

A photograph of an allotment garden. In the foreground, a dirt path leads away from the viewer. On the left, there are several wooden sheds of various sizes. On the right, there are garden beds with plants and a red shed. In the middle ground, several people are walking away from the viewer along the path. The sky is filled with white and grey clouds, with some blue visible. The overall scene is a typical allotment garden.

the allotment of time

photos by Ian Beesley
cartoons by Tony Husband
poems by Ian McMillan

foreword

The group was set up to offer couples who were grappling with a dementia diagnosis an opportunity to meet every week and explore possibilities of enhancing the experience of people who are living with this debilitating illness.

Take a moment to ponder what a diagnosis of dementia may mean for such a couple. Shock and confusion are certainly initial reactions but as time passes, the reality of living with the illness begins to set in. A loneliness descends, social interaction lessens, fears arise and a struggle takes place to maintain the relationship you used to have.

Contrast this image with a different reality of gathering together with others with dementia, their families and carers, a dedicated leader and a group of diverse volunteers all offering unstinting loving care and kindness. 'Stirred and mixed together' - something wonderful has occurred.

For a large part of the year the group meets at the allotment. The group are involved in preparing the ground, potting and planting and all the tasks required for successful growing and harvesting.

Entering through the gates, a feeling of happiness at seeing other members who have become our true friends, catching up with their news. The tasks are varied and organised to suit a person's ability. The task of making Dominic the scarecrow comes to mind. The laughter and fun this created had a ripple effect for the next few weeks.

An important part of the experience is gathering around the tables for tea and a piece or two of wonderful, homemade cakes in the knowledge of a satisfying afternoon's gardening well done.

I cannot stress enough the magical feeling of being outdoors in the fresh air with the sunshine on your face; the feeling of solitude and yet; at the same time; embracing the companionship around you.

Budding Friends? I believe they are in blossom now and will remain forever so. We leave our book to speak to you for itself. We hope you enjoy it.

Anne Hards



the allotment of time

Time is flowing like a stream
Time is quicksand
Time is watching the tomatoes ripen

Time is something that one is always aware of
Time is a changing face
Time is blowing like the wind

If we could gain time it would be fine

Time is a sieve
Time is just a minute
Time is measured in retrospective

I measure time with a tape measure
Day after day
There are times when time is too slippery to measure

I can't get the measure of time

If time slowed we'd all be rich
There isn't time for time
Time is an imaginary journey

Time passes quickly when I remember things I should have done





Age UK

Budding Friends
Project






allotment weather

We don't care if it rains soft rain
Because the rain soaks in
And it's good for the brain;
We don't care if the wind blows strong
Because our days are lovely
And our days are long;

We don't care if the snow falls deep
Because our lives are warm
And they're ours to keep;
We don't care if the sun's too hot
Because the weather we have
Is the weather we've got.



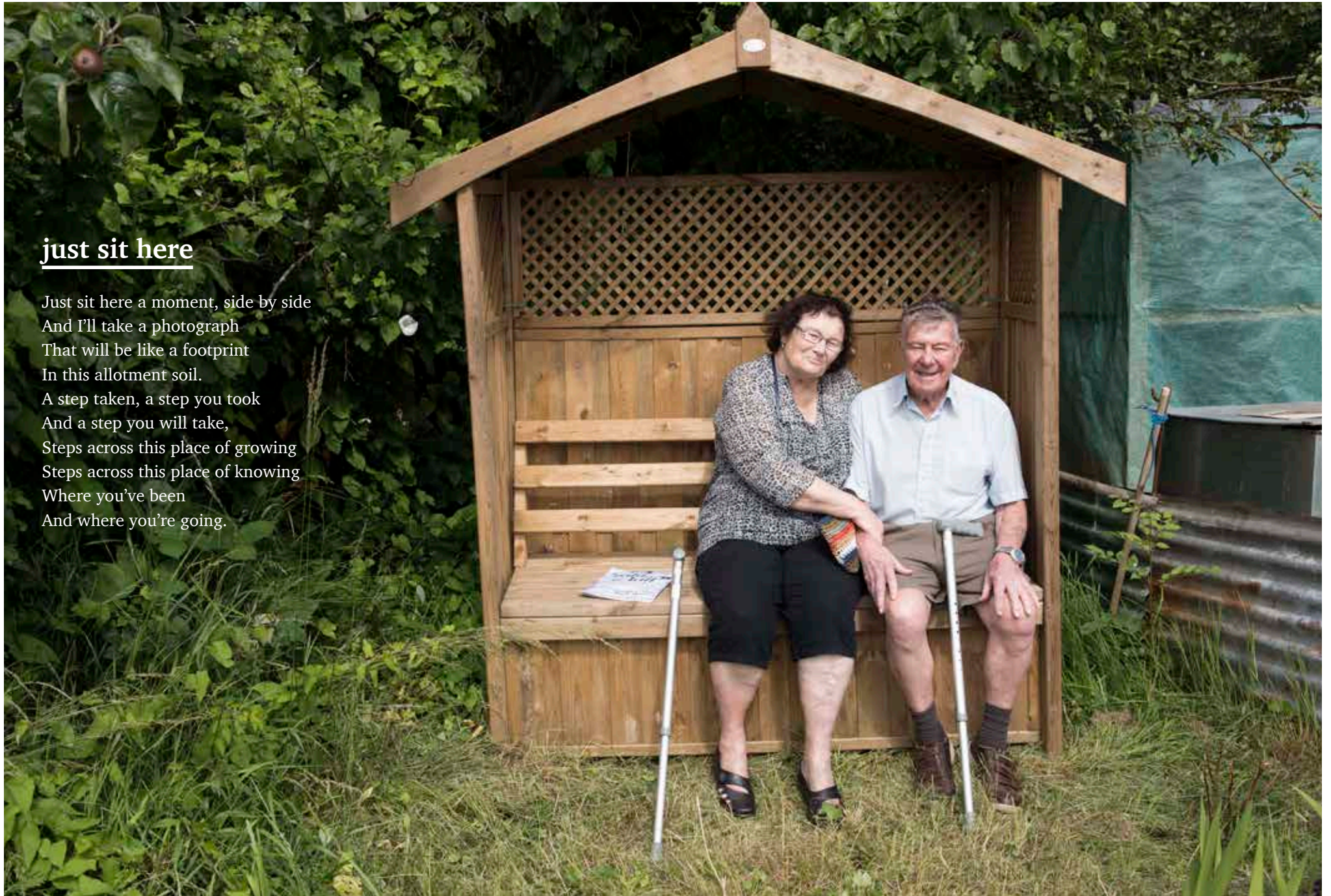
“I’ve been carrying it for years,
reminds of me of who we used to be.”

I hold the photo in my hand
A face across my palm
And somehow I still understand
This face means me no harm;
The eyes look right into my own
And hold me warm and tight
I hold the photo, not alone
In a long day’s fading light.



just sit here

Just sit here a moment, side by side
And I'll take a photograph
That will be like a footprint
In this allotment soil.
A step taken, a step you took
And a step you will take,
Steps across this place of growing
Steps across this place of knowing
Where you've been
And where you're going.



No Brian! Stop stirring
the paint with your
walking stick!



Tongstue
Brian
Confession

“This photograph takes me back, but who’s he.”









ooops Sorry



Barrie
BARRIE'S
CONFESSION









Bill + Myra



'scuse me do you want
any help in there?

Bill no!!

A simple line drawing of a man in a suit running away from a car. He has a look of panic or fear. He is holding a briefcase in his right hand. The text "Bill no!!" is written above him, indicating he is being called out.

Bills Confession



for someone who doesn't
grow Strawberries Richard
You do a roaring trade in
Strawberry Jam'



Richard's Confession
To Arthur

A close-up photograph of a person's hands, heavily tattooed, holding a physical photograph. The person is wearing a dark grey long-sleeved shirt. The photograph being held shows a woman in a white wedding dress and a large bouquet of white and yellow flowers, standing on a staircase with green patterned carpeting. The background of the photo shows an indoor setting with a doorway and some furniture.

stick in the mind

Some things sort of stick in the mind
And won't come unstuck; some things
Float away from the mind like sticks
In a rushing river or breeze-thrown leaves,
But some things stick, like magnets
To the mind's fridge, held there,
Waiting to speak to us in voices
That we can't quite recognise, voices
That sound friendly, comforting, that stick
Like faces in the past's cracked glass.

**“I remember that day, I'll never forget that day,
it's sort of stuck in my mind.”**

Sylvia

Richard



P. B.



Oh... you been throwing
my kids onto the
next allotment??!



PETERS CONFESION





laugh lines

Grin grew to chortle grew to chuckle
Grew to guffaw grew to hoot
Grew to cackle grew to giggle;
In the allotment that year
We had a really healthy crop
Of laughter: planted, tended
Picked and distributed to us all
Free of charge to use right now.

Or keep for later
When we needed it.



a life more ordinary

This chapbook was produced as part of the 'A Life More Ordinary' project. Through collaboration with people who have dementia, carers, relatives and other supporters, the project aims to create a series of arts-based activities and outputs which provide a positive but realistic look at the experiences of those living with dementia and the individuals behind the diagnosis.

For this first chapbook in the series, Ian Beesley (photographer), Tony Husband (cartoonist) and Ian McMillan (poet) held a series of workshops in 2016 with Age UK Exeter's 'Budding Friends' group. The artists spent time with the group—including those with dementia, their partners and volunteers—both on their rapidly growing allotment and indoors. Members of the group shared their images and stories, both from the past and in the present, and joined in activities with the artists. The chapbook presents some of the images and poems produced during the workshops on the theme of 'The Allotment of Time'. We thank the group for their willingness to be involved, for their openness and honesty, and for the non-stop laughter during each session.

'A life More Ordinary' is led by Professor Linda Clare at the University of Exeter and is funded by the ESRC (ES/M50046X/1). It is linked with the 'Improving the Experience of Dementia and Enhancing Active Life' (IDEAL) study which examines what aspects of the social situation or the psychological resources that people with dementia and their families have help or hinder their ability to live well. The IDEAL study is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (UK) and the National Institute for Health Research (UK) through grant ES/L001853/2 'Improving the experience of dementia and enhancing active life: living well with dementia' (Investigators: L. Clare, I.R. Jones, C.Victor, J.V. Hindle, R.W.Jones, M.Knapp, M.Kopelman, R.Litherland, A.Martyr, F.Matthews, R.G.Morris, S.M.Nelis, J.Pickett, C.Quinn, J.Rusted, J.Thom). The support of the ESRC and NIHR is gratefully acknowledged. (ES/L001853/2).

For more information please see: www.idealproject.org.uk

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