

Reflections



Poems by
Keith Spence

REFLECTIONS

This little booklet finds me approaching Easter 2026. The Christian message of new life coming out of death seems very relevant in the current world crisis.

It's hard to be positive with so much suffering and destruction, but we have to be, for the sake of ourselves, families and people everywhere who seek a safe and fulfilling life free of violence and oppression.

So this little collection is reflections on things that brought me pleasure, sadness, inspiration and joy, from my late brother's wood carvings to a new road scheme.

I offer it as usual with the invitation to the reader to contribute to the ongoing work of my local Hospice at Home. The value of this largely voluntary aided organisation for terminally ill patients is immense. This is my small way of supporting them.

*Keith Spence
March 2026*

*Contributions may be sent to Hospice at Home (Carlisle & North Lakeland),
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REFLECTION

A round pool and cherub
catch my eye,
it's quiet with no birds
in the sky,
winter's breath holds sway
with the trees,
waiting for spring to come
in the breeze.

Often life is hectic lived
without rest,
rushing round trying to
do what's best,
here is a place to stop,
catch one's breath,
standing still by a pool,
good for my health.

The cherub grins at me
clutching his fish,
as if he is fully aware
of my inward wish,
to carry this peaceful
moment with me,
into every place where
I happen to be.

SEEK AND FIND

It can be anything
spectacles or diary,
once by our hand
now lost, it's scary!

Why does it happen,
this soft negligence,
a vanishing trick?
It makes no sense.

But, what a thrill,
seeing things again,
holding what's lost
stops aching pain.

Like the Jesus story
we search the place,
looking until at last,
joy lights our face.

I wish memories
could be the same,
discovered in time
along with a name.

Life feels out of joint
when names are lost,
who we are is hazy
forgetting the cost.

REBIRTH

For the long winter time it sat
pushing upwards to the light.
nothing to write home about
just a tiny stem rising.

But suddenly in March when
the days were cold and wet
a transformation came that
was totally surprising.

Along the new formed stem
buds burst out and opened
into fragile little flowers
with glowing colours.

The orchid blossomed into
life again flowering in style
as wrongly we thought it
had been lost to us.

There's a lesson here for
those of us who struggle
with not a lot to show
upon the surface.

Life's hidden energy lies
deep within our lives
but it can rise to put a
smile on our face.



HOMAGE

(Vaughan Williams Fantasia on theme of Thomas Tallis)

A window opens on a vast landscape
stretching back in time, music ancient
and sublime.

VW found tunes in villages and towns
celebrating our history, in both dance
and mystery.

From the Archbishop's church came
a melody divine, a sound beautiful
and fine.

The solemn music moves from one
to the other, paying tribute to Tallis
his brother.

FRAGMENTS (Digging for Britain)

(Dust you are and to dust you will return. Genesis 3:19)

I admit it's stylishly done
archaeology on TV
Alice Roberts looking
for traces of our past.

Digs in Scotland's islands
in Cornwall, or Wales
devoted students search
for things that last.

Bits of pottery found
in Roman-built villas
bones lifted from sacred
graves now exhibits.

Our ancestors unearthed
for scientific research
cataloguing remains
any reverence prohibits.

Lying on the finds table
in neat plastic boxes
tagged and displayed
forensic and mute.

The Biblical prediction
now in modern dress
you may be discovered
under Alice's boot.

GEODE

Unexpected beauty
held in ancient rock,
earth's secret delight
born of volcanic shock.

Like a crystal cave
with mineral bands
this minute jewel box
glows in the hands.

Universe writ small
tiny fused asteroid
cradled in the earth
symbol of the void.



PETITE FLEUR

(Chris Barber)

Sound of the 50s, Bechet to Barber
jazz royalty and young devotee,
sharp memory of smoky rooms
with music that's lively and free.

Chris and Lonnie led the way to
skiffle, blues, and rock and roll,
jazz morphing into new shapes
for younger, urgent, clientele.

Post war with a new generation
reaching for music with a beat,
New Orleans and Chicago are
so cool and fresh off the street.

SIMPLE JOB

It came in cardboard boxes
with all the parts listed,
packed with more plastic
I ever knew existed.
Instructions are enclosed
to assemble the pieces
metal garden furniture
for when winter ceases.

So I set off with spanners
thoughtfully provided -
a piece drops off the table
my efforts are derided!
it takes me half an hour
to put it back again,
but just to mock my effort
it won't take the strain.

Finally assembled, hurrah
a table proudly stands,
now four chairs as well
following the plans.
Three with effort make it
but not number four!
A Chinese welding fault,
it falls to the floor.

After visits to the DIY and
much epoxy resin,
I finally screw the leg on
- here ends my lesson.
NEVER think it's easy
as the adverts say,
Foreign manufacturers
want to make us pay!

MASTER BUILDER

Storms increase as oceans warm
and island people raise the alarm,
farmland drowned by heavy rain,
crops will not grow without harm.

Scientists and politicians dither,
building walls against the weather,
thousands spent building higher,
still a self defeating endeavour.

One creature harnesses nature,
a mammal we know as beaver,
he's the finest dam builder ever,
no concrete needed just molars.

Late on we have noticed his skill,
to hold rivers back at his will,
and welcomed this neat engineer
so the floods will not appear .

(Beaver carving by Eric Spence)



SLEEP WALKING

(Iran war)

Here we go again, same old mistakes
dictator's hubris plunges us into war,
a bloody outcome spread over screens
telling the world that it's not very far,
to wonderful victory for the just cause.
Sleep walking to ruin.

Brutality reigns when humanity sleeps
and fantasy conquest raises its head,
collateral damage of ordinary people
crushes any notion of military pride,
broken homes, broken lives in dust.
Sleep walking to ruin.

Can we never stop making enemies
allowing hatred to make us fools?
When will we wake and live in peace
turning our weapons into tools?
Safety does not lie in destruction,
It's sleep walking to ruin.

TOXIC

You hear it all the time, part of a new vocabulary
of news and non-information,
when things go wrong and there is blame to lay
someone says in explanation,
it's toxic.

In politics, high-finance or media extravaganza,
boardroom, or backroom,
conflict reigns with people at each other's throats
a voice in a tone of doom, says
it's toxic.

Apparently we live in a permanently poisoned
atmosphere made worse,
by commentators and public pronouncements
sounding like an ancient curse,
it's toxic.

Is there an antidote for this catastrophic blight,
who can call it's bluff?
Someone be prepared to step out of line and
say enough is enough,
it's not toxic!

It's life.

TREE GRAVEYARD

Throbbing motorway, streams of lorries and cars
hurtle towards destinations, locked in motion.

The procession changes for diggers and cranes
the new vehicle dance is for a road expansion.

Highways being dualled to make travel safer
for thousands of travellers crossing the hills.

But insatiable appetite for road travel increases
with more trucks, vans, and electric vehicles.

Bland assurances given mask greed as 'growth'
duly trotted out to make it respectable.

The cost is high, nature the loser, trees crash
and land's ripped up for a new crop of tarmac.

The birds have departed, so have the animals
pushed aside by us, vowing not to come back.



BATTERY CHECK

when cold winds blow
and I am walking slow
my battery is low

when I want to go fast
but I end up the last
I'm from the past

when everyone's cheering
and I'm not hearing,
ears need clearing

when they see I'm old
and feeling the cold
wrap up I'm told.

when I sit and doze
and energy goes
well, life slows.

'cos

my

bat..te..ry's

xx.

CLOSING DOWN

It's the end of the road
a cul de sac, going
to nowhere.

Boarded up windows
absorb the light
and declare

this shop is empty
of goods, of folk
with money.

Joining the malaise
afflicting streets,
it's not funny.

The past is closed
the future empty,
beyond hope.

Yet, spring arrives,
sap rises again,
giving scope

for lost dreams
to revive in a
new form.

The closed door
opens on new
plans born.

A HUNDRED YEARS YOUNG
(Winnie the Pooh 1926-2026)

As birthdays go it's pretty special
for a children's book character,
long before Paddington he was
the loved bear they all ran after,
Christopher Robin's furry friend,
his head stuck in a honey jar,
Winnie the Pooh, pals Tigger,
Eeyore, Piglet, all adventure.

Celebration of childhood pals
spanning hard wartime years,
reminder of a sylvan past now
lost beneath our global fears,
when children roamed freely,
and imagination was captured
by simple games in the woods,
until our innocence fractured.

(Pooh carving by Eric Spence)



SPRING FASHION

Suddenly they are there,
like earrings hanging
in curling hair.

A new fashion display,
lights the bush on
a bright spring day.

Signal of fresh intent,
catkins are dancing
now winter's spent.

The hazel has a friend,
a robin singing says
winter's at an end.



TURNING OF THE TIDE (Easter)

Dawn rises to wash the sky
with light
a turning of the tide
of night.

Earth clothes herself in green
to bring
water and blood to birth
in spring.

Birds rise like hope set free
to fly
above the mourning land
and cry
welcome new life out
of death.