

St Luke's Graveyard

Away from noise, smoke and dust of Black Country heartland,
a schoolboy hunts small game. Listens for familiar bird song.
Searches through neck-high grasses, scratches arms on bramble,
pimples hands on nettles, tears jeans on hidden stones and timbers.

Mindful of mourners and flower arrangers, he remains unseen,
ducking, creeping between memorials, ignoring names and dates.
His world of nature becomes an escape from home, school
and chores to satisfy a busy mother; pocket money tasks for Dad.

Distant wilderness calls, where no spade has penetrated the ground,
no paths evident nor bushes cleared; few people have strayed.
Hawthorn and holly attract his attention, elderberries bring a smile, before
he crouches and stares; patience yields bounty as grasshoppers emerge.

Careful searches produce flowers of goat's beard, plantain, trefoil and clover
attracting peacock, wood brown, common blue and a horde of whites;
ragwort being eaten alive by cinnabar larvae, their writhing, bristly bodies
refracting sunlight, sparkling against rapidly undressed stalks.

Distracted by a distant skylark, he finds a knoll, lies back, closes his lids.
In the stillness he identifies the calls of thrush, wood pigeon and robin.
Warmed grasses generate honeyed aroma, crackles from slight movement
fade to silence, but for the distant hum of a motor and whine of a crane.