



Childhood in Assendon

Building camps and climbing trees,
Grass-stained clothes and muddy knees.
Always wearing Wellington boots -
That's what the paths and woodland suits.
A steep lane of flint and leaves and mud,
Watching Guernseys and Freisans chewing the cud.
Climbing up banks and splashing through puddles,
Pushing through brambles growing in muddles.
Hiding from friends and running down slopes,
Dreaming, imagining, full of hopes.
Then collecting flowers and stones and nuts,
Looking in holes in tree-stumps and ruts.
Lying in fields enjoying the sun
Pretending to be somewhere else - oh what fun.
Pretending the top of the fence is a horse -
Too uncomfortable to sit there long, of course.
Instead round the house, in circuits, I run,
Jumping flowerpot obstacles - oh what fun.
Exploring amongst rhododendron bushes,
Getting deep underneath with scrambles and pushes.
This is our camp - our secret house,
With seats and beds - we're quiet as a mouse.
Till, scratched, dirty and tired, at the end of the day,
We trample indoors for food, after our play.

The House in Assendon

Above the valley, on the side of the hill,
Beside a wood with a creaking mill,
A field of cows on three sides found,
Freisans and Guernseys with calves around.
At night the cows stampeded past
From the top of the hill to the cowshed at last.
Moon-daises, buttercups, thistles, nettles and clover
Grew amongst the grass - sometimes taking over.
The early summer field was buttercup yellow and bright.
The farmer cut nettles and thistles before they gained height.

Below, in the valley, there was to be found
A turkey farm with gobbling sound.
On the opposite slope a cemetery stood -
Walled, with two chapels, beside a wood.

On the floor of the valley an 'A' road was found -
Henley to Oxford, through village and town.
Leave the valley to climb steep Bix Hill,
Green fields beside it, peaceful and still.

The house was symmetrical, built of brick,
Front door and four windows, in wall red and thick,
Steps to the front door (painted green),
Flowerbeds on either side with plants to be seen.
At the rear was a coal shed, by the back door,
In the wall was a trig point telling height from sea floor.
Hidden away in a corner was a shed for our bikes -
Never locked up - just kept out of sight.
By the gate was a rockery with a little round pond,
Below that our children's plots - of which we were fond -
Where our own plants and flowers we independently grew,
Digging, sowing and watering, all seasons through.