up in front  
    Some more spewed up behind  
Our language then became quite blunt  
    God, were those gunners blind?  
We hugged the mud now stained with blood  
    And waited there to die  
    And some of us were chose by fate  
    Though we still don't know why  
And some of us still seethe with hate  
    And some of us still cry  
Why had this happened to a friend?  
    Why did he have to go?  
    It was a useless pointless end  
    It was Fate's fickle blow  
Most trudged on then from out the mire  
    For most had got away  
And some still hear that "friendly fire"<sup>5</sup>  
    In flash-backs to this day.

---

<sup>5</sup> Not a term in use at that time





## No Calling Card

Though Death will come he rarely is announced  
No calling card's presented in advance  
His victims know not when they have been trounced  
Their friends may see things as a sad mischance  
Like Coliseum fights in ancient times  
Leaders may seek salutes from fighters here  
But we now live in very different times  
Few leaders here will hear a hearty cheer  
But still there are some great men in the ranks  
Who may show leadership in battle's heat  
And put themselves at risk yet get small thanks  
Yet many may well end up as dead meat  
Though friends when old will feel sad looking back  
Remembering their bravery in attack





## Leading from the front<sup>6</sup>

A leader was found for the fray  
In barracks awaiting his ship  
But after not many a day  
He'd come to the end of his trip

He'd gathered together those men  
Available in that far place  
But he was to leave us all when  
The life had gone out from his face

We never knew much about him  
We don't know his folk or a friend  
When he died what really seemed grim  
We could tell no one of his end

We knew that he was one of us  
We laid him to rest in the ground  
This may be the time now to fuss  
For we need his folks to be found

---

<sup>6</sup> This relates to a specific man, a sergeant in the marines not named here out of respect for the family's wish.





## Coordinated Actions

The landings come from both the sea and air  
Yet stealth and guile are better than brute might  
With sniping by men hid within a lair  
Surprise is quite an ally in a fight  
When trained to shoot at targets things go well  
But when the sights are trained upon young men  
What it does to each soul no man may tell  
For conscience dwells in realms beyond our ken  
Together men may laugh; alone some cry.  
There's comfort there within each group or corps  
Together men are rarely heard to sigh  
Alone some ponder what it's all been for  
Alone some men may feel so truly wan  
About a man they killed who's dead and gone





## *He* still sees the glint of sunlight

Those two men were clear on the height  
I noted their slow stooping run  
Through the sun's glint on the fore sight  
Quite calmly I aimed the bren gun

☞ felt the recoil in my shoulder  
Heard metal sounds of the spent rounds  
Chills gripped my soul and grew colder  
My conscience screamed like baying hounds

The men jerked up static and stiff  
Each grunted a guttural sound  
There came an end to this mischief  
As folding they slumped to the ground

☞ still see the glint of sunlight  
There on the fore sight of the gun  
But an evil can't be put right  
"Oh My God - Just what have I done!"



## Chaos

There's chaos and confusion  
Within a troubled mind  
What's real seems an illusion  
But old friends all seem kind  
And who can find the reason  
Sometimes when salt tears flow  
They come in any season  
But they're not put on show





## Old Soldier's Conscience

Young soldier jerked from out of sleep  
A hollow thunder loud and deep  
Told of the action due to start  
He heard the thumping of his heart

Not a quiver in his hand  
Gun was shifted on its stand

With soldiers it may be their lot  
To aim a careful good clean shot  
Men fall like puppets with strings cut  
When shot in chest or head or gut

Deeds like that when they are through  
Rot forever within you

With a bayonet when he'd slashed  
Across a throat so deeply gashed  
Frothy blood gushed and bubbled  
Was easy then but now he's troubled

Now there are quivers in his hand  
From the memories he can't stand

All the talk of honour in deeds  
Sanctioned by religions' creeds  
Cover up for a long time  
What conscience tells us is a crime

Yet the sweating of his brow  
Says conscience is his ruler now

Old man jerks from out of slumber  
Conscience raging awful thunder  
From wars of long forgotten time  
Where killing was not then a crime

But the quiver in his jaws  
Shows he'd broken Nature's laws





## Tales Told

There's many a tale that's told of each near miss  
And tales like wine matures as time goes by  
"There's that round that passed close - we heard it hiss"  
"The barrage was so fierce - I thought we'd die"  
In mess decks matlots tell their same big tall tales  
These "ditties" are what helps when times are hard  
When ships are locked in war or caught by gales  
They're not the boastings of some sad braggard  
They're part of long traditions of the sea  
Professionals are not all cold men of ice  
Each had free will and chose what they would be  
But not all choices lead to what is nice  
In later years the tales will be retold  
By these same men when they have grown quite old





## The Meaning of “p~~h~~ew”

It seemed to pass me by  
It passed you by too  
I heard both you and I  
Both quietly whisper “Phew!”

We’d lived beneath a shade  
With a dismal view  
Now sun may light the glade  
Again we both said “Phew”

Anticipation’s there  
Both of gloom or light  
There with a mellow aire  
Or with a cloying fright

Omens of foreboding  
Or sighs of relief  
Stress may start corroding  
With false or true belief

Change may well be strange  
It might make you blue  
When fate’s not found its range  
It’s then we both say “PHEW !”



## Short Straws

But there within harm's way some take a hit  
It matters not from whence the blow was struck  
Head injured men may froth and foam and fit  
Embracing Death as they run out of luck  
The psyches of some man are deeply marred  
From actions not of much account in war  
The souls of such as these are easily jarred  
There comes a point when they can take no more  
In later years long after this is done  
Long after they have laid their friends to rest  
Long after all the actions fought and won  
The lives they live seem cursed with nothing blessed  
And sad grey men are seen to pass away  
Still marred by things that happened on that day





## PTSD<sup>7</sup>

And late at night with dread  
He lay down in his bed  
But deep within his mind  
There was no rest to find

For there in his deep sleep  
A dreadful date he'll keep  
With phantoms of the mind  
And they are most unkind

Repeating on and on  
Each past or dreamed of wrong  
Survivors can like sheep  
Be dragged down in this deep

To depths of all despair  
Choked like they have no air  
Writhe 'n writhe in slumber  
Goes on without number

So on and on each night  
They face repeated fright  
Of ghostly secret dread  
Of what's there in their head

No rest can they now find  
When troubled in their mind  
It's known to me and thee  
It's called PTSD

---

<sup>7</sup> Post traumatic stress disorder, or combat stress. Shell shock in WW1.





And years after a war  
It kills so many more  
So torn by all the grief  
Death's sought out for relief

It quietens all the dread  
There, in a troubled head  
And peace is finally found  
When low'r'd in the ground





## Long Ago as a Child

On Grandpa's lap he'd first heard stories told  
And then he told tall stories on our mess  
Some thought his heart was stark and dark and cold  
True feelings are so hard for each to guess  
His Mother got a letter from the Crown  
So full of words about an upright man  
They sent it on that day we'd cut him down  
He'd fell as far as that short rope had run  
With face and throat there of the darkest hue  
The ventilation shaft had seen him die  
Its thing like this the traumatised may do  
While closest friends in private may well cry  
Old man may now remember this mishap  
As they talk to a grandchild on their lap



## *Unease*

In the future this scene might be called friendly fire  
In the past it was just a damned mess

The reports that were filed had been written by a liar  
So the truth's to be anyone's guess

Now the children's bodies that went down the river  
And fed the creatures in the swamp

Leave memories clear that make an old soldier shiver  
As he stands at the cenotaph - amid all the pomp





## PTSD's end

Peace, peace, he does not sleep, he's dead  
Released from all the horrors in his head  
No more in sleep will gunfire rattle him  
Nor faces of the dead unsettle him  
He dreams no more so must now be content  
For deep and dreamless sleep is heav'n sent  
Its darkness is the sweetest kindest balm  
And in it troubled souls are free of harm

Peace, peace, he does not sleep, he's dead  
Released from all the terror and the dread  
The dead will visit him at night no more  
No sadness from a long forgotten war  
The dreams have stopped that shook him in his bed  
And tore around like thunder in his head  
The ghosts will have to find another haunt  
And find some other poor sad soul to taunt

Peace, peace, he does not sleep, he's dead.





## *Red Shoreline*

Most of the time was spent at idleness  
Until there were frenetic things to do  
Then things were done to cause a foe distress  
Though in all this there was not much that's new  
Virgin soldiers<sup>8</sup> had done all this before  
There in Malaya not too far away  
And now young men were at all this once more  
Mischief is never all that far away  
Nations will strive as each one seeks an edge  
Old men make threats while young men have to fight  
Without a blush some will break each new pledge  
Power's the drug that blinds them to what's right  
"Great" men will mostly die at home in bed  
The good, the young, had stained this shoreline red

---

<sup>8</sup> Title of a book about the Malayan Emergency.





## It's Ended

The pilot released his bomb load  
Some young men were happy below  
They joked as they sat by the road  
It was quite a quick way to go

One man only journeyed half way  
His gut was spilled out in his lap  
He sat for the rest of that day  
Slow dying can really be crap

The pilot had gins in the mess  
His sortie it's said was "well done"  
That soldier had sins to confess  
Then ended his pain with a gun





## The Open Sea

Beyond the reef out on the open sea  
A steady swell could roll toward the shore  
Sea birds could float on thermals rising free  
In these idyllic scenes men fought a war  
In operation rooms all dark and dim  
The shoreline could be seen on radar screens  
And busy men recorded much that's grim  
In lurid pale blue light that softly sheens  
Directions would be giv'n to front line men  
By those who'd trained so long in being precise  
No blood was seen on hands of these men when  
An enemy was butchered in a trice  
Though some old men may like to reminisce  
As wars can be quite clean when fought like this

Inside the turret all was raging din  
As mechanisms clanged and spun about  
It's said that when we kill it is a sin  
But gunners do their work quite free from doubt  
Below men load and work each turret's hoist  
Each charge and shell is heaved and thrown around  
In torrid heat each brow is dripping moist  
And ears left ringing with each hellish sound  
Where gunnery control has done its sums  
Trajectories projected will fall true  
Close to their target is a scene that numbs  
But in each turret this is out of view  
Old gunners at reunions laugh and joke  
Who knows the work once done by "nice old folk"?



## Dancing

Riding through the coral reef  
As tracers light the sky  
Planting out a minefield  
So that a foe can die

This is what we trained for  
& this is what we do  
So won't you come & dance with Death  
He wants to dance with You

With blood upon our boots  
We're running through the mud  
& hiding in the tree roots  
Then spilling yet more blood

From Klingklang in Kalimantan  
Kuching and Tawau too  
Death wants to dance with everyman  
& wants to Dance with You

Bodies heaved into a pit  
Or dumped far out to sea  
Ah was there ever sense to it  
Was it what's meant to be?

Yet this was what we trained for  
And this is what we do  
So won't You come and dance with Death  
He wants to dance with You

Their flesh has rotted now  
The bones and sinews too  
There never was a sacred cow  
In what we trained to do

We know until our last breath  
That this was what we did  
So now it's time to dance with Death  
And he knows where I'm hid





## Tea and ...

Committee rooms where civil servants sat  
Reports were opened, oh, so far away  
With tea and biccies men in suits would chat  
“By God there has been some good news today”  
The splattered blood on trees was now quite dry  
At first aid posts those there do what they can  
Beneath a lurid pastel tropic sky  
A medic tried to patch what was a man  
“They put up quite a show to take the field  
And now much more support can be flown in”  
The joy in that room could not be concealed  
There was no chance their world could be blown in  
Old politicians get gongs from the queen  
But dried-on blood removes the medal’s sheen





## 7F...

7f you can tell big porkies and keep a straight face  
If you can be two faced and seem to have good grace  
If you can wangle a big house and not get caught  
If you can seem to be quite fair when you've been bought  
If you can be at ease amid much torrid sleaze  
And always find some way to do just as you please  
And as you do it see all blame is never yours  
And as you leave your friends and brothers with your chores  
And as you take the glory that belongs to them  
You will by then arrive at what you have become  
You will by then be a - politician - my son





## *A*ftermath of Action

*S*weet sickly smelled the killing scene  
Where so much rich red blood congealed  
The scene seemed intimate, serene  
As if some sacred scroll was sealed

*U*ntil all of their blood had chilled  
He stood in shock and shook with grief  
As violently as they'd been killed  
This aftermath brought no relief

*T*here was there now a strange bond sealed  
Between soldier and his victim  
And his stained soul would hold concealed  
How killing them had altered him

*F*or really he could not see why  
All these young men just had to die





## “Too Soon to Tell”

Old Chou En Lai<sup>9</sup> in China far away  
Said once of past events and their outcome  
“It’s all too soon to tell” about their sway  
Or all that may result from what is done  
While victories lead to changes in events  
And for some time a nation is secure  
Long centuries may work through the consequence  
Though grim predictions may hold no allure  
Most men who fought there may well have been changed  
Their lives in some way altered by all this  
Then many minor things are rearranged  
though some may never now find their own bliss  
Old fighting men at last will have their day  
Then as the saying goes we’ll fade away

---

<sup>9</sup> Prime Minister of China during the 1970’s. When asked the main outcomes of the French Revolution replied, “It’s too early to tell”. He seemed to have some wisdom.





## Late Afternoon

Late afternoon now fades  
The evening's coming on  
Now dim we see some shades  
And so quite soon we're gone

In morning was a storm  
Noontime had seen a change  
All seemed to have a form  
But now it's all so strange

In early hours we played  
But playtime was to end  
Remember how you prayed  
Each time you lost a friend

Late afternoon is warm  
This twilight holds allure  
Long gone now is that storm  
So rest now feel secure



## “Jutland and After (1916)”

### Author's note

These verses are based loosely on tales told to me by my grandmother's second husband, known to me as “Uncle Arthur” and by other old matelots. He served at Jutland. I believe his ship was HMS Chester but I am not sure. She was a Chatham ship and most of her crew would have come from London and the South East. Arthur was from Portsmouth and in his tales I always thought he was talking about Portsmouth and Spithead. Verbal history is not always accurate. However, I have relied more upon my faulty memory rather than historic research in the draft of this yarn.

The Chester was built for the Greek Navy and completed in 1915. She was not exported as the Royal Navy needed all available ships. The unusual thing about her was that she was fitted with 5.5 inch guns not 6 inch guns. It is said that although these fired a lighted shell they could achieve a more rapid rate of fire. One source says of this design of gun that its shielding did not go right down to the deck so "...did not give adequate protection to the crew from splinters...". The fate of her legless gunners seems to bear this out. No further ships were subsequently fitted with this design of gun.

I have chosen a fictional character, able seamen Arthur King, for this narrative. It seemed better for a semi-fiction than to use the name of dear old Uncle Arthur Wickes.

Arthur King returned home in 1918 to have his young wife, Anne, die of the “Spanish Lady”, the great flu epidemic of 1918-1919.

My "Uncle" Arthur married Mary Morgan a widow of the Great War and my grandmother. He grew old before his time and died within a year of retiring in 1962 at the age of 65. This means he must have been married with one very young child at the time of the battle.

To me as a child he was a jolly man but had deep sad eyes and took me to my first football match. When I was eight he told me some tales as though





they happened to someone else who had told them to him. This could be the case, I have no way of knowing. I do know that many of the men of his generation in my family in Portsmouth, if they lived today, would be said to have PTSD. Then it was put down to a “lack of moral fibre”! Many turned to alcohol or to unreality or to humour. The drunk, the mad man and the fool are a gift to society from warmongering politicians.

Trevor Morgan  
Rockwell Green February 2015





## Dedication - to stories of the sea

The sailors ply the wilful sea  
But it's not theirs to quell  
It guards our island's liberty  
And there's so much to tell

For sailors may tell many a tale  
Of what they may have done  
As when ashore and drinking ale  
There's wenches to be won

Some tales are fancied some are true  
Some stories are quite tall  
In all of this there's little new  
Let's hear the oceans call

Let's hear of fights far out at sea  
Let's hear of dead men's deeds  
Of how an island was kept free  
Remember widows' weeds



## Prologue

### Poor Rupert<sup>10</sup> at Gallipolis - 1915

When the blood was draining Rupert  
Draining from your bowels  
When you lay on that ship Rupert  
Dying for no reason

Was England first in your thoughts then  
With its pomp and power  
Did you care for England Rupert  
In that painful hour

Rupert why did you waste your life  
The only one you had  
Rupert why did you have to go  
You must have been quite mad

So now Rupert there's a corner  
Of some foreign field  
There's a corner poor dear Rupert  
That's forever dead.

---

<sup>10</sup>The poet Rupert Brooke





## Jutland May 1916

For Kaiser and for King each shot  
Great salvos of huge shell  
That fearsome battle's now forgot  
And yet it cast its spell

A generation dwelled in shade  
With sorrow in the soul  
Though war's an art that is man made  
It does not make man whole

It takes away the young and fit  
The gods claim those they love  
While others bear the stain from it  
The raven eats the dove

The dove it is the bird of peace  
It is the bird of hope  
When battles end and wrath may cease  
Not all know how to cope

The raven is a carrion bird  
It eats flesh off the dead  
Some tortured souls don't say a word  
Their life's one secret dread

They dread the dreams that come at night  
They jump at each new din  
This terror is their secret plight  
So who in war can win?

That sea's at peace again once more  
With waters dark and cold  
They lap upon our island's shore  
Where sailor's tales are told





## *P*osing in for action

*A*cross the sea there to the east  
Grey forms were steaming fast  
Some spewed smoke like some ancient beast  
This day could be their last

*G*reat waves form patterns so beware  
They roll before the eyes  
With complex movement everywhere  
Beneath those eerie skies

*E*ach pattern's change in motions strange  
Form part of destiny  
So as two fleets came into range  
Then what will be will be

*T*he rapid firing of each gun  
Resounded through the hull  
The belching smoke that dulled the sun  
Went on without a lull

*A* flash upon the forecastle deck  
One gun then ceased to fire  
It had become a twisted wreck  
Become the gunners' pyre

*A*nother gun fell silent too  
Its crew tossed all about  
Without legs what were they to do  
The lucky soon bled out

*O*ne untouched man stood in a daze  
A boy bled at his post  
As sense came back within this haze  
Hell had a new outpost





The horror of the scene was grim  
Good mates were bleeding free  
His training then it guided him  
Like all men on that sea

The toiling crew worked to put out  
Some raging fires below  
There was no time for hope nor doubt  
Before that deadly glow

Those legless gunners got some care  
Their stumps were torniqueted  
But Fate it can be so unfair  
Each Death was just delayed

The two survivors of the blast  
A man and dying boy  
Each in their way would be down cast  
And never now know joy



## Tumult's cease - June 1916

The anchor cable rattled past  
The taut towrope went slack  
Though they were here near dock at last  
Not all had made it back

The sea birds circled by the stern  
On trash they might be fed  
Along the decks on this return  
Not many words were said

The sail-maker had worked hard  
On bodies sewn up neat  
The Reaper had shown no regard  
For Death just can't be beat





## *F*reed Souls

Some herring gulls are gliding by  
They float there to the lee  
Beneath the wild and windy sky  
Souls, like those gulls, drift free

Their rended bodies in a heap  
Tossed there by just one blast  
Left mates of theirs to cry and weep  
Once battle's wrath was passed

A strange serenity came then  
When guns had ceased to roar  
The fearful task for living men  
Became a sacred chore





## Burials

They'd stopped to bury men at sea  
They'd sung the sailors' hymn  
From flashbacks some would not be free  
That battle had been grim

Their cruiser once was quite a ship  
Part of the grandest fleet  
But after this near fatal trip  
She didn't look so neat



## Sonnet - Shell's Shock

The battle had been waged by two great foes  
Their cruiser was but light and built for speed  
So she had suffered, oh, such awful woes  
With decks turned red as shattered bodies bleed  
Where shattered metal from her shattered bow  
Sliced through both men and boys like some foul scythe  
Yet some remained unharmed - they knew not how  
Some with minds marred but bodies still quite lithe  
And haunted until death by what had been  
By sights of legless men who died through shock  
Such sights it's better that men had not seen  
Not all have hearts or souls cold as a rock  
Where bodies may stay whole minds may be marred  
Then dragging years of life seem bleak and hard



## Going ashore

The wounded were laid on her deck  
Ready to take ashore  
From shell impacts she looked a wreck  
But she'd joined naval lore

The dying boy was wrapped up well  
He seemed so very pale  
All heard the bosun ring that bell  
Most of her crew felt frail

That wan young hero dying there  
Had yearned to go to sea  
His eyes now had the saddest stare  
His soul would soon be free

Free from the horrors he'd been through  
Free from the agony  
Free from the chores this crew must do  
Free from war's tyranny

He'd shown no fear when wounded there  
He'd stayed firm at his post  
And now he had that empty stare  
Though he'd be honoured most

The youngest VC<sup>11</sup> of all time  
His life now ebbed away  
The stories told might sound sublime  
But some would feel dismay

Dismayed by all this loss of life  
Dismayed by all the pain  
Not all felt glory came from strife  
And some now felt a stain

---

<sup>11</sup>Victoria Cross awarded to John Travers Cornwell of HMS Chester died from his wounds age 15





## Flashback

The roar of gun, the crash of shell  
The friends torn all apart  
That acrid stench that seemed to dwell  
And stain each empty heart

Three cheers for king and country then  
Three cheers, the rum is up  
And there's less need for moping when  
There's some good rum to sup

The cold North Sea had claimed so much  
Both ships and matelots too  
With many now not quite in touch  
There was still much to do

They held that sea but at great cost  
Each man had fought so well  
But who had won and who had lost?  
Now only time would tell



## The stain of trauma

Trauma may leave a darker stain  
A certain special scent  
And once that's burned into your brain  
Somehow it won't relent

Now there's reminders everywhere  
That brings it back to mind  
For where there's things we cannot share  
Then life becomes a grind

We can smell things that aren't at hand  
Flash backs burn in the brain  
Tormented minds just cannot stand  
The trauma and its stain

False scents seem true to haunted men  
Whose torments won't relent  
And they are only ended when  
All our life's force is spent

Survivors carry such a cost  
Too much for some to stand  
And when it seems all hope is lost  
Their deaths are not so grand

Why do we let our young men die  
In so much pointless strife  
Though many more are wasted by  
A longer blighted life



## Day dream

There Able Seaman Arthur King  
Gazed out towards the shore  
He never heeded death's sad sting  
Because his faith was sure

He loved his wife more than his life  
And he would soon be there  
Away from this dark war and strife  
Some things are good to share

But he would never share with her  
All that they had been through  
Though right now all things seemed a blur  
The sky was pastel blue

The late spring of this year was fine  
The sun warmed his neck here  
Some shattered ships moored in the line  
Sent smoke plumes in the air



## Love Lies

“’s love in life a load of lies  
That dims the wits and clouds the eyes  
The way you once confused me so  
Made it not clear to tell or know.  
Is love itself a thing at all  
To search for wonder, shout and call?  
Or is it but a Will o’ wisp  
We dream of but does not exist?  
And yet I say that I love you  
And though you say it to me too  
Whilst each may hold the other dear  
Great loves can have no need to fear  
When we can see no means to ends  
It’s then that we can be good friends”



## The dying boy

Ashore the songbirds sang with joy  
There was a gentle breeze  
But on that deck that dying boy  
Felt, Oh, so ill at ease

He saw the gulls and petrels too  
As they whirled overhead  
He saw the shoreline now in view  
His wounds still seeped and bled

He felt the wetness on his side  
The pangs grew bad again  
But never once there had he cried  
Still stoic mid the pain

His small form was not yet full grown  
Some things aren't meant to be  
He had loved all that he'd been shown  
He'd loved his life at sea

He'd seen his gun crew be cut down  
Their legs and feet all gone  
And though he'd earned some great renown  
His eyes no longer shone

Near moribund and marked by Death  
A haziness closed in  
He laboured at each single breath  
Some fights you may not win



## Ephemeral or lasting

Some go in the morning  
Too long before the noon  
Parents are left mourning  
Oh, they died too soon

The gods it has been said  
Who dwell up there above  
Claim young who are now dead  
As their dearest love

Some go late in the night  
Drift off into the dark  
But men see this as right  
Like songs of a lark





## *Yearnings and bad memories*

As Arthur King stood by him there  
And yearned for his young wife  
It seemed as though he did not care  
For all this loss of life

*He'd* tourniqueted six legless men  
But each had died of shock  
That horror was beyond his ken  
He saw the far off dock

*He* knew they'd be ashore a while  
He'd soon be with his wife  
The thought of her then made him smile  
Amid this waste of life

*He'd* met her four short years ago  
She'd now had their first child  
Inside he felt a tender glow  
He stood there and he smiled



## The boy's freedom

The boy near him was ashen grey  
And looked quite close to death  
But he would linger many a day  
Before that final breath

He'd watched as many men had bled  
His soul was chilled and grim  
Orations read there for the dead  
Had not meant much to him

It seemed just like a waking dream  
How could this horror be?  
He thought he heard some dead man's scream  
Thought soon he might be free

Be free for he was soon to die  
A posthumous VC  
There Arthur heard his gentle sigh  
And spat into the sea.



## Arthur's freedom

Old scars upon his back felt cold  
From where he'd had the cat<sup>12</sup>  
With body young but soul grown old  
He coughed again and spat

He felt a deep and foul distaste  
For ships now and the sea  
Sickened by the futile waste  
Ashore he would feel free

Free from out the memories here  
Free from survivors' pain  
Free from that inward cloying fear  
He must be free again!

Eternally they seemed to wait  
Beneath the pale blue sky  
Mere tools used by their nation state  
Yet few would question "Why?"

Brought up on duty and belief  
Each did as they were told  
All stifled in their hidden grief  
This left some spirits cold

The dying were first shipped ashore  
The injured followed on  
The cloying wait all calmly bore  
Soon it was past and gone

---

<sup>12</sup>Cat o' nine tails



## *Come coming*

The cobbles were beneath his feet  
The bustling streets unreal  
He heard the throb of his heartbeat  
Again now he could feel

The numbness of those days now past  
Slid from his soul, was gone  
He hastened on for now at last  
He was not woebegone

The bustling streets became more real  
Familiar things were here  
And they may help a soul to heal  
Bring back to life some cheer

He bought some flowers from a stall  
New joys sang in his brain  
As though he heard the angels call  
And had known nought of pain

Elation is the strangest thing  
Amid much loss and grief  
He touched his golden wedding ring  
He had a sure belief

Belief in love belief in joy  
Belief in much of life  
For now he'd see his baby boy  
And his sweet darling wife

And that he did and he was whole  
And saw that war right through  
He hid those scars upon his soul  
The way that most men do

At home he had his dear sweet Anne  
At sea he fought the fight  
She helped him be a better man  
The world seemed just and right





## November 1918

A Spanish Lady crossed the land  
Breathed in with many a breath  
Now yet more traumas were at hand  
As millions met their death

The Fates it seemed they had their plan  
Arthur stayed whole and well  
The Spanish Lady took his Anne  
And cast his soul in hell.

One Tuesday she had coughed that night  
By Thursday she was dead  
Dark angels seemed to pile on plight  
To drive him from his head





## *F*ickle gods

The gods it seemed  
They loved her so<sup>13</sup>  
And so she had to die  
For some are young  
When they must go  
There seems no reason why

When gods arise  
They don't feel wan  
These young are like their dreams  
For when they wake  
They fade, they're gone  
The gods they have their schemes

Now gods it seems  
Don't love us all  
Some live to greater age  
And like bad dreams  
They have recall  
And cause the gods to rage

The gods it seemed  
They loathed him so  
They did not let him die  
For some grow old  
Before they go  
There seems no reason why

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<sup>13</sup>Old Greek saying: "Those the gods love die young".





## The Widower's rage

The coffin was heaved on the shoulders  
As they shuffled mock solemnly on  
And he thought of the lady he loved  
Of her spirit departed and gone

On side he had cried with despair  
But the face that he wore was a mask  
For his feelings he would not share  
And his duty was up to the task

The black shoes shuffled out to the hearse  
And the coffin was slipped there inside  
Inside him, Oh how he had so cursed  
But these feelings he knew how to hide

Now this coffin that bore his dead wife  
Was adorned with that single white rose  
And so now for the rest of his life  
He adopted his own solemn pose

But inside he wanted such vengeance  
On the Fates who had caused her to die  
But his soul lacked all true resilience  
Before dying in private he'd cry

Then his coffin was heaved on the shoulders  
As they shuffled mock solemnly on  
And he followed the lady he loved  
As a dead soul dejected and wan





## What was this life about?

He reeled beneath this bitter blow  
“What was this life about?”  
The answer none may ever know  
Grief filled his heart with doubt





## Glad good-bye

Now some dark courts condemn a man to “life”  
But death may be more sweet  
With no more chaos, no more strife  
No constant sad defeat

No more of pressures to conform  
No more “Do as you’re told!”  
And no more need to ape some norm  
No facing growing old

No forward looks to addled brains  
No aching in the heart  
With no more feeling of the pains  
Oh, may we soon depart

Depart from all this pointless waste  
Depart from all this snide  
At doing harm all must make haste  
All this we can’t abide

Men sentenced to too long a life  
The gods must all despise  
And their deep loathing is so rife  
Oh, let us fall not rise.

A widower and still quite young  
He nearly did not cope  
In shades of loss we dwell among  
Sad wraiths who’ve lost all hope

They drag the souls of some so low  
They take faith out of sight  
Each new day seems a bitter blow  
The will is lost to fight

The horror of each dying friend  
The sad death of a wife  
Bring nightmares that may never end  
Until the end of life





## Repeated Nightmares

Long years each scene was seen  
Locked in the dreams of night  
The dead may be serene  
The guilty dwell in fright

The joy of killing spun  
A mesh to trap the mind  
Where awful deeds are done  
True hopes are left behind

Some guilt comes not from sin  
But having stayed alive  
It rots away within  
And hope may not survive

This burden some must bear  
It drives the spirit low  
Eyes have a sunken stare  
As haunted men all know

There's fecklessness in empty men  
Life's like a tangled thorn  
There's haplessness in all things when  
The soul has turned forlorn



## Memories

They'd met upon the Gosport Ferry  
Crossing there one summer day  
Life it seemed would be so merry  
But these young hopes have gone away

That ferry ride then made him cry  
Life had been too short for Ann  
How could a good God let her die?  
To leave him such a doleful man





## Gosport ferry song

“There’s bright sunshine on the harbour  
Winter winds are blowing chill  
Cold hard frost reflects the sunlight  
And I’m longing for you still

Chorus        Our best dreams can be so empty  
                  And our longings give no thrill  
                  Love is turned cold indifference  
                  And I’m longing for you still

There’s a thick fog on the harbour  
Mists are hanging grey and still  
Cold hard frost reflects the lamplight  
And I’m longing for you still

Chorus  
There’s an oil slick on the harbour  
Slimy streaks clear waters kill  
Rainbow tint reflects the bright light  
And I’m longing for you still

Chorus  
There’s cold moonlight on the harbour  
I had wanted you until  
Cold hard fate extinguished love’s light  
Yet I’m longing for you still

Chorus  
There’s ice floating on the harbour  
Winter winds are blowing chill  
Cold hard frost reflects the warm light  
And I’m longing for you still



## Chorus

Old hard frost reflects the warm light  
And I'm longing for you still

I am longing for you still

Longing, longing for you still”





## Empty

His life was empty without Ann  
He could not now be as strong  
Without her he was half the man  
Life seemed so unjust and wrong





## Sonnet - *Memories of Ann*

The raging of an angry grieving soul  
Where hopes are wrecked and life is too unjust  
No way now may this life seem good or whole  
All is now tarnished all is dull as rust  
And lacks the hue that makes things glow with light  
Events dragged down the soul of this good man  
Whose heart stayed free of any thoughts of spite  
Yet sadness stayed with him throughout his span  
His love for Ann was total and complete  
Safe anchorage within the storms of life  
In her alone were all things that were sweet  
But for his children he took this new wife  
A widow who grieved for her man who'd died  
So practical, but love free, knots are tied





## *Ann's elegy*

Sweetness of the silence  
Stillness of the air  
Soft and sure reliance  
Knowing you are there

No hurt from hard words  
Nor pain nor harm, maybe  
Listen to the Birds  
Together we seem free

The freedom of our bond  
The Liberty of ties  
To feel so surely fond  
With no need for lies

No great rage or lust  
No fury of desire  
To be yours is a must  
Like soft glowing fire

Sweetness of the silence  
Stillness of the air  
The soft and sure reliance  
Knowing you are there



## Joe (1945-1953)

Young Joe died of polio in 1953  
A little boy a lot of fun  
But he's still here in me  
Joe came from Kingsdown  
We romped and used to lark  
Playing on the bombsites  
And running in the park  
He came to my birthday do in 1953  
And I had cried  
When he had died  
He couldn't come play with me  
So I went to the bombsite  
And to our secret den  
And wished and wished  
That he'd come back  
But I only see him when  
I sleep and in my dreams  
He's there with me again  
For fifty years we've played at night  
There in our secret den  
But I wake up each morning  
And daytime's there again  
And I hate that dawning  
Of that sad fact on me  
That Joe died of polio in 1953<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>At the age of eight my best friend Joe died of polio just a few days after my birthday which he left early feeling very ill. My generally taciturn old Uncle Arthur was a great companion for me at the time of this loss.





## December 1953

He told sweet tales of his dear Ann  
To his stepson's small boy  
That boy would be a navy man  
He too would lose much joy

For polio had killed his friend  
Arthur could see his pain  
He helped this little boy to mend  
So he could play again

He told great stories of the sea  
Told of the battle's rage  
He told how wars had kept us free  
In his and every age

He walked that child along the beach  
Told him much of the sea  
Of sailors ghosts now out of reach  
Yet in the breeze are free



## Song - Souls on the sea breeze (Tune from “Oh what a lovely war)

Our doomed ship's bell  
Goes ting a'linga'ling  
Then slips beneath the sea  
We're dragged beneath  
The choking waves  
And drown deep in the sea

Our ol' ship's bell goes  
Ting a'linga'ling  
A knell for you and me

Ah, Death you have  
A sting a'linga'ling  
You have this victory  
As our ship's bell goes  
Ting a'linga'ling  
Deep down beneath the sea

Our bodies rot  
Beneath the waves  
Deep on the ocean floor  
Our boots or shoes  
Lay there in pairs  
Down there for ever more

As our ship's bell goes  
Ting a'linga'ling  
Here on the ocean floor  
Each time a ship  
Goes down at sea  
Some flotsam's washed ashore





The kin will wait  
Ashore in vain  
The sea claims more and more

Yet ol' ship's bells go  
Ting a'linga'ling  
And ring for ever more

Each time a ship's  
Sunk out at sea  
We're joined by ever more  
As ol' ships' bells go  
Ting a'linga'ling  
They're sometimes heard ashore

Yet we must say  
That Death can't win  
Though it's not seen to lose  
And on the floor  
Of the deep sea  
We find those pairs of shoes

An' all the bells go  
Ting a'linga'ling  
AND RING FOREVER MORE

But sailors' souls  
Are floating free  
They are now free from Death  
The shoreline breeze  
Now sings of them  
AND SINGS FOREVER MORE





*For* whilst their souls  
Are out of reach  
We HEAR THEM on each beach  
Ah, Death where is thy  
Sting a'linga'ling  
Where is thy victory

*As* all ships's bells go  
Ting a'linga'ling  
AND RING FOREVER MORE  
All ol' ships's bells go  
Ting a'linga'ling  
THEY'LL RING FOREVER MORE

*They'll* ring forever more

*Ring* forever more

*Forever* more



## Time's sure flow

Like mist that drifts across the sea  
And cloaks the distant shore  
It hides from us what is to be  
Or what's long gone before  
There's no way to communicate  
With all those now long dead  
There's no way now to penetrate  
Know what they really said





## *Unquiet soul*

Arthur could show apathy  
At other times disdain  
But he could show true empathy  
For that young child in pain

Arthur was free of inner peace  
Free of true joy and hope  
So he worked like he'd never cease  
Each has their way to cope

He worked long hours in the dock  
Worked on each mighty ship  
The demons in his dream would mock  
They had him in their grip

On all he tried, all just went wrong  
Each failure made him wild  
His stocky body though so strong  
His mind became a child

And inwardly he gazed upon  
A pointless useless life  
He's happy now he's dead and gone  
He's gone to join his wife

Would call him Uncle Arthur then  
As all my siblings had  
To me he'd been a perfect gem  
He'd been a great Granddad

His deep sad eyes and his tall tales  
Live on within my heart  
It's love not hope that never fails  
Though men die and depart





## *F*allen poppy petals

*P*ick a poppy and it will die  
Or let it go though you may sigh  
Perhaps, then place a lily wreath  
Remembering who is there beneath

*M*ay be, then stand still in that place  
And feel if they're touched by Grace  
Sow more poppies let them grow  
So future generations know

*T*he past that they were taken through  
And of the dead that they once knew  
Pick a poppy and it will die  
So let them grow, whilst you may sigh





## Epilogue - The Public Records Office at Kew

After every action then  
Reports were written up  
They told of what we had done when  
We'd drunk from out that cup

Reports prepared in triplicate  
Was what they used to do  
They keep the first and duplicate  
The third must go to Kew

After thirty years or so  
And for true history's sake  
They are then put on public show  
Though some may be a fake

For can a state so be candid  
And show off all its shame  
Who needs to know all that it did  
Lies keep it safe from blame



Photo # NH 63077 HMS Barham, photographed circa the 1930s



HMS Barham 1941



HMS Barham after she was torpedoed by U331 off the coast of Egypt in 1941. This can be seen on YouTube video by searching YouTube with 'HMS Barham explodes and sinks (1941)'.





HMS Albion during the Confrontation. On her flight deck are both RAF and Royal Navy helicopters. This picture was taken from one of the Albion's helicopters of the coast of Sarawak en route to Sabah.





Joan Morgan on holiday in Brighton visiting her parents with her three youngest children: Marian, Trevor and Kevin (December 1953).



Trevor Morgan age 3 in 1948 with his brother Kevin age 5.





Trevor Morgan with his wife Priscilla Morgan to the awards ceremony for *Pingat Jasa Malaysia* in Weymouth, Dorset in 2007. At the ceremony the Malaysian Colonel awarding the medals said: "...there is an old Chinese saying, when you drink sweet water from a well you should remember the men who dug the well..."



Trevor Morgan with Mark Formosa a politician who supported the lobby for British veterans to be allowed to receive *Pingat Jasa Malaysia*.

The Government in the United Kingdom had been resisting the offer by Malaysia to award the medal whilst governments in Australia and New Zealand had been much more appreciative of this gracious gesture by Malaysia.





Trevor and Priscilla Morgan with their granddaughter Shreya Morgan





## Biography



Trevor Morgan in the marshlands of the Somerset Levels

Trevor Morgan joined the Royal Navy at the age of 15 in 1961. He served on HMS Albion during the Indonesian Confrontation as a radar operator and as a member of a boat crew. He never got beyond the basic rank of able seaman by the time he left the Navy in 1967.

He has had a varied career in construction and in local government and gained a degree in Economics in 1981.

He is now retired and lives in rural Somerset in England where he is to be seen wandering about with note pad in hand stopping now and then to scribble furiously. He knows all the local tea rooms and visits them regularly to sit in calm and quiet to complete each composition and drink a nice cup of tea.





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