



THE LINE

Poems from CWU members

The Line: poems from CWU members

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members**

www.cwu.org

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Welcome to this collection of poems from CWU members and reps. It has mostly been compiled from members who have taken our poetry courses, entered our various competitions or become members of the CWU Poetry Club. We also have contributions from popular poets; Steve Pottinger, Emma Purshouse, Dave Pitt, and Potent Whisper, all of whom have worked with us to develop the poetry workshops you can access through our **CWU Left Click** online learning platform. We are delighted to be able to share such a wide ranging collection of poems.

The line is at the heart of communications; lines on paper, dropped through letter boxes to excited recipients; lines of code travelling over telephone lines. The chirping modem, once the sound of the future, now a distant memory, shows how quickly time moves on but the human element of interaction remains. It is the driving force of all we do. As the pandemic has shown, CWU members have been the beating heart of our communities.

This has not been without its toll. The stress we have all been under, the friends we have lost, what the future might be. More people than ever are looking for an outlet to share their thoughts, hopes, and fears. We've all got something to say and poetry is the most democratic of art forms. All you need is a pen, a piece of paper and something to say. It fits around our busy lives. You can do it while you're sat on the bus or waiting to pick up the kids. This is part of a rich tradition of working class self-expression, which is beginning to be more widely acknowledged. Exeter University has compiled an excellent archive of poems written by workers during the Lancashire Cotton Famine and, inspired by the punk poets, rap and spoken word, popular poetry has been going through a bit of a resurgence.

You don't have to worry about forms, stanzas and meter. They are tools in your toolkit that you can use if you want to. The CWU offers a range of poetry courses online at **www.cwu.org/leftclick**. If you prefer something a little more sociable, we also run a poetry club on Zoom every Thursday evening. Contact **pdovey@cwu.org** for more details.

It is a real pleasure to see our members discovering the skills and confidence to share their poems. Personally, socially, and politically, it is so important for working people to establish a platform to express ourselves. As Benjamin Zephaniah once said, "If you don't write your story someone else will!"

CWU members are making their voices heard.

Kate Hudson
Head of Equality, Education, and Development

www.cwu.org

Poets, Prattlers, and Pandemonialists are really passionate about poetry. We believe that, as art forms go, it's incredibly democratic. It's your opportunity to find your voice and share what you want to talk about, in whatever way you want. You can scribble an idea for a poem down on the back of a shopping receipt, or the margins of a newspaper, or just trust it to memory. You can write a haiku – all seventeen syllables of it – in a few spare moments. Your poem might rhyme, but it doesn't have to. It might follow a recognised form, but it could be free verse. It'll be as long as it needs to be. It might say everything it needs in a few lines, or run over several pages. And you make it using words. That's all. Your unique words, telling stories that only you can tell.

In Autumn of 2020, we developed and ran a series of poetry workshops for the CWU. They were designed for people who may never have given poetry a go before, as well as folk who already dabbled and wrote. We're delighted that this volume of poems has now been produced to showcase some of the work of CWU members, many of whom took part in those workshops. In here, you'll find poems about delivering the post, or working in a call centre; poems celebrating love, or small moments of happiness; poems which pass comment on the world around us, and – more important than ever during a pandemic – touch on the importance of human contact. You'll find great storytelling. You'll find rhyme, and free verse, and poetry forms (haiku, triolet, villanelle, and acrostic, if you're asking).

We hope you enjoy it. And we hope it encourages you to pick up your pen and write, and give a platform to your voice, too.

**and now,
the poems...**

Remember Freedom

Manifest abstinence of delight,
Shielded from its high;
Sunshine permeates through,
Breaks into our sky.

Suddenly it is green,
The world is in bloom;
Suddenly it is right,
Not a moment too soon.

How long we have waited;
How desperate we have yearned –
To breathe in that freedom
And know that we have learned

To hold dear one another;
To kiss when we can;
To remember that darkness,
When all this began.

To take from it our strength;
To pray rest to the fallen;
To found new pleasures,
In memories once stolen.

To sit among the trees,
Canopied overhead;
To say I love you,
Before going to bed.

To thank one another,
For all that is done;
To stand tall and proud,
Together we are one.

To never forget
The times we all fell;
When the heavens opened,
Ring out the bell.

We stood by each other –
And that is where we will be;
We will never forget,
When at last we are free.

Aideen Sullivan

Teaching Grandparents to Skype

It starts with a phone call
to talk them through the steps,
which shouldn't be hard at all,
if only they'd find their specs

The laptop's on the table,
Okay, now switch it on
but it turns out they're not able
to find the power button

Of all the things frustrating
(and trust me there's a few)
now Windows is updating
and there's that spinning wheel of blue

Finally it's finished
and the home screen's shining bright,
but interest has diminished,
let's leave it for tonight.

Okay, it's day two
now let's get this done!
If only we knew
that it wasn't to be the one...

It seems the laptop died
because the charger wasn't connected
and I honestly could've cried,
they seemed so dejected

Right, and we're back!
Third time's a charm –
let's give this another crack,
focus and stay calm

Remember what I said
about turning the laptop on –
yes, the power button's red,
perfect, that's the one!

Now right click,
no that's left,
don't worry about being quick –
there's no need to be deft

Now scroll up,
no, that's down,
don't worry about a hiccup –
there's no need to frown

Now we're making progress,
logged in and online
success after success,
I think we're going to be fine

I've got a good feeling,
we've made it into Skype
we'll manage it this evening,
I'm sure the time is ripe!

Let's try and start the call,
now I'm feeling nervous,
what if it doesn't work at all
and we tried this to no purpose?

I turn back to the task
and hear a cry of delight,
we're face to face at last
(though it's now late at night)

The wonder in their eyes
makes it all worthwhile,
it's such a nice surprise
to properly see them smile

Brilliant! Fantastic!
They sit and exclaim,
we actually did it –
we can see you in the frame!

All's well in the end
and they got quite a thrill,
they've already boasted to a friend
about their new-found skill!

I'm so glad we got it working
and had a heart-to-heart,
they call now every evening
and we can be together apart.

Danielle Hutchinson

The Last Last Orders At The Bull Stake Pub

An old guy, Harry, sits alone in the Bull Stake pub
When the bell rings to say the night is almost up.
If anyone but the barmaid were in this boozer
They'd think the old guy in the corner was a bit of a loser.

But Haitch knows things, despite rumours to the contrary.
He knows when playing pool, two shots carry.
He knows one five four is triple 20, triple 18, double top
He knows when you're in the pub you never ever talk shop.

He knows a thousand stories which make the protagonist shine
He knows to avoid the dangerous lady called Barley Wine
He knows Old Hooky is 4.6 percent and Guinness is 4.2
He knows if you want something stronger try his home brew.

He knows the vibrations come from machines he thought he controlled
He knows he was blind. He knows his bosses wore a blindfold.
He knows she was proud of him and that is cathartic.
He knows since she's been dead the bed has been like the Arctic.

He knows this sanctuary of sticky carpets and ale is about to go
A rich man in Kent knows it'll make more money as a Tesco.
The bell rings. This is the last last orders at the Bull Stake pub.
Harry leaves without a final drink. He knows he's had enough.

Dave Pitt

Spider Brendan

At eleven
he spent most of the Autumn term
doodling daft faces
onto the sperm
which lazed
across the pages of Biology 101.
We all did quite frankly,
but his better ones
looked a bit like
Youngy's mom.

At twelve
On the walls all around town
He's spraying "spider".
Started off with crude childish lines
Before the designs got tighter.
Soon
like we're eating five gobstoppers
we're silent
admiring them.

At thirteen,
Thanks to a library book on
New York Subway graffiti,
and some shifty spray-can thievery,
his spiders became 3D.
It had quite an impact on us
when we'd reach out a hand and touch them
to find they were flat

At fourteen
While we're all trying to get off
with Emma Salisbury
he's painting a picture
of a spider catching a bumblebee
on the door of the cop shop.
Right under their CCTV.
He even drew a spider invasion
Across the door of the Chief Super's
Austin Aggravation.

At fifteen
after marking more of the town
than a pissy dog
he's decided to hang upside down
off the overpass.
Then he's done a spider
towering over a silhouetted city
examining the tableau
through a looking glass.
We day know about
metaphor and similie.
We knew it looked good though.

At sixteen
this story gets to the crazy part
because this Egg Chips and Beans Botticelli
this Council Pop Pollock
this UB40 Klee
only got an E
in GCSE Art

Dave Pitt

Mermaid on the number 3

I know she is a mermaid because her hair
is the exact blue of a chromis fish
and is lit with yellowy-green streaks
like sunlight reaching down to a reef.
If I dove my face into its depths it would,
I know, smell of ozone and drying nets.
Her coat is sand-bank brown. Her nails, I note,
are coral coloured. Watching from behind
as she rolls a cigarette, I'm still sure
(in spite of nicotine stained fingers)
that should I turn to look as I alight
her tail will be coiled, thick and muscular
between the frowsy bus seats, and my eyes
will meet the full on glimmer of her scales.

Emma Purshouse

Previously published by Offa's Press in Emma's collection 'Close'.

Feeling Low?

Breathe in. Create a snapshot; visualise
the faces of those people who have said
Chin up, it could be worse. Include in shot
the *Cheer up! It might never happen* lot,

those who know *exactly what you need* and,
of course, the *pull yourself together* team.
Bring into frame the smiling kindly crew
who mention people *far worse off than you*.

Zoom out to show all heads impaled on spikes
(a little way outside the city walls).
Add crows to peck at eyes – should people doubt
the depth and darkness of your mood. Now smile.

Breathe out.

Emma Purshouse

Previously published as a Poetry on Loan postcard.

The Great Bed of Ware

Beware of sleeping in this luxury bed
'Cause Jonas the ghost will tap you on your head
Either that or he'll pinch your bum!
If you're not a royal, don't sleep but run

A prince was the first to speak of this bed
In the 1590s and he was high bred
It was a gimmick to set Ware apart
From towns in the county, and this was so smart

It went from inn to inn around the town
It was even displayed at a pub called the Crown
So big that 4 couples could sleep side by side
In Twelfth Night it's mentioned, 'cause of its size

But Shakespeare's words that speak of this structure
Say nothing of the graffiti or sculpture
Nor colourful fabrics or the paint that's all gone
It's displayed with care now, but the story goes on

It came back to Ware and went through the roof
From the V&A to tell you the truth
The bed came to visit Ware just for a year
It was welcomed back with music and cheer

People still talk of this bed in Ware town
They chat with pride of its fame and renown
This bed that is built of wood will endure
Its story will live forever, I'm sure.

Esther Robertson

Postie Triolet

I ring the bell, I knock the door
I leave another 'Sorry we missed you' card.
Now off to number forty four
I ring the bell, I knock the door
'Morning! I've something to be signed for.'
So off I go up another yard
I ring the bell, I knock the door
I leave another 'Sorry I missed you' card.

Esther Robertson

Warm April Morn

How did god cultivate this elegant morning scene?
With daisies awakening in a carpet of green
Whilst smoky mists climb from the frosted lawn
In the gentle heat of a warm April morn

A Wedgwood blue sky surrounds the early morning sun
This signals to the birds that the day has just begun
Blackbirds and robins sing a chorus proclaiming dawn
In the gentle heat of a warm April morn

The sweet fragrance from flowers starts to fill the air
Perfumed fragile blossoms open here and there
A rainbow of colours in the garden is born
In the gentle heat of a warm April morn

A fat bee buzzing can now be gently heard
As she flies through the grass, past a ladybird
Drinks a breakfast of nectar then the bee's airborne
In the gentle heat of a warm April morn

The warmth of the sunrise caresses my cold face
Gives a cuddle of comfort I willingly embrace
The vision before me no one can ever scorn
In the gentle heat of a warm April morn.

Esther Robertson

Wolf

Grrreat

Stop. Why walk so fast?

It's grrreat to see you here at last

To see you here, now, in the wood

My lovely little Red Riding Hood

Grrreat

It's grandma and she's all alone

With no WiFi or telephone

With one bite and with one cry

She is here today and then, goodbye

Grrreat

Red is here but she is cleVERR

Asking questions but the chat I severrr

I attack and Red runs away

Finding a hunter on the way.

Grrreat

I am cornered in the bedroom now

I need to exit fast but how?

The hunterr's axe with one swipe

Hits me and takes my life.

Esther Robertson

Kindness

It's Mental Health Awareness Week,
And I've been sat here thinking about a word.
It's a word that should be thought of often,
And always should be shared,
You see for Mental Health Awareness Week,
This year the theme is kindness.
Kindness is a good act, a good turn, or a good deed,
It should be used with affection and how we should lead,
An act of kindness can change somebody's whole day,
It can pick them up, boost their confidence
and make them feel OK.
So be friendly, considerate, take time to care,
Your act of kindness might just be shared.

Kate Hudson

The Call Centre Staff

The call centre staff I hear them say
"What shall we buy when we get our pay?"

The call centre staff I see them work.
They call on me when they get stuck.

The call centre staff like to chat all day.
The stories they tell sometimes blow you away.

The call centre staff, some happy or not.
Will get along fine when tea's in the pot.

The call centre staff love a cake day
and it's even better when the bosses pay.

The call centre staff are the workers of today
when many factories have dwindled away.

Lylia Ferguson

Seasons in the Weather

Whispering in the wind is the cool night air.
Every star in the sky is shining through.
Autumn leaves have fallen off the trees around.
The snow in winter has fallen to the ground.
Hello Spring where we see raindrops falling
Eventually it's Summer, I can hear the sunbed calling!
Rain, wind, sun, or snow, always enjoy wherever you go.

Lylia Ferguson

The Cracking Bingo Caller

He was a classy cracking caller
Handsome Dabber that he was
He wore his tie on his shirt
Bright purple, no flaws

His shoes were all bright and shiny
Polished up, and leather too
Laces were all trim
The ladies cried *Woo hoo!*

The suit a silky grey
All buttoned up correct
Trousers were pleated perfectly
He was the grannies' pet

Sliding on long carpets
With the shiny shoes
The grannies' floral brollies
Sitting in the pews

We love our handsome dabber
Whilst playing the wooden books
He loved himself also
Getting all the looks.

Lylia Ferguson

I wonder

I wonder what tomorrow will bring.
I wonder if the birds will sing.
I wonder if the babies will cry.
I wonder if the stars will shine in the sky.

I wonder if the dogs will bark.
I wonder if I will be home before dark.
I wonder if the cats will meow.
I wonder when that will be for now.

I wonder and wonder, night and day.
I wonder if you will be safe, I pray.
I wonder how long my life will be.
I wonder...

Lylia Ferguson

Summer

Green leaves bowing in the breeze
Colourful butterflies gracing the gardens
Navigating puddles of water in the park
Ice cream on the beach melting deliciously
Toddler taking her first steps, toes sinking in the white sand
Singing at the top of my voice for the sheer fun of it
Flip flop, oh yes that's a no brainer
Smiles and laughter all around
Breathe in and enjoy, it is summer!

Maria Adams

Day off

Make my day.

Watched the cloud formations,
a ray of light shot down from the heavens ... sheer bliss

Engrossed in a great book ... hmmm, relaxing

Danced un-inhibited to music I have never heard before ...
how exciting

Arranged those flowers all-round the house ... rewarding

Joined the girls skipping down the road
after their class ... this is fun

Showed off my latest recipe to the family
at the dining table ... being hopeful

All, so that at the end I could lift up my hands and say thank you
... finally stress free!

Made my day.

Maria Adams

Leo

Leo is David on a smooth marble plinth.
Polished as a piece of cold steel armour.
Piercing your eyes with his, the sharpness concealed
Behind a glint of metal - a glint of a needle.
His movements' warm fire draws people closer
To enjoy and celebrate themselves, for they
Have brought themselves to this fire and this light
Of Leo, the one who gives as the Samaritan did
Until he asks for a simple bid:
A favour, a favour for a friend
Whose fire he to you does lend
With the glint of a needle in his eye.

Mark Storm

The woman in the photo

She was a firecracker of a woman
Or so they said
All pearls, passion, and penurious perfume
Like an ill-fitting sheet on an awkward bed
Oh, the glamour of the three-bar fire
The curious net curtains
The threadbare rug
The crackly ancient radio
And the buggered old man in the corner

Like a dislocated arm she's displaced
Captive in a muted, muffled existence
But like the sun she can't stay down
She sets sail for six weeks straight
An agonisingly exotic world welcomed
Nothing familiar, yet everything the same
But never did she set sail home again
And never did she write or call

And every day, they cried.

Pamela Thomas

Emit timE

Can you imagine a world with no time?
No clock to speak of, no hours or days
Our lives would run on rhythm and rhyme

Can you believe a world more divine?
No hurry, no stress, no damn delays
Can you imagine a world with no time?

Only dark and light, and we'd be fine
No timescale or pressure, nothing to faze
Our lives would run on rhythm and rhyme

No deadlines to meet or get over the line
No confusing, congested, secret maze
Can you imagine a world with no time?

No alarm to wake with a ghastly chime
No dates or deadlines to make your pays
Our lives would run on rhythm and rhyme

No hustling for every single dime
No running on empty with eyes ablaze
Can you imagine a world with no time?
Our lives would run on rhythm and rhyme.

Pamela Thomas

The personification of the seizure

You wouldn't know me to look at her
You wouldn't know me to talk to her
Most don't know about me at all

But I'm here. Watching. Waiting.
Lingering patiently, intentionally, for my
cue to enter 'stage left'

I gift a kaleidoscope of colour to her eyes
And beautiful jagged lights, intently intoxicating
I pretend not to notice as she tries to blink them away

I send in the aura. To her it's surreal, unreal
Like a déjà vu she can't explain. Already seen
Hypnotic, exotic like a familiar friend, but not

An explosion of electric activity, I watch from my front row seat
If she could only see herself, dancing like a crazed maniac
Frantic panic from the curious crowd, they wonder if she's dead

The curtain falls, I take my bow, ready for the applause
But instead of idolisation, she seems embarrassed and ashamed
I'm confused, what does she want me to be? I was just being me

I arrived the day she splattered on that damp concrete floor
An unwanted invisible disfigurement, she tries to ignore
I wonder how she'd treat me if I was a blemish on her face?

I'm a shameful secret she'd rather hide away
She pretends I don't exist or I'll magically disappear
But I'll be here watching and waiting patiently

Watching and waiting.

Pamela Thomas

Rain-dancer

The gull performs a
rain dance, worm-charming expert
claims his earthy prize.

Pamela Thomas

The New Normal

The new normal goes masked in public,
And none of the commuters or shoppers
Mutter about terrorism or
How difficult it is to make a connection,
It's almost as if their discomfort was a fabrication,
A sugar-coated confection.

As one mask goes on,
Another one slips.

The new normal understands
That it's just a thin skin on the confusion,
A momentary delusion,
A pattern in the chaos,
Before it occurs to all of us
That everything we've built can fall, in just a second.

As one mask goes on,
Another one slips.

The new normal finds it hard to turn a profit
In a system that no longer fits
With the way we now have to live our lives.
The billions of zeroes on screens
Mean nothing and disappear into nothing,
When something pulls the plug.

As one mask goes on,
Another one slips.

In the new normal, it's feet on the ground,
Rather than dollars or pounds,
That transform our world.
There were orchards of magic money trees,
Because money is just a relationship between you and me,
And now that relationship has changed.

As one mask goes on,
Another one slips.

The new normal will remember
That we were saved by those so underpaid,
Those carers who were called unskilled,
By ministers so clearly ill-prepared
To organise anything except their ongoing money-go-round,
From the green benches to seats on the Board.

As one mask goes on,
Another one slips.

The new normal understands
That civilisation is a collection of hands in hands,
Acrobats helping each other up higher,
Reaching up to the stars glinting in the night sky.
The heights that we gain are achieved by us all,
And it just takes one sneeze for us all to fall.

And when the masks come off,
We'll kiss.

Paul Dovey

They Used To Call Me Tim

At the third stroke...
Yeah, I'm that bloke,
If you want to know the time,
Give me a ring, it'll be fine,
Time after time after time after time,
At the third stroke,
At the third stroke,
At the third stroke,
At the third stroke,
On and on it never ends,
Your mum, your granny
And all her friends
Ringing up not to say hello,
Just to find out how long they've got to go,
It never ends,
It never ends,
It never ends,
It never ends,
And then the sponsorship begins,
Just more words to get squeezed in,
The time sponsored by,
The time's going by,
At the third stroke,
At the third stroke,
At the third stroke,
At the third stroke,
It never ends,
It never ends,
It never ends,
It never ends,
And then it did,

Who rings the speaking clock anymore?
I sit here silent, looking at the door,
Is there really another 8 hours of this,
When I could be out, getting pissed,
But even they've stopped calling time,
I'm sitting here, I'm on the breadline,
Alexa's all the rage right now,
But she's no use and I've seen how,
She spies on you and tells Big Brother,
The listening clock, the secret shopper,
I would never grass a mate,
Professional pride is out of date,
There's a moral code to what I do,
You listen to me, not me to you.

Paul Dovey

Alien In Aldi

I am an alien,
Invading this human nest.
These scuttling creatures show no interest
In anything, except the collection
Of food and provisions.

The cameras map the paths of interest
To be assessed on computers,
Modelling the shoppers.
Journey from aisle to aisle,
Fruit and veg near the door,
Sweets by the counter, and so on.
Different shops but little variation,
As if someone has paid great attention,
Repetitively pacing out these patterns,
Like monks mapping out their dedication,
To the reproduction of consumption.

Walking through an enclosed world,
Where the air is strangely scented,
And chemically injected, with something
That their brains associate with remembering,
With caring, with feeding, with shopping,
With loving.

Say it with flowers,
Say it with chocolates,
Say it with underwear,
Say it with tea and biscuits,
And forget to say it at all,
Just a brightly wrapped parcel
Unopened in the hall
As darkness begins to fall.

They are drowning in love,
Or perhaps just the signs of love,
Signification, representation and commodification,
Of human emotion,
Cluttering the surfaces,
Piling in the corners,
Pushing the walls of their little houses,
Close to bursting

Meanwhile the other half are starving,
With no food and no housing,
Less still any shopping,
Their love carries them on boats,
Into the arms of gangsters,
And traffickers,
And people who want to close all the borders,
While we sit and eat our bendy bananas,
In silence.

Paul Dovey

The Myth Of The Self-Made Man

I'm a self-made man.
I spotted a gap in the market
Through the fissure in my morality.

A self-made man,
A bullshit merchant,
A shit-Golem,
An alchemical homunculous,
Constructed with the blood
And sweat of working men,
And the bones
Of starving children.

My white dream palace
Is swept clean,
On the hopes of migrant families,
Their dinghies tipping in the wash,
Of playboy parties on my yacht,
Washed up on beaches, soon forgot.

In the half-light of the city night,
My silver shadow flits
Between the Michelin stars, beside me sits
My self-made wife,
Of silicon and blonde highlights,
Date stamped with pre-nup shelf-life,

As arse of cow fills feet of crow,
Perma-tan skin stretches tight,
And age can't touch me now,
Because I buy myself time,
Because I buy myself love,
But ultimately always by myself...

You're fired!

Paul Dovey

Alive in Love

A poem for a boy named Bow, after the death of his father

To my dearest brother Bow
I heard about your dad
It makes me feel so low to think about you feeling sad
I meant to write you sooner and I really wish I had
Because I love you and need to ask this question that I have...

Where does your love live?
Think about it properly
You know the love you feel is real,
but where inside your body?

Do you feel it in your heart?
Or is it in your chest or stomach?
You know it's there, but where is it?
Have you ever wondered?

Well...

Love is not our heart or any part of us that's flesh
Love is not a body part, it doesn't need a breath
Love is more than what we see and doesn't simply end
And I believe your father's love for you still lives beyond the death

Because Bow, did you know, that people can love each other from
different worlds?

When you were in your mother's womb your father couldn't touch you
You had not been born yet and so he couldn't hug you
He was in a different world to you, he was above you
But you didn't need to share a space for him to love you

Because people can love each other from different worlds.

And people don't just love, people are love...

Your dad is love and he will be with you throughout the ages
Love is never gone, just sometimes lives in different places

We don't always know where love is living, and it's sad
But in a way it doesn't matter:
If you feel it, then it's Dad.

Potent Whisper

Your Lucky Number 17

A poem she will never hear

They way that I love them, she loves me
The things I do for them, she does for me
The way I try to trust, I think she trusts me
The way I'd run to them, she'd come for me

The words that I would offer, she told me
The burdens I embrace, she shoulders too
The way that I hold them, she holds me
She holds me, but only cos I'm you.

Potent Whisper

Rain Or Shine

Early risers, the sky's still dark,
On sorting mail we do embark,
Mech, large letters, packets next,
The amount of mail, we're all perplexed,
Redirections, specials, then bundle up,
Cup of coffee, last little sup,
Load the van and off we go,
Under pressure but a smile we show,
1 bag, 2 bags, 3 bags, more,
And plenty of knocks upon your door,
Redeliver on a day to suit,
Wave at us, our horn we'll toot,
Come rain or shine, we're out the same,
We even try remember your name,
Bag after bag we pound the street,
With a smile, *Hello!* to all we meet,
When all bags done and packets too,
A quick pit stop to use the loo,
We then head back from where we started,
Another day done, from work departed,
Home for a wash, shower or bath,
Family time, let's smile and laugh,
Time for sleep now, getting late,
A long hard day, a tired state,
Alarm is set for an early start,
Deja Vu now plays a part,
So an ending note to my postie mates,
Stay safe, take care and 'close those gates' !!!

Steve Parkinson

Pet Hates

We hit the streets on our working day
A few pet hates found along the way
So I'll list a few, that make us mad
Many more I'm sure you'll add

I'll start with one we all do hate
Redelivery on a certain date
We place the parcel by your door
Knock, step back, you've heard I'm sure

A second knock you're sure to hear
You must be home, I have no fear
Minutes pass and still no sign
For a second time a P739

Why arrange for a certain date
This kind of thing makes us irate
So back it goes from where it came
And in two days time I'll do the same

So we walk up to your door at pace
Then whack! smack!bang! right in the face
A hanging basket by your door
Now petals and dirt all on the floor

Why put it by your letterbox
So many times my head it knocks
I know by now I should really learn
So I now look skyward at every turn

As I walk up to your bolted gate
Your dog comes running at quite a rate
Barking, growling, looking fierce
Eyes fixated, its stare does pierce

You soon come running right behind
Laughing, smiling at what you find
'Don't worry, he's all mouth, won't bite!'
I'm sorry I don't believe that shite

'He won't hurt you, he wants to play!'
I'm sure he does but in a painful way
Just take him in and have some sense
I'm not coming beyond this bloody fence

Now I see the need to stop the chill
Draft excluders they fit the bill
But how stiff do they need to be
I post a letter, now fingers three

I'm posting letters two streets away
From where you live, or so you say
'Have you got any post for me?'
I'll run to my van, check to see

Like hell I will, you complete buffoon
Just wait your turn I'll be there soon
It's raining hard, I'm getting wetter
So you can ask if you've got a letter

Please put mail in the box on the wall
I would if it wasn't so bloody small
I've seen bigger boxes for a pack of cards
So letters get folded and rammed in hard

So I'm here to deliver your ordered packet
A couple of loud knocks, making a racket
First time knocking and no answer yet
I'll knock once more, they're out I bet

So nobody comes and opens the door
P739 written out once more
I endorse the packet and walk away
Then a voice I hear 'did you knock?' they say

'Yes I did, quite loud to be fair'
'I didn't hear, I was washing my hair'
That's quite strange, I say in my head
Cos your hair's still dry, just got outta bed??

I'm sure there's plenty more to state
Like trying to open a knackered gate
Vertical letterbox, what's that about?
And a flap won't open, just give it a clout

But whatever it is that gets on your nerve
For back in the office, the expletives reserve
Unless you don't really value your job
Carry on regardless – and watch your gob!!!

Steve Parkinson

Early Morning

So early morning we all make a start
Throughout the pandemic playing our part
Sorting the letters, and packets too
Rushing around to get them to you
Clothing and shoes, and the odd ukelele
Demand has increased, like Xmas just lately
Whatever the weather, sunny or raining
It all gets delivered, we're not complaining
We're risking our health and mental well-being
If only you knew what everyday we are seeing
The majority of people they stick to the rules
Just a shame that there's a handful of fools
They think it's ok to go on as normal
Not even a warning, nothing so formal
They don't see a risk, when will they learn
It's the future of everyone going to burn
But when it dies down, hopefully soon
And gone are the days of doom and gloom
We'll still be rising at the same old time
Delivering letters and amazon prime
So I leave you with this thought for a while
Remember those workers going that extra mile
So you can stay safe and still have your mail
Give us a smile, cheer us up it won't fail
To every key worker risking their life
My hat I do tip, acknowledge your strife
My respect is given with every hour you work
And when it's all over, hit the pub, go berserk!!

Steve Parkinson

Love at distance

So nearly 3 years since we made a start
And more than that when you stole my heart
My love for you each day has grown
And the love you show my mind is blown

It started with a secretive kiss
My heart that day a beat did miss
Many hours between holding hands
But passing days our love still stands

Holidays, outings, and fun times in number
Back and forth between Leeds and the Humber
Good times and bad we've seen them all
But together we've conquered standing tall

Cautiously starting and soon in a spin
To a place that we both are happy we're in
Never a moment does pass when apart
In my mind, my soul, and more so my heart

Engaged we were, too quick some said
Decision was made with both heart and head
A move was afoot, but where to you ask
Deciding our future, not an easy task

But in we both went, knowing our minds
A place of happiness, woes left behind
With three proposals along the way
And finally planning our special day

The 24th of March was decided the day
And 'I DO' we both would get to say
With family and friends to witness that feat
A day to remember that nothing can beat

I say to you Elaine, with all that I can
Forever and a day I'll be your Man
I love you today and all of my life
Thank you so much, my Beautiful Wife.

Steve Parkinson

the folk who read the news

the folk who read the news never look like us
you won't see them down the chippy
or queueing in line for the rush-hour bus
they don't have dirt under their fingernails
or hard hats on their head
but imagine things were different
and looked like this instead...

we wake up in a world where we switch on the TV
flick through all the channels and this is what we see:
a fella in a high-vis interviews the Minister for Health
while a lass on zero-hours quizzes a CEO on wealth
a political correspondent fresh from stacking shelves
experts in their field who are the mirror of ourselves
language rich in dialect and accent
anchors of every shape and size
who mutter *bollocks* to the camera
when the Prime Minister tells lies
sports news brought into our living rooms
by kids off the estate
who know the subject backwards
*He ****ing dived! I tell, you, mate!*
pensioners from Blackpool
do the guide to entertainment
reports on poverty and foodbanks
by people formerly known as 'claimants'
who were anonymous and voiceless
but now have the platform to explain
how going cap-in-hand demeans
and we can do better than go there again
cut to a piece on childcare
and now it's time to get the weather
from a single mum in a B&B
who's holding it together

and who promises the cold snap
will soon be pushed away
by high pressure moving in from the Azores
smiles, and says who thought we'd see the day
when the folk who read the news
are people just like us
and we see them down the chippy
or queueing in line for the rush-hour bus.

Steve Pottinger

*Previously published by Ignite Books in Steve's collection
'thirty-one small acts of love and resistance'.*

Fatima

A response to the government ad "Fatima's next job is in cyber..."

Fatima's working in cyber
she's learned how to snoop and to hack
she's talented, driven, and passionate
her revenge a cold feast, not a snack

Rishi's bank account there on a spreadsheet
a few clicks of the keys, and... goodbye
Hancock's now being sought on charges of fraud
Gove for intent to supply

Cummings just never existed
his records amended, deleted
Johnson pursued for child maintenance payments
left penniless, bankrupt, defeated

Rees-Mogg's found his place in a workhouse
learning to do what he's told
and a freighter inches towards St Helena
with Priti Patel in the hold

Yes, Fatima's working in cyber
she's smart, and she seizes her chances
at the end of the day, puts her laptop away
picks her shoes up

and smiles as she dances.

Steve Pottinger

Sclera – the unique badge of all humankind

Dogs and apes can only stare
We as humans can also glare
Reading one another like a book
As the whites of our eyes reveal where we look

Eye contact is a human affair
Exchanging messages, the voice would not dare
Spontaneous body language regardless of stance
True feeling revealed with just one glance

No words needed just a roll of the eyes
To express our opinion as we look to the skies
Or sometimes it is just a cheeky wink
To let others, know of what we think

William Kendall

CWU Left Click (e-learning for CWU members)

For more poetry and creative writing courses, family history, music, IT, creative software courses and much more visit our online learning platform CWU Left Click [**www.cwu.org/leftclick**](http://www.cwu.org/leftclick)

CWU Poetry Club

CWU Poetry Club is open to all CWU members and meets over Zoom every Thursday at 5pm. Contact [**pdovey@cwu.org**](mailto:pdovey@cwu.org) for more details.

Pay What You Can

This book is given to you free of charge but we would encourage you to make a donation to Communication Workers Union Humanitarian Aid via [**www.paypal.com**](http://www.paypal.com). See [**www.cwuha.org**](http://www.cwuha.org) for more information.

a few words about the contributors to this anthology:

Aideen Sullivan: I work in Cardiff for Openreach as a flex agent, currently working on Tier 1 DFE roles to assist with incoming synthetic requests. I've been writing ever since I can remember but really got into poetry as a form of therapy about six years ago. I've been adapting ever since.

Danielle Hutchinson: is the daughter of Tony Hutchinson, Treasurer for Somerset, Devon and Cornwall branch. She enjoys turning topical issues into meaningful poetry.

Dave Pitt: is an award-winning playwright, poet and performer, and Associate Artist at Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton. www.davethepitt.co.uk

Emma Purshouse: is a freelance writer, performance poet, novelist, experienced workshop facilitator, and the first poet laureate of the city of Wolverhampton. www.emmapurshouse.co.uk

Esther Robertson: a post lady in Ware, Hertfordshire, with 32 years' service. A member of CWU Eastern No.4 branch. I saw about the CWU poetry workshops on the union website, and thought I'd give it a go...

Kate Hudson: CWU Head of Equality, Education & Development. I have always had an interest in poetry. I have always found it to be a good way of expressing strong feelings or emotions, or communicating ideas in an engaging and memorable way.

Lylia Ferguson: I am a grandmother working on Tier 2 Resolution team resolving telephone line and broadband complaints. Heard about poetry classes through the CWU and decided to join as I have been trying to write poetry for a number of years. Enjoying writing and joining the lockdown poetry zoom gigs!

Maria Adams: I am a member of the Edinburgh, Dundee & Borders branch, and work as a DAN controller for 2nd stage engineers. I have lots of stories in my head to be penned on paper.

Mark Storm: Mark is in UTAW, that's "United Tech and Allied Workers", the UK's first union for workers in technology workplaces. He is their first comms officer, and is better at doing that than writing poetry.

Pamela Thomas: I work in the Dundee branch as part of the learning and design team. I've always loved writing from an early age. Give me words over numbers any day!

Paul Dovey: I work in the CWU's Equality, Education & Development Department. In my spare time I write poems and organise the CWU Poetry Club (new members always welcome).

Potent Whisper: is a Spoken Word artist, author, and educator who is reputed for using rhyme to translate and respond to key socio-political issues. www.potentwhisper.com

Steve Parkinson: I work at Hull CDO on full time delivery. I first started writing when I was 8 for a competition at school and wrote about the life of Walt Disney. Love to bring a bit of comedy into my poems, when I get chance to write that is

Steve Pottinger: is a poet, author, and workshop facilitator who has performed his poems at pubs, clubs, and festivals the length and breadth of the UK. Often found in a pub with Emma Purshouse and Dave Pitt. www.stevepottinger.co.uk

William Kendall: Chair of the South Wales branch. I believe poetry is the most profound use of language. We enjoy it at an early age in nursery rhymes, being a universal attraction we have as babies and young children. This inherent attraction is, I believe, still within us as adults. Poetry is a most pleasant way to offer thought or opinion to others. These ideas are more likely to be remembered, and indeed re-iterated, if expressed in memorable verse.

The line is at the heart of communications: lines on paper, dropped through letter boxes to excited recipients; lines of code travelling over telephone lines.

The chirping modem, once the sound of the future, now a distant memory, shows how quickly time moves on but the human element of interaction remains.

It is the driving force of all we do. As the pandemic has shown, CWU members have been the beating heart of our communities.