

POETRY
IN
A
PANDEMIC

APRIL 2020
TO
MARCH 2021



YORK

BY DEE BOYLE

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With thanks to all the friends and family
who have been interested in and enjoyed
my poems in the past.

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at the Unitarian Chapel in York
who reignited my love of poetry
and reminded me that writing it
as well as reading it and listening to others
reading their poems
can be fun.

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me valuable advice with regard to getting my work published.

Although we may all be glad when the pandemic is over
I hope these poems serve as a reminder of all we've been through
in 2020 – 2021.

Changes

What a change from meeting friends,
from being a part of many groups,
from traveling around on buses,
and walking in areas so freely!

What a change to be in isolation,
to being a part of a few virtual groups,
to be avoiding all public transport,
and walking cautiously once a day!

What a change in the environment,
from being dirty and polluted air,
from being noisy and busy roads,
and being hectic and frantic on foot!

What a change for people to slow down,
to have time to spend with family,
to have time to reflect on things,
and to have the time to just be!

What changes will the future bring,
from being part of world destruction,
from travelling the world unnecessarily
and causing general pollution and waste?

What changes will we plan to make,
to be a part of a caring community,
to be a part of a greener environment,
and be part of the change we want to see in the world?

April 2020

Changes (2)

‘A change is as good as a rest’
or so the saying goes but
at first when changes were
suggested many railed against it.

Changes were put in place
to keep us all as safe as possible,
but our lives had routines that
made us all feel at ease.

We didn’t want changes unless
it was ones that we made,
but now some of those changes
allow us to find time that was lost.

Changes created time for us to be still,
to spend time with families

to do activities that we didn't have time for
before, but are now so valuable to us.

Changes have also allowed us time
to look around us, to look at nature,
to look at the climate and our destruction
to see what further changes can be made.

We are closer once again to nature
and this precious Earth that we live on.

We are noticing things again that
previously we took for granted.

We can be part of the changes
that we want to see in the world.

We can make even more in the future.

It is not too late for us to change.

April 2020

Confinement

It used to be one rule for them
and another rule for us,
but now it is more of a real
level playing field for everyone.

What affected a few folks then,
now affects everyone the same.

It does not favour the rich
nor does it select the poor.

It has no respect for age
or gender or nationality.

It knows no boundaries or borders
and is not confined to one country.

As it spread throughout the world
people were the ones to be confined.

They were the ones to have to change
their behaviours, possibly forever.

There may be an end to confinement
one day but will this visitor just be lying
in wait and ready to pounce once again and
repeat devastation on an unsuspecting world?

May 2020 (BC Before Cummings)

Freedom

We have almost forgotten what a joy
it is to walk anywhere we choose,
to wander freely and meander at leisure.

What will we be like when once again

we are not restricted and we can move
easily in places currently out of bounds?

Where will we walk when not restricted
by guidelines imposed to keep us safe
but that confine us as if we are wrong-doers?

We are confined as prisoners in our homes
without the freedom to roam we took for granted
and with no real questioning coming from us.

What will that new-found freedom mean to each
of us as the doors and gates are open again and
once more we are free to choose where we go?

Will we return to our old ways and disregard
any warnings we've had, or will we take heed
of them and readjust our lives accordingly?

We have the freedom to choose how we proceed
in future so will we opt to be part of those changes
we want to see in the world or will we ignore the voice within?

May 2020

Comings & Goings

The comings and goings that used to go on
have almost stopped and some have gone.

For some of us who used to go about
have stayed at home and not gone out.

We've stayed indoors and followed the rules
we didn't want to be classed as fools
who flaunted advice to stay at home,
or act like those creating rules of their own.

When others used to come and we used to go
when we had our freedom to roam to and fro,
we never thought that this would happen to us
that we'd be frightened of walking or going by bus
that we wouldn't travel on trains, boats or planes
and wondered when we'd see families and friends again.

We would meet with groups without any thought
of whether simply poetry, but the virus they'd brought.

Our Comings and Goings have been curtailed for a while
but there are still plenty of things to help raise a smile.

We've clapped for our carers and hit pots & pans.

We've made quite a racket all over the land.

We've drawn rainbows on windows and put 'thank you' on bins
and for many, extra wine has been one of their sins.

Whatever we've done, there's one thing for sure

2020 will be remembered for many a year.

June 2020 (AC After Cummings)

Coming in and going out

I have had some visitors coming into my garden

and they were not just the birds or insects.

They were family at first, then just one friend

and eventually two friends at the same time.

It felt quite daring to have visitors coming into

my garden but after weeks of being alone

it was such a treat to have a real person opposite me

and not on some sort of square screen.

But there was also a bit of worry about others

coming in to my personal and safe space.

When they went, I felt I had to sanitise handles and

door knobs and areas where my visitors had been or touched.

I have never been a neat freak or plumper of cushions

nor have I vacuumed, wiped or dusted every day. But

somehow this time I felt it was needed and so I did it.

I enjoyed them coming into my space, sharing it with me

and having some quality time albeit different with no hugs.

Now, today, for the first time, I was the one going out and I went to

visit a friend and spent a lovely few hours before coming home again

and wondering if, as I left, did she start her cleansing and sterilising?

23rd June 2020

The Lockdown

While being confined to my home

I turned my hand to a poem.

I didn't spring-clean

though my cleaner's not been

and I sorted through tome after tome.

The cupboards did not get a sort

and groceries online they were bought

I didn't get out,

save my allowed walkabout,

making sure the virus I hadn't caught.

My conservatory is used for art.

The lounge is for music, in part.

I've sewn lots of masks

and done telephone tasks

and via zoom I've shared things from my heart.

When lockdown is at an end

will we have gone round the bend

by talking to walls

and juggling all balls

so our brains we will have to mend?

24th June 2020

100 Days

It's been a hundred days since lockdown was decreed.

One hundred days of feeling that we never would get freed

again to travel around and go wherever we cared

to go and to do whatever it was that we dared.

Early in the lockdown I lost a friend due to his heart

and I couldn't attend his funeral. That was just the start

of feelings that I never thought that I would feel

of being in situations that somehow were not quite real.

Then another friend I lost due to a bleed on her brain.

The crematorium was closed to all so outside we had to remain.

I was the celebrant for her life and so at least could say goodbye

and remembered all the years we had before it was her time to die.

I came home in a daze on the bus, the last time I travelled so.

I may venture on one again soon but only with a mask in tow.

Did the 100day war feel much like this, with people shocked the same

as we were and when did it start to feel a little bit normal again?

When will it be that we will hear people around us start to say?

“Do you remember when we had to stay inside for 100 days?”

This was in order for us all to take care, stay safe and stay alive

To help those who cared for sick folks to ensure they would strive.

Will life ever be the same again, I and others often wonder?

And on these 100 days of lockdown, we will forever ponder.

30th June 2020

Not Yet

We are eager to get out and about again
and to get our lives back on track
but what exactly will that entail as
we know that it will not be back to
normal but it will be a new normal.
Many people are anxious for things
to be open again but we are told
it would not be just now, not yet.
Not yet for some places but ok for
others and strange how decisions
had been made for the slow reopening.
Some places that reopened one week
were back into lockdown by the next.
Was this a sort of warning for us all
to take it easy, take it slowly, and
be patient as the time for normality
is not quite here at this moment, not yet?
We can get our hair done now so that the
lockdown look is gone and also those who
want their nails painted and trimmed can do
but I can't get my tattoo done, not yet anyway.

13th July 2020

A Room with a View

In recent months while trapped inside
I've been so grateful for my home to hide
in and look out of my room with a view
to watch people passing, albeit just a few.
My room with a view has three sides to look at;
a street in front, a garden at rear and a side slat.

I'm luckier than many who don't have much space
they're stuck in high rise flats without sight of a face.
They don't have a garden to spend time outside.
They are limited in what space their rooms can provide.
Their room with a view is of a window and four walls,
not exactly space for exercise or juggling with balls.

They hardly have space to, say, just 'swing a cat'
let alone space for each person to know where they're at.
My heart goes out to their room with no view
they are not quite as lucky as I am, or you.
So, next time you think you feel cramped or as tight as a pin
be grateful for your room with a view and the home you are in.

26th July 2020

Zooming around

I never thought that I'd ever say
that I would be zooming around every day.
A few months ago, I'd never heard of Zoom
unless it was a rocket flying around the room
But now every day I can zoom into many homes
and also go zooming to places in other time zones.

I never thought that I'd ever dream
of being grateful for time in front of a screen
or being thankful for technology allowing me to be
linked in with friends in the UK and overseas.
But now I can zoom with the best of the 'geeks'
and have been zooming around for over 16 weeks.

I never thought that I would find comfort
in seeing squares of faces pop up in front
on a screen where usually were lines of words
that meant work or meetings to be heard.
But now I am so grateful for all types of zoom
that bring all aspects of my world to my little room.

29th July 2020

All alone

During lockdown while in the midst of this pandemic
that started so slowly but then created such havoc around
the whole world it felt strange to be suddenly on my own.

What was I going to do? How was I going to pass the time?
Should I learn something new or just practice other skills
that I could do with perfecting like music, art or sewing?

I certainly didn't fancy just cleaning every inch of my home
as it seemed many people around me had chosen to do.
There was no fun in that and so it didn't even come to my mind.

I could use it as a Retreat I thought, read more, meditate more,
consider things more, talk on the phone more, paint more,
spend time on self-reflections of my life and how it has been.

There were so many things to do as I was on my own, all alone.
All things considered, if I had to be locked in during lockdown
I am so grateful that the person I had for company ... was me!

29th July 2020

Friends

I am so grateful for my friends during this time.

Some have been in contact often and others only occasionally but they are still friends despite not being nearby right now.

This strange time has seen the end of some of my long-term friendships for various reasons mostly due to misunderstandings or some people not being able to handle the lockdown so well.

I have been missing friends no longer here but wondering how they would have coped during this period of the pandemic.

One special friend and I would have spent hours on the phone chatting about everything.

Despite being hundreds of miles apart our friendship had lasted through good times and bad.

This time would have been no exception.

I know we'd have had the most amazing conversations but instead, I have to just chat with her in my mind.

For those friends who are still here and living through these quite difficult times I am so grateful that they are still part of my life, albeit in a different time.

30th July 2020

Coming Out

To hear those words once again, “Are you coming out?”
were words to be heard with a whisper, not a shout.
It almost seemed like we were being quite daring,
to be going out seemed like we were not caring.
And yet, when we ventured out for a distanced walk
it seemed so natural as we strolled and we talked.
It almost seemed like nothing had changed at all.
It felt like for that brief moment there had been no fall
of millions of people around the world due to this virus
this pandemic, this plague, this consumption, this major crisis.
I had walked by myself silently throughout all the days
I smiled at anyone I met, even those who averted their gaze.
I said hello and sounded as cheerful as I could
to hopefully spread a little lightness into this dark wood.
But, oh! how lovely it was to once again be on a walk
not on my own now but with a friend and having a talk!
I am pleased that we have started to come out once again
as, you may agree, coming out is so much more fun than staying in.

August 2020

The bite of a beastie

Some folks think that wee beasties are quite timorous
but I would certainly not quite agree.
There was nothing timorous about one I encountered
as she took a wee bite out of me.
I didn't see any sign of this beastie that moved quickly
but just felt a sting and an itch.
She left her mark on my leg and drew blood with her bite
and I thought to myself, what a bitch!
I didn't know at the time that it was caused by a horse fly
and it is only the females that bite.
I wonder if this means it is really a mare or a filly fly
that stuck its sword in with all of its might.
Whatever it was it caused quite an infection to start
and a red swollen leg racked with pain.
It is easing now but was bruised as it healed
and hope never to get one again.
I didn't see where it came from or where it went
and didn't really know that it had been
But as I suffered for weeks with a leg not so good
now I wish that it had not been seen.
Around the area I live there are trees and even a lake,
I guess it could live somewhere nearby.
But I sincerely hope that I do not encounter the like
again, that fills me with such fear.
A beastie like this should not be around here
and should live its life on a farm.
It should be away from folks like me and you
where it can do much less harm.
But if they have to stay in our towns like they do
I wonder if they can start wearing a bell
around their neck to send warnings to all about
the bite that causes us humans pure hell.

August 2020

The Battle of the Cauliflower Beasts or Battle of the Brassicas

This year as we were going into lockdown
I planted some cauliflowers ready for summer.
I wanted to be more 'green' as well as have fresh
vegetables to devour as often as I wanted.

However, it seems that beasties in my garden
had other ideas as the caterpillars moved in
to the vegetable bed on mass and even
brought along their pals and more pals.

One day my cauliflowers were growing well
and the next they were full of holes
and the little green beasties devoured
each and every leaf as their banquet!

Instead of lush cauliflower leaves they looked
like colander leaves ready to rinse water.
There were more holes than leaves and
just green sticks instead of stems.

I even put out real leaves from my shop-bought
cauliflowers in the hopes it would tempt
them away from the ones trying to grow
but those cunning caterpillars were not fooled.

Next year I will plant them again but then
I will be ready for the battle of the brassicas,
and will be armed with netting and egg shells,
hoping that next year I will win the battle of the beasts.

August 2020

U-turns

Pick a letter – any letter
as long as it is a U
at least that's what the governments do
to me and sometimes to you.
They give us Guidelines
and also some Rules
then they change their minds
like any playground fools.
Is it any wonder that we
are so totally confused
when they make statements
daily that make us so bemused?
Our MPs are divided now
on what is wrong or right.
They can't agree to anything
though discussed with all their might.
In England it's one rule
and in Scotland it's another!
In Wales it is totally different
and in Ireland quite another.
It seems that whether it is
related to COVID or BREXIT
it's a case of U-turns being
the only winner now – i'nt it!

Sept 14th 2020

Why, oh, Why, (Y O Y)

Why oh why, are we in such a pickle?

What happened to that stiff upper lip?

Was it yet another U turn they offered us

or was it them shooting from the hip?

Why, oh, why, do minds keep changing?

What can they be thinking about?

With telling us one thing one day

and then turning it inside out!

Why, oh, why, can't they act like you and me?

What makes them think that they are right?

Who is giving them guidance from the side

with no end result in sight?

Why, oh, why, are people not seeing sense?

What is it that they think when flaunting rules?

Who do they think they're harming? Nobody?

And not see themselves as fools?

Why, oh, why, can't we think and act as one?

Why can't we do what's best for us all

by stopping all these U turns now

before we take an almighty fall?

Why, U turns can be good though not all the time
Why, U turns can be handy to help see another way
Why, U turns can make sense sometimes
but not when taken every day!

Sept 30th 2020

A Woman of Letters

I used to be known as a woman of letters
as I penned them whenever I could.
I always followed up any general complaints
with a letter, as polite people always should.
This is how I was taught, to put it in writing,
as the written word couldn't be ignored.
And make sure that you ask a question
so that an answer was needed, good lord.
But now letters are not written as often
and it is emails that are sent instead.
They may be quicker than post used to be
But they are still letters, compiled in my head.

30th Sept

Love Letters

Love letters used to be written about in songs
and were composed from the heart with much love.

They were a work of art in themselves with all
the poetic terms used and the flowing of words.

But sadly, these days, love letters are rarely heard of
and certainly seldom seen by anyone, let alone lovers.

The nearest anyone gets to love letters is a selection
of random letters put together to form a text
that some of us can't begin to understand.

LOL used to mean lots of love but now it is
more often used to indicate Laughing Out Loud.

HAK is now hugs and kisses but this too has even
now been abbreviated and shortened to OXOXOX.

ILU or ILY is simply I Love You but it somehow
just doesn't seem to do justice to those words.

And by the way - whatever happened to SWALK?

Whatever would the poets and wordsmiths think
of the love letters that are sent these days?

Somehow along with losing the beautiful words we
appear to also have lost some depth of meaning. SO SAD.

30 Sept 2020

My Vision

I have a vision of what a post pandemic world
will look like but many may not want to be in it.

Those who enjoyed wasting things and destroying
the natural life that had done them no harm,
but offered them life in all its forms
will not survive for long without changing.

There will be no hiding place for them
to continue their destructive ways.

There will be no space for them to waste things
and leave behind a trail of frippery as before.

My vision will see those that care showing,
creating and sharing a new way of life
more in harmony with nature, not destroying it.

It will be a way of learning from the past
not ignoring it and returning to ways of old
that worked and were sustainable,
combining those ways with the new ones
to create a place where the vision of today
becomes the reality of our tomorrow.

1st Oct 2020

Different visions

We each have a different view of what can be
and of what the future could look like and hold.
To get there we need to make difficult decisions
and ones that to some eyes may seem quite bold.
It needs to be thought through and talked about
and discussed at length by all it is concerning,
not speculated on by just a few whose ideas
may not be the same as those more discerning.
A vision of the future needs to be one for all.
It needs also to be one that with others is shared
not just for a few who shout the loudest
but for all who for the future have cared.
A vision for the future should bring people together
and help them to work alongside each other as one.
It should be about us healing all the rifts and cracks
and allow misunderstandings of the past to be gone.
I hope that our vision gives us hope for the time ahead
and helps us once again be happy, solid and strong.
I hope it gives us chance to be again a community
full of different individuals coming together as one.

11th Oct 2020

Alternative Christmas Songs

Ding dong merrily on high

1. Ding dong merrily on high
the Minster bells are ringing.
Ding dong verily we sigh
for us there is no singing.
Oh no, oh no, oh no, oh no, oh no, oh no
How can we keep on singing?

2. Pray you dutifully prime
via zoom now all ye singers.
May you beautifully rhyme
your songs now all you bringers.
Oh no, oh no, oh no, oh no, oh no, oh no
We must now keep on singing!

3. So here's another thought
how our songs can be sung.
We can sing at home
or through our masks we'll humen.
Oh yes, oh yes, oh yes, oh yes, oh yes, oh yes
We can now keep on singing.

4. We now sing again at home
alone and in our room.
We can sing from our hearts
and see others sing via zoom.
Oh yes, oh yes, oh yes, oh yes, oh yes, oh yes,
We know how to keep singing! (Repeat last two lines)

(Sung to the traditional Christmas Carol tune)

October 2020

(Written early for Unitarian Chapel Newsletter)

Deck the halls with boughs of holly

Deck the halls with boughs of holly
fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la,
'tis the season to be jolly
fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la.
Don't you think that we deserve it
after all we've just been through.
We should have some time of cheer now,
to ourselves we must be true.

Deck your home with decorations
fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la,
linked into our country's nations
fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la.
Tartan ribbon, scarlet dragons,
emerald shamrock and roses too.
Add some lights, a bit of sparkle
seasonal bits to warm us through.

Deck your doors with festive greeting
fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la,
pass them on to all you're meeting
fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la.
Send them cheer and all good wishes,
send your thoughts to all nearby.
Pass on cheer to all your neighbours
since we can't meet eye to eye.

Deck your windows with some light
fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la,
make your home a festive sight
fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la.
Through the dark times in this winter
let us please send cheer to all.
Sing we now of days much lighter
pass your blessings on to all.

(Sung to the traditional Christmas Carol tune)

October 2020

(Written early for Unitarian Chapel Newsletter)

Lockdown two

In Lockdown One, we didn't know what to expect

but this time around we have more of an idea.

It may not be as long as the first one was

but it most certainly will be darker and colder.

In Lockdown One we were worried about things

but this time around it seems worries have gone.

Some people think it is all a sham or hoax

and that we are not really in a world pandemic.

In Lockdown One the days were bright, light and warm.

We treated it a bit like an unexpected holiday.

It may have been uncertain times ahead

but we were most certainly all in it together.

In Lockdown Two, the days are short, dark and cold

we can't treat it like an additional holiday

as there are even more uncertain times to come

and we are now not, it seems, in it together.

In Lockdown Two, we have been given more freedom.

We can walk outside and take some exercise

and we can even meet with a friend in the park

but just not with a group of others as yet.

In Lockdown Two it may not be such a long time
and it may be not as strict as Lockdown One was
but it still is proving difficult for some folks
and will those folks now spoil it for the rest?

Lockdowns are not meant to create an easy time.
They are not imposed merely for the fun of it.
They are not in place to upset people.
They are in place to attempt to save the lives of all.

Lockdowns can be fought and railed against.
They can be shouted at and rallied about.
They can have guidelines broken each day.
They can be ignored by the few at cost to many.

We didn't want a Lockdown One in Spring.
We didn't want a Lockdown Two in Autumn.
We don't want a Lockdown Three or Four
so let us hope there will be Lockdowns no more.

4 Nov 2020

Thanksgiving & Giving Thanks

Thanksgiving is a time of being grateful

but this year what have we to be thankful for?

There are not a lot of things for us to say thank you
for, unless we give thanks for still being here.

There are many people who we have lost
whether they are family or friends to us.

Their families would give thanks for them still
to be with them, just as we are all here.

We give thanks to all those who are busy
caring for us and looking after us all.

We're thankful that some are putting their lives
on the line for us in every way.

Our thanks also extend out to those who
are working in simple ways that keep
everything moving along and trying to
maintain a small bit of 'normality'.

So maybe there are plenty of things right now
for us to be grateful for and show our thanks.

And despite the difficult times that are around us
perhaps we can still spread a little thanks about.

20-Nov-20

Thanksgiving

When I brought some strange white men
home to meet my folks a long time ago
little did I know that many years later on
I would have wished that this was not so.

I helped to show them how to live
and how to grow food to keep them fed.
We showed them how to use the land
and where best to lay their head.

We shared our food and taught them things
that meant they could survive.

We gave them the chance to start again
and showed them how to keep alive.

They gave us thanks and became our friends
and together we grew and lived alongside.

We worked at life and seemed to find a path
until it seems that some folks had lied.

They took everything that we held dear
and they even took the land.

They gave us places that nobody wanted
and never offered us a helping hand.

They left us to struggle and sometimes starve
and to survive the best way we could.

They didn't treat us as we had done them
but some really wished that they would.

And now each year at thanksgiving I find
they re-tell that old story of long ago.

It is celebrated with much joy and such food
that they want everyone still to know.

But what is it that they want folks to know?

That it's ok to take whatever you need
in order to keep you and your family alive,
but true care is not really to heed.

Is that what 'thanksgiving' really is?

I would like to think that just as long ago
when a lesson was learned and they realise
that true 'thanks' comes from the heart, not below.

(Based on the Pocahontas story) 20th Nov 2020

At last the wait is over

At last the wait is over
for now the vaccine is here.
It's what we have been waiting for
to bring us all good cheer.

But now, just as with buses
when waiting seems to be
an endless task of patience
then along come three!

We wanted one pure vaccine
to help save us from this mess.
But then, just as with buses,
come three and nothing less!

The first is being doled out now
to those who need it most.
Then in turn we will get ours
depending on the host.

By Spring we all should have one
so that should help us be
once again as we were before
safe, prosperous and free.

Dec. 2020

Birthday Blues

I heard all the year about birthdays being held
in a different way to usual and I thought
how dreadful it must be for folks not to
celebrate as they always had done before.

People who had reached milestone birthdays
during the lockdowns must have had a tough
time of trying to have treats but still be safe
and not celebrate as they had done before.

For children who would usually have parties
complete with friends and families joining
them to play games and share party food
they could not celebrate as they'd done before.

For older folks who may not have many
birthdays left to be together with family
this must have seemed a strange year to them
not being able to celebrate as they'd done before.

And now it was my birthday and my turn
to not spend it as I would have hoped to do.

I didn't have my 'un-birthday birthday' in summer
and now could not celebrate as I'd done before.

17th Dec 2020

The Pagan Year Review

This year has been like no other
that any of us has ever experienced.

It has seen us having the Spring Equinox
celebrated in only a minimum way.

Although the days grew lighter
our moods were somewhat darker.

The Summer Solstice saw us attempting
to celebrate as much as we could
but in a very different way to usual.

We hoped that by the Autumn Equinox
we would have more freedom
but this did not come to pass.

Now we prepare to face Winter Solstice
with more restrictions than ever.

It is the shortest day and darkest time of the year
and to many it is the darkest time in their lives.

We can still get ready to welcome the light
but for now, it will have to be the lightness
in our hearts as we look forward to
the light returning again to our lives
but not for sometime yet.

20th Dec 2020

Solstice

A time for reflecting on the year that has past
a year that is behind now, “thank God,” we say at last.
It has been a year like no other that we have known.
a year when many friendships and promises were blown.
It has been a year of testing us in every single way
of making us review ourselves and changing every day.
It made us rethink values, and look to deep within
to see what lay beneath us all and look where we have been.
For some this soulful search was difficult to look so deep inside,
their searching found a different person there lurking trying to hide.
For others their searching found new strength to help as never before,
it made them seek an inner strength that lifted them from the floor.
The Solstice brings a time of finding a new inner light
that still is there in times of need and such a welcome sight.
I hope the Solstice bring folks comfort, especially this year
and brings to us the light we need and with it lots of cheer.

21st Dec 2020

Yule

And so now it is Yule

a time of feasting and celebrations

that have been in place for centuries

but for this year – not quite the same.

The ancient feast of Yule

is celebrated by Prince and Pauper

and everyone in every house between

but for this year – not quite the same.

The celebration of Yule

is the link with our Mother Earth

and we mark the winter with festivals

but for this year – not quite the same.

The tide of Yule

is the season of goodwill to all

and we share blessings of earth with others

but for this year – not quite the same.

This is the feast of Yule

and Season's Greetings to all.

Pass love & blessings to everyone

but for this year not quite the same.

And so it is now Yule
we are celebrating and feasting
and passing on cheers to all
but for this year – just not quite in the same way.

26th December 2020

Review

Well – who would have thought it
back then 9 months ago
that we would still be meeting like this
and zooming to and fro?

We thought it would be all over
at least by the summer time
and we would be returning to normal
and seated in our lines.

But here we are now at mid-winter
and in our various tiers
still staying home for most of the time
and facing many more fears.

We have now become accustomed

to accepting things anew
and challenging our learning skills
to communicate with you.

It looks like we will still be here
for a few months more
and not returning yet to the norm
or as we were before.

But, now as 2021 approaches
and we reach another year
let's hope we actually get there
without shedding another tear.

26th Dec 2020

New Year's Eve

We have made it to the end of the year
even though we are now in a different tier.
Our celebrations will not be so joyous
and festivities not quite as boisterous
but at least some of us are still here
and ready to move into a new sphere.

For those we have lost we now remember
as we arrive on the last day of December
We think of good times along with the bad
of times that were happy, were funny or sad.
We think of everything we knew from the past
and these in our memories forever will last.

It is the end of the dark times, the start of the light,
It's the end of an era as we move through this night.
Not only has controversial BREXIT concluded today
but new things are ahead for us in every way.
The deals have been made and papers were signed
and now for a new future we must be resigned.

The vaccines are here now and already in use
so soon from the pandemic we should be loose.
But it's changing its tack now and grabbing a hold

so, we must continue to stay home as we're told.

We can still celebrate and meet friends via zoom
but from the safety and comfort of our own room.

We still wish everyone a Happy New Year

and this time we mean it and are being sincere.

Whatever your thoughts are and from wherever you hale
whether you are still here or your ship has set sail.

We want folks to be happy and healthy and here
and that is why we wish all folks 'good cheer'.

31st Dec 2020

Here we are again

Here we are again

happy as can be

all good friends

and jolly good company.

Or should we say, here we are again

not quite as happy as we can be

when all good friends are not around

and we've only ourselves for company.

It's a case of, here we go again
am I really as happy as I can be?
Where are all my good friends right now
as I've only myself for company?

So, it will be a case of here we go again
and to try to stay as happy as we can be
to keep good friends within our hearts
and enjoy our limited company.

We will get there sometime again
and we will be as happy as can be.
We will have good friends around us
and we'll be in jolly good company.

5th January 2021

Lockdown three

A new year, a new start and now a new lockdown.

We had hoped the new year would bring relief
and that a new start would mean new freedom,
but instead, it has brought us more restrictions.

It came after yet another U-turn that seem to
have become part of procedures these days.

We were told one thing one day and then
by the next day, it was all change yet again.

It is a difficult time and we know that these
are uncharted waters for us all to be in but
surely there is a better way for us to deal
with everything that is safer for us all.

Let's hope that during this latest lockdown
people will follow the rules and stay at home
not flaunt them and break them without a care
for others that will be affected or harmed.

Only time will tell of course as to what will be.

Will it work out as hoped and then will the virus
start to diminish as is the overall intention
or, will this be yet another unproductive move?

6th January 2021

Twelfth Night

On the twelfth night of Christmas what will fate bring us?

It will not be maids a-milking as its against union rules now,
but it could be Lords a-leaping as they try to make sense
of what is happening amidst the pandemic pandemonium.

It will not be geese laying as it is too cold for them right now.

It will not be swans a-swimming as lakes and ponds are frozen
but it could be a partridge in a pear tree providing that he
was lucky enough not to be plucked and eaten at Christmas!

It will not be turtle doves unless they have a warm cote to cosy in
and likewise, with the French hens laying now that Brexit is done,
but it may be five gold rings as the Olympics were postponed
in the hopes that they could go ahead safely this year - some hope!

It will not be ladies dancing as it is not allowed in any tier
as social distancing must be observed at all times, even today.

But, it may be Birds if you are lucky enough to have a garden
or trees near where you live and they are still allowed to do 'calling'!

I doubt it will be Drummers as that number is far too many and it
exceeds permitted people, as well as the volume of the drumming.

But, it may be Pipers Piping depending on where you live
as there are many lone pipers piping around the streets.

So, whatever is it that Twelfth Night brings us may it be
some sort of allowable cheer or virtual hug, or perhaps a
permissible person popping in to say hello but if not then
hopefully it will be well sanitised, cleansed but above all – fun.

6th Jan 2021

Pandemonium in the Pandemic

Just when we thought it could not get any worse
we find that there are other trials being sent to test.
This time it was it was for the supposed people
in the most powerful house known in the West.
One power-mad President urged protesters to walk
and show their feelings to those doing their job.
Sadly, it wasn't just a peaceful walk by people upset,
it became angry, violent, and an out-of-control mob.
Democracy was challenged and people got hurt
property was damaged and vital papers were torn.
There was furniture and items that were ransacked
and it seemed like a new era of the mob was born.
The country may need to review and change laws
and it may well need to find a way forward for all.
But one thing is for sure and however it is done
the USA may be heading for quite a huge fall.
I hope that the pandemonium we saw on our screens
will be short lived and that sanity and truth will ensue.
I hope that the new President will work with the world
making a safer and peaceful place for me and for you.

7th January 2021

A Change of Regime

With all the changes we have seen come and go

this is one that many were wishing would be so.

We have seen so much strange behaviour over the days

and welcomed a level head to change some ways.

We hoped it would be smooth and without any fight

as one person was hanging on with all of his might.

He had called it 'fake news' and an 'illegal vote'

he left without a handover and not even a note.

Many folks were pleased to see him finally leave

but there were other followers who started to grieve.

As the eyes of the world looked on at events to take place

they hoped it would go smoothly, in a peaceful space.

No incidents to mar this change of power and regime

and despite all security an air of calm was to be seen.

We all breathed a sigh of relief and relaxed just the same

as the power was passed into safer hands once again.

Only time will tell if these new hands will prove good

but we hope that for now at least, we are out of the wood!

The next morning the one thing we saw that was new

people around the new man all wore masks, not just a few.

He signed lots of documents and made laws anew

so hopefully, it will make a difference to me and to you.

21st January 2021 (Day after the inauguration of the new President of the USA)

Seven banes of York

Instead of the seven plagues of Egypt right now we may feel like it is all of them visiting us here within one year as it seems like one bane after another.

The first cases of coronavirus in the UK were found in York and a few months later a world pandemic was announced and our lives would not be the same again.

Shops were closed as the country went into lockdown and many of them were destined never to reopen ending up with people losing their jobs and income.

This in turn resulted in more people needing to rely on the food banks that had only been for a few before but was now in demand from the most unlikely folks.

Spring and Summer brought us a heatwave that made the lockdown easier for some but difficult for others as the temperatures reached and broke all records.

Autumn saw us entering another lockdown but this was not as easy as the first - with days much darker and colder and spirits seemed much lower.

Then in Winter came the snow and ice which
at any other time, we could cope with but this
year it added another risk of falls and accidents.

Then finally one year after the virus arrived
along came the flooding to test us even more
just when we thought we had started to see the light.

They survived the seven plagues in ancient Egypt
and for sure the folks in York will do the same
as, when up against it, out will come Yorkshire Grit!

23rd January 2021

Sad Statistics

It is one year now since the first
cases of coronavirus were detected
in York and since then we've
had the whole world being infected
by the extent of the virus
and the number of people dying
with all deaths linked to the pandemic
and now Governments are vying
as to the amounts of the vaccine
they are buying, to protect

the people in their countries
so no more cases they will detect.
We have now reached a huge number
that we hoped never to actually see.
Those who've died is over 100,000
more than ever we thought it would be.
It may be a milestone and a vast
one for us to actually cross
so how then can we begin to imagine
an even greater extent of loss?
After reaching 100,000 deaths yesterday
today we recall many more lives lost
and think of over 6 million lives gone
as we remember those in the Holocaust.

27th January 2021

Will it make a difference?

Will it make a difference
now that the death toll here has risen so high
and will we remember each person still
as we remember these times in days gone by?

Will it make a difference
all those laps Captain Tom walked around,
the money he raised, the inspiration he gave

and the world-wide fame that he found?

Will it make a difference

now that he's gone and we all feel his loss
for he made us all feel that whatever we did
we could try to be cheery and not cross?

Will it make a difference

now that the vaccines we need are here -
they are being doled out to groups already
and bringing a new glimmer of cheer?

Will it make a difference

if I go out to on my doorstep to clap for the man,
for the bravery he'd shown when times were bad
and for his help to remind us 'that we certainly' can?

RIP Captain Tom 3rd Feb

And now it is my turn

The vaccines are ready to be given out
and now that they are all here
will I be happy to go and have mine
or will I be full of such fear?

The sceptics are making us wary

of having the blooming thing
because of the contents within it
and not just because of the 'sting'.

They say there there's no need to have it
and no need to be cautious or agree
because there is nothing to be fearful of
it's just another ruse to stop us being free.

Well, now it's my turn for the vaccine
and it's my turn to decide what to do
and I have to admit that I'm quite happy
to then feel safer for me and for you.

It may not be the wise thing to do
but I have had to admit for a while
that I want to get back to some freedom
and once again feel able to smile.

So, I will go for my vaccine today
and I'll be happy that my turn has come
it will give me a sense of helping others
and returning to times of more fun.

3rd Feb 2021

Lockdown Haircuts

Once again we have found ourselves in a state of 'lockdown hair-cuts'.

The good thing is though that everyone is in the same boat unless that is you happen to have a hairdresser living in your house or one allowed within your 'bubble'.

The rest of us have to settle for whatever it is that our hair decides to do and whichever way it opts to grow, or should I say stick out!

We can 'have a go' ourselves with either scissors or a shaver but often this just creates more problems.

And so instead we have to accept that we have joined a merry band of fellow humans with similar 'lockdown hair-cuts' and hair that is doing its own thing or pretend we are aiming for the windswept look and if all else fails - just wear a wig!

6th Feb 2021

Faith, Hope & Charity

We were asked to have faith in our government when we found out all about the pandemic. But, could we really place our faith and belief in a group of people who seem to lack any wisdom?

We are all hoping that our situation will pass soon and we will return to better and safer times. But, are our hopes well founded at present or will these hopes be dashed yet again?

We know that Charities are suffering right now and so, have we given more to help those in need? But, do they need money as well as items to help those with less than we have just cope and survive?

We can have some faith in ourselves, even if nobody else.
We can hope to make a difference, no matter how small.
We can give to others some of our time, money or items
but as well as these things we can also offer our love.

Faith, Hope & Charity.....but the greatest of these is Love.

14th Feb 2021

Zoom Power

Never underestimate the power of a host on zoom.

She has the power to eject you from the room.

When her finger goes onto the button with a boom

be assured you will most certainly be ejected – *kaboom!*

Do not use foul language or insult anyone

for in the touch of a finger you will be gone.

This is not the age of men like years bygone

it is now more power in the age of woman.

15th Feb (After zoom meeting of Handforth Parish Council goes viral -8th Feb)

Masks

Two years ago, if we had walked into a shop with a mask on the people inside would have been worried and scared for what we were going to do as we would have looked suspicious and they would have felt unsafe in case they were to be robbed.

In York we had been used to seeing visitors from the East wearing their masks as they walked about in our city and we wanted to say to them, “It’s ok, our air is cleaner, you don’t need to wear your mask here like you do at home”.

But a year ago that all changed and the advice came to us to wear a mask inside any buildings, especially in shops so, the majority of us complied and wore our masks to protect ourselves and others from this hidden virus.

There were the standard blue medical style masks that the majority of people wore and they all walked around looking very much the same as everyone else did and you couldn’t see the face or the smile of those you met.

There started to be a whole range of home-made masks made out of whatever material people had at home even some that matched outfits and were coloured-coded to allow for a little bit of individuality amongst the masks.

And then there were the designer masks that arrived
on street-seller stalls and could be found in our shops,
that was of course, when the shops were open and when
checked where these were made? It was, ironically, in China!

There was also an army of volunteers who were sewing
home-made masks for those in the care sector and also
those in teaching who needed to keep as safe as they could
and yet still continue to work within all aspects of their jobs.

I made almost a hundred special ones for friends and family
throughout the year for their birthdays and Christmas
and they ranged from Rainbows to Harry Potter and then
from plain coloured to those with a fun festive feel.

Will we ever return to a life without wearing our masks?

I fear that it may not be for quite some time yet.

Who would have thought back then, that we would all
spend a whole year hiding our faces behind a mask?

22nd Feb 2021

Road Map

Hoorah, we have a new road map
to help us out of lockdown.

No, not one for driving around
but to help get back to town.

It gives us 4 steps to follow
and to guide us to new ways
that will take us out of lockdown
and a return to freer days.

It will need us all to do this
and to adhere to what is said
to allow us out of lockdown
and into another never tread.

22nd Feb 2021

(After Boris's road map is announced)

Homeless

Being homeless at the best of times is hard enough
for those in that position but in times of a pandemic
where do the homeless go to 'stay home' as instructed?

In York the homeless were found places to be housed
to keep safe and to have a place they could call home
but did other cities and towns do the same, I wonder?

Meals were provided by volunteers with some treats
in the food bags the same as others gave themselves
so that they too could feel that they were cared for.

If we can do this for twelve months as we have done
then why not do this all the time and not just during
a time of crisis or in winter months but 'forever'?

10th March

(After providing & delivering meals for the YES Below Zero project)

Shopping has changed

We took for granted the time when we just went out to the shops whenever we felt like it.

We could walk around shops, browsing without buying or just window-shopping for ideas.

If you needed inspiration for your DIY at home then you looked for a while before making any decisions or buying.

But then, when lockdown was thrust upon us we needed to rethink our shopping habits.

Did we really need that item we were so desperate for a short while ago or could we just make do?

Were you one of the many folks who went into panic mode and bought up all the loo rolls that you could find, in case you were caught short?

Did you stock pile all the basic items needed and by your actions make it impossible for others to get even a tin of beans or a loaf of bread for their families?

Did you think only of yourself and not of cutting back a little bit to ensure there would be enough for everyone?

Did you remember to send or donate something to those needing the food bank, just as they always have?

Many people changed from going to the shops to ordering their shopping online, whether it was food or the new outfit for whenever they could go out again.

The home deliveries proved to be a learning curve for many as we found our way around the online selecting and ordering, especially when requesting 2 of something, not 12 or 22.

Decisions not to allow substitutes proved to be a good idea especially when toilet cleaner came in place of washing-up liquid and you wondered who on earth made that choice for you!

Just getting a home delivery was quite a task and so we became adept at placing orders at midnight or receiving orders late into the night when you would usually be thinking of bedtime.

'None in stock' became the most annoying phrase you read especially when you knew there were plenty in the actual shop or when your item wasn't recognised by the words used – well, honestly!

What we used to take for granted and even used to moan about will be such a treat when lockdown ends, when the pandemic eases and once again, what used to be a bit of a drag will become something of an outing, able to go to do our weekly shop.

I have never been a big shopper but to go out to town and then to meet with friends again, browse the shops, and then to buy something to bring home that same day will feel like a special day.

25th Feb 2021

Seasons

To everything - turn, turn, turn -
there is a season – turn, turn, turn -
and a time for every purpose under heaven.

There has been a time for everything
as the seasons turned during the year
but most of the things we missed on earth.

From Spring last year when everything
stopped - turn, turn, turning - until Spring
this year when the turns started again.

Everything else seemed to stop
around the whole world and only
nature and the seasons kept turning.

The summer came and went
as did Autumn and Winter too
until it was back to Spring again.

To everything – turn, turn, turn -
there is a season turn, turn, turn - and
a time to give thanks for a future.

4th March 2021

Schooling

Throughout the year schooling has changed
and for many it's been done at home.

Parents have become the teachers
with quite a taxing time for some.

Technology has helped for many
but some others got left behind.

It highlighted the gap between families
as old laptops some tried to find.

There were classes galore of every sort
done in front of a screen for a start.

From exercise to history, maths and RE
and even new ways of tackling art.

All lessons were covered as often as possible
and in the best way that they could.

But imagine what teachers and parents felt
when told schools were to reopen, they would.

Parents were relieved they could return to
once again being just mum and dad.

Teachers were pleased to start teaching again
and the children – well, they were just glad.

They were skipping to school and for once
they were awake, up and out of the fold.

They were happy to see their friends again
and school was on track again, not on hold.

8th March 2021

Light

When the days began to get light again
our spirits seemed to start to soar.
Our hearts began to sing again
and our minds became clearer once more.

The mornings were lighter
when we woke up with the sun
and our lives seemed much brighter,
'twas the same for everyone.

We were told that the darkness was over.
There was light at the end for us all.
But, was the tunnel end really in sight
or were we about to have a great fall?

My spirits certainly seem lighter and
I looked forward to the future once more.
Was I ready to pick myself up
from a position way down on the floor?

After what seemed like a year of darkness
was I ready to face life anew?
Was I prepared to start over again
and to be one of the chosen few?

Could we create a new life after COVID
and have a lighter outlook on life,
one that is more equal for all and
without all the darkness and strife?

I hope to be one who can manage
and help build a new city for us,
that makes everyone here feel valued
and can start a new life with a buzz!

8th March 2021

Life on hold

The whole world has been on hold
and around the globe has been fear
of this virus that affected people everywhere
whatever their age was, for over a year.

I imagine back then, if people had been
asked not to go out but stay inside
for a year and only to leave home rarely
and for this to be happening world-wide.

Although countries have varied in how
Governments have dealt with this thing,
each one has rules and guidelines to follow

and feel constraints that lockdowns can bring.

Slowly our life on hold is now being eased,
people are starting to venture out once more.

Some are even coming and going between
countries again just like they used to do before.

Now it looks like life is starting up again
and restrictions are also being eased.

Our lives can once more begin to move along
and won't we all then be so pleased!

12th March

COVID Conversations

Our language has changed so much in a year
and new words have come into being.

Ones that most of us never had heard of
but soon in the dictionary we'll be seeing.

COVID was the first at the start of the year
the name of a virus that we'd come to dread.

Lockdown was a word we'd soon come to know
and to many it meant time to stay in your bed!

To others this word was a frightening thing

as it meant the end of the freedom they'd known.

Social distancing became a phrase that was used
whenever you left the safety of your own home.

The 2 metre rule was observed at the shops
and it was eventually cut down to just one.

But wherever you walked you were always aware
of your own space and when it was gone.

We started to Zoom all over the place each day
for our work, some meetings and even for fun.

This brought its own language about 'being on mute'
and being warned when your 'connection' had gone!

We spoke in the 'chat box' and not face to face
and some folks even shared part of their screen.

We could see notes, figures and photos galore
no matter where in the world they had been.

We started talk of 'pandemic' as it spread around the world
and it changed from just the virus we'd known.

Then the word was we would need vaccine passports
though this possibility made some people groan.

Then of course there were the COVID deniers
who believed that the virus was not really here.

“It’s a conspiracy or a plot,” they believed or insisted,
a government ploy to take our freedom and stop cheer.

They may deny that the whole thing wasn’t happening
but for each one there are many who do not agree.

They know that it happened to their families and friends
and the pandemic happened for you, them and me.

Our conversation will change as the years roll along
and our language will start to evolve once again
New words may come in and some words will go
but certain new words in our language will remain.

13th March

Fundraising Fun

Throughout this pandemic many things ceased to be
and one of the main things were events.

Gatherings were not allowed either inside or out
not in theatres, cinemas or even in tents.

This meant fund raising events could not take place
so raising money was at an all-time low.

People had to be canny to think up new ways
and being creative to inspire those in the know.

Some people did walks around their homes or roads
some even did socially distanced things in their street
They inspired others to follow and try for themselves
to get donations from all that they meet.

There were walkers and runners and swimmers galore.
there were even some sailors and rowers on seas.
Though I doubt there was anyone this year
to be found sitting in a bathtub of beans!

There will still be red noses of all shapes and sizes
with people in wigs and making fun faces.
They will all do their best to raise lots of funds
by hook or crook or socially distanced races.

No matter however bad the times seem to be
our Nation is well known for funds that we raise.
We always seem to dig deep, especially the poor
and for big hearts and generosity they need praise.

This year will certainly be quite a challenge for us all
to see if we can dig deep and rise to the test.
But, it could be a surprise as we rally to the call
and show the world that there's life after our rest.

17th March (Just before Comic Relief / Red Nose day)

Census Day 21st

It is time for our national census this year
and I wonder how many will find
it hard to complete the forms without
the names of their loved ones on it.

There will be thousands of people
who last year would have had their
names being recorded for 2021 as
living at home with their family.

This year will be a difficult census
for those people already living with
a grief that is hard to take to then be
reminded that their family is incomplete.

There will be no special box on the form
where names of those lost during this
pandemic can be recorded and so we
will have to keep that box within our hearts.

21st March 2021 (Census Day)

Spring Equinox

It is a time for new beginnings

and for finding a balance within.

May we find new light around us

as our move from darkness begins.

As nature starts over again this spring

may we too start our lives once more.

May it be a new beginning for us now

and not the same as it was before.

21st March (Celebration of the Spring Equinox)

It's been a year!

What a year it certainly has been for us all

and will be one that we don't wish to repeat.

It has turned our whole world upside-down

and knocked many folks clear off their feet.

When it started we hoped that it wouldn't last long

and would be over within just a few weeks.

But after a whole year since our first lockdown

a touch of normality once more do we seek.

Faith groups will once more return to their prayers

and start meeting in their own sacred space.

The York Interfaith Group will meet once again

not on small screens but in true face to face.

Concerts will commence and cinema screens will be on.

Our theatre stages will no longer be in the dark.

There will be music for all and dancing to be done
whether in clubs, in private or even in the park.

Our hobbies will once more be able to start again
and we'll play or watch sports of all different kinds.
I will play my ukulele together with friends again
and have meetings together with those of like minds.

The students will meet with their friends again
and be able to see tutors and have a heart-to-heart.
I look forward to meeting with groups I belong to
as for many they have been kept quite apart.

There are so many things that we want to do now
as we slowly start to come out of our shell
but we need to do this quite carefully, and how
to make sure that we start to do things well.

After a year of our worries, of our fears and of shock
and for some a whole period of sheer disbelief,
we must acknowledge the hurt and loss felt by some
as they come to terms with their pain and their grief.

We must think of our nurses and doctors for sure
to honour all the hard work that they've done.
For many will be broken and their energy drained.
It has been serious times for them and not much fun.

There are still sad times ahead and troubles for some
as the future for many looks bleak with less work.
Our food banks will need help to maintain their support
so, from donating and supporting we mustn't shirk.

We can stretch out a hand to help those in need
and in times of darkness offer glimmers of light.
Not just for those with obvious troubles to see
but for those also whose hurt is out of sight.

We should try to stay positive whenever we can
and make sure that our actions reach everyone.
If we follow the one Golden Rule from now on
then the battle against this virus will be won.

23rd March 2021

Changes (3)

It is time for more changes for us all to take on
for life to return to be able to be 'normal' again
or whatever that new normal is going to be
will depend upon all of us to make changes.

We will be able to go out of our homes again
and to be able to do this more than once a day.

That will feel so very strange to so many folks
who have been shielding for over a year now.

We will be able to give family and friends a hug,
something that we have longed to be able to do.

We'll be able to hold new babies again and also
give our old folks a cuddle and a kiss to let them
know that we all love them so and have missed
these tender and special moments that humans have.

We may still need to wear masks for a while
but it will be so worth it just to know that we
can have those moments of touching each other and
changing back into the loving, caring folks we used to be.

March 2021

Changes (4)

I'm ready to change my ways,
will you now also change yours?

I want to be outside again
and not to stay indoors.

Are you ready to change your ways
and not stay the way you were?

Do you want to help Mother Earth
and save the life of her?

Will you be the change you want to see
in this new world we live in, always?

Will you keep up the change you want to be
until the end of your days?

March 2021

