

Poetry Series

**Andrew Shiston**  
**- poems -**

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## Andrew Shiston(16th March 1943)

I am an Englishman now living in Lincolnshire, England; I am a retired Merchant Navy officer, retired after twenty five years at sea. I write poetry of the sea, and of Dorset, (Thomas Hardy country) I also write novels, one of which has been published. My goal in life now is to publish a book of poetry.

Poetry has always been my passion and I used to write on long trips away at sea. I have been active and have had some of my poetry published, but not as yet in book form.

# A Day In Late Spring

The fog is lifting and the foghorn silent  
On the point of Portland Bill  
The lighthouse light extinguished  
Only seagulls now are shrill  
This late day in early spring  
Time passes slow, as in the Islands church  
Light through stained glass windows  
Sends shadows through the crypt  
And from the candles, tallow weeps  
The smell of incense and dusty hymn books  
Scratched pews and threadbare seats,  
In this sailors ancient graveyard  
Daffodils and fog wet grasses  
Grow against long uncared for headstones  
A tantalising harmony of joy and grief  
As once again the fog comes down  
The foghorn once silent, now reverberates  
Mist now creeps amongst the gravestones  
Meandering like a thief.

Andrew Shiston

## A Sonnet: Love Lost

I will never visit, nor ever call  
You are lifeless, dead, without love for me  
I shall go away and will never fall  
In love again, you have set my heart free

I will never, ever see you again  
Or hear your sweet voice, to me you are gone  
Now I sit surrounded by my pain  
Once I adored this place I sit on

We came here once with our love, in the sun  
And talked long, in your arms I fell asleep  
But now you have scorned my love, I must run  
I cannot stay, my love for you was deep

I now walk this path and from you I'm free  
My head high, my life ahead I can see.

Andrew Shiston

# A Symphony Of A Storm

The lightning and crashing of thunder  
And squalls of gale force wind  
Leave the sea a striped peppermint humbug  
To a horizon the eye cannot see  
Clouds as tall as a Gothic Hall  
Meet the fingers of sea giong by  
A howling tempest of a hurricane wind  
Sends twisting plumes of water on high  
Clouds flatten and swirl in a peppermint curl  
To the end of a symphonies chorus  
The brass band sits down and flags unfurl  
As the violin plays the last chord  
And away in the distance of the passing squall  
The thunder of the storms applause.

Andrew Shiston

# A Time Before

The Island appeared from the parting mist  
The cliffs rise from rocky broken bones  
Surging tides of Eocene, laid waste  
And cleansed this marbled artery of stone  
On the cliff above, a gallery of cradled nests of lamps  
White light for the wreckers moth,  
Beneath the baleful eye  
Rests the fishermen's windswept homes  
Windows glow with warmth  
Black ranges chuckle glowing red  
Driftwood, kindling piled against the shed  
Gallows, timbers thick as stilted trees  
Hunch over clinckered stalwart fishing boats  
Waiting to be lowered by block and tackle  
Into the Islands gale flung seas  
With the wind comes the cracked buoys bell  
Warning of four racing tides  
The full flood sweeps in across the rocks  
Dark seaweed with that salty ozone smell  
Dragged from below the sweating cliffs  
Spume filled waves leave foam  
As thick as snow upon the windswept roofs  
Flotsam, limbs of broken trees  
Washed up and flung across a shingled beach  
Lay as broken skeletons, kindling  
For the men who dare to fish these seas  
As the wind abates, seas ebbing  
Leaving mountain bones of broken stones  
Shingle stretching towards the land  
An isthmus created by the storms applause  
Stretching out towards the distant shores.

Andrew Shiston

# Christmas Eve At Sea

The sheets were frozen solid  
And snow lay on the decks  
The day was as cold as charity  
As we tacked from east to west  
We could see the shore lights bright and clear  
With warmth in the streaming smoke  
But we couldn't get close, or near  
Or we would founder on the shore  
The proud figure-head of our bounty  
Had dove in the grey-beards before  
But now her head stayed wet  
As we heeled hard to the storm  
The young-bloods were trying to reef  
But the frappings were covered in ice  
And to climb high above the decks  
Would be the last of a young-bloods life  
With a cannon-shot the topgallant went  
We broadsided to the gale  
With sheets ripped into pennants  
Only time for the others to fail  
From the shore we heard the church bells ring  
Now it was Christmas day  
And with all the crew in the forecastle  
Now was the time to pray  
The sailing master saw a shining light  
It was the light at Portland Bill  
With starboard rudder hard over  
He clung to the steering wheel  
The figure-head aimed for the opening  
Between two massive great stone walls  
And on Christmas day as the church bells rang  
The anchor fell through the hawse  
And our torn and shredded vessel  
Swung at anchor  
With cheers from townsfolk ashore.

Andrew Shiston

# Come With Me To This Island In The Sea (A Villanelle)

Come with me to this Island in the sea  
Tears of stone shed by ancient mountains bones  
The curving shore for all good men to see

From storming seas and flooding rip tides free  
This Island of white stone only Neptune owns  
Come with me to this Island in the sea

Stand alone on these stark broken cliffs, that be  
From pounding of the sea, the broken stones  
The curving shore for all good men to see

Portland's sheltered stony bay, that's in the lee  
The Island and her Pulpit Rock that groans  
Come with me to this Island in the sea

Steer your ship towards the Bill's lightning tree  
Sail safe to the bay, from the wind that roams  
The curving shore for all good men to see

Come all God's seamen, pray, come walk with me  
Find peace away from King Neptune's unholy moans  
Come with me to this Island in the sea  
The curving shore for all good men to see.

Andrew Shiston



# Danger

Rocks open mouths with teeth  
Creamed waves curling high  
Over the demon faces of the cliffs  
Outcrops of grasping fingers  
Reaching for the vessels passing by,  
Below in the rushing tides  
Surging waters, wearing  
Turning wooden hulks  
Towards the hungry shallows  
Daring unknown sailors  
With strange alluring fluted sounds  
Singing the songs of sirens  
And warm lights of the wreckers beacons  
Cold grasping hands, beckoning  
With unkempt broken nails  
To urge safe and warm temptation  
Upon the cold and grey quicksand's  
Waiting for the flotsam  
To stay with the quickly, now ebbing tides.

Andrew Shiston

# Drowned

From many fathoms deep  
In the dark and dismal depths  
Where day and sunlight disappear  
Lays a rusting rotten wreck  
The weeds that grow upon her deck  
Where seamen used to splice  
Move like gentle pennants  
Where proud flags used to fly  
The only men that crew this wreck  
That lays upon her side  
Is a pile of rotting human bones  
Of men that sailed and died.

Andrew Shiston

## Last Rites

Dark majestic, rising high in the heavens  
Black clouds of bulging rain  
Photo flash, a backdrop  
Lightning, lighting a golde halo  
Gods with black faces  
With puffed cheeks, mouths pursed  
As the storm gathers force  
The wind screams through the rigging  
Ripping sails into pennants  
Masts of finest redwood trees  
Bend in final submission  
As arms array they feel the sea  
The proud fugure-head leaps high  
As though in contest with the sea  
A final dive as the bows break off  
And with a groan the masts break free  
In slow reverse, bows high  
She slips below the foaming seas  
A final resting place below  
With just torrential rain  
The only morning cry.

Andrew Shiston

# Location

Where astern our screws thrust deep  
And streamed our spliced log line  
The bows break the forceful seas  
As we sail through the salty brine  
At knots we travel across oceans  
To ports across the world  
Our anchors oiled, pistons thrusting  
Clocking the ebbing tides  
Dolphins race our soiled skin  
Rust and weeds abound  
Sextants searching the horizon  
Looking, searching for the mid-day sun  
The ticking clock, chronometer, time  
Position, chart protraction  
Stainless steel dividers stride the charts  
Finding yesterdays location  
Radar searching the far horizon  
Find shadows of a tempest, storm  
Time to alter course for arrival  
For docking, anchors oiled  
Ropes laid out for the coming morn.

Andrew Shiston

# Lonely Girl

Forlorn and standing tall  
In an empty dockyard basin  
Bent and rusted rails  
By broken fallen walls  
Stands the rusty crane  
Below her siezed up wheels  
And piles of mixed up cables  
Lay her massive hook  
That lifted all the cargos  
From deep inside the holds  
Until her day had come  
Now she stands alone  
In an empty dockyard basin  
No ships, no men, just rubbish  
Drifting down the wharf.

Andrew Shiston

# Nightmares

In the darkness of the night  
Lit by a three quarter moon  
The swirling mist hovers  
Over rough and ready cobbles  
Like old fired cannon-smoke  
Ghostly shadows of fighting ships  
Clinging to the quay, fallen ancient castles  
Masts of tallest red-wood trees  
Arms stretched in disarray  
A drawbridge of battered sodden wood  
With spliced and knotted rope  
Drunken press-ganged sailors  
Board this shadow of sorrow and no hope  
The mist now lightens  
With the coming of the morn  
Flood tide has reached the top of ebb  
The cannon-shot of falling sail  
Hemp and three-fold purchase fall upon the deck  
Pennants proud, red-wood of mast and castle  
Spars with canvas flapping, filling  
Sail as fading shadows  
Into the hungry seas and coming dawn

Andrew Shiston

## Nightmares 2

Away out on the starboard beam  
Betwixt the stars and earth  
Beneath the laden storm clouds  
The distant shore lights gleam  
The ship that passes on this night  
Is a phantom passing through  
The wind that whistles in its sails  
Is a sailors nightmare  
That drives the ship away  
He dreams of waves and open sea  
Of forever sailing on  
Of tempest dark and gloomy depths  
Deep sleep far below  
To wander in the night  
No glance at twinkling lights  
Just a phantom passing through.

Andrew Shiston

# Ode To A Sunken Ship

Seagulls soaring over white water  
Wings stiff in the black sky  
Storm clouds race the raging wind  
As breaking seas crash by  
White water surging from astern  
Thrusting bows, dipping down  
Drowning the bare-breasted figurehead  
Shroud covered sails dripping  
Touching the dark green sea  
Barnacled weed covered hull  
Broaching as the masts break free  
Flotsam washed up on the cold grey sands  
No last post played  
No homecoming, no welcoming band.

Andrew Shiston



# Portland

This Island, this out-thrust spit of land  
At the end of miles of stone  
Where on the farthest cliff-top  
A lighthouse stands alone  
At sea four rushing tides collide  
Sending giant waves against the cliffs  
Committing suicide  
Leaving scars of giant caves  
Filled with dripping stalactites  
Long dead blackened dragons teeth  
Open mouthed about to bite  
Spray blown by the wind  
Falls where only shadows walk  
And sweeps across dark-faced quarries  
Disturbing pools of whitened chalk  
Under travelling skies and empty shores  
And distant collapsing seas  
Against the wind only gliding seagulls soar.

Andrew Shiston

# Quiet Of The Morning

As the mist swirls in the valleys  
And drifts across the fields  
The ghostly shadows harden  
And the ancient trees appear  
Old Oaks with giant branches  
And waists that spans their years  
Stand proudly dripping water  
From mist as though of tears  
In a gentle silent clearing  
Between these ancient trees  
Stands a broken fallen cottage  
Gnarled red ivy round its eaves  
In this quiet silence of the morning  
Before the wakening of the birds  
The sound across the clearing  
Is the, tap tap, tap tap of water  
Dripping down from sodden leaves.

Andrew Shiston

# Skeleton Coast

Thrusting from the dark green depths  
A mountain peak of monstrance stone  
Venereated by stinking guano  
Screaming gulls and dead birds bones  
A coast of storms and tempest  
Violent seas that never rest,  
Held below in Neptunes grasp  
Lay wrecks of ships turned on their sides  
Hulls split, seamen drowned and died  
Tangled in webs of seaweed, washed ashore  
By restless oceans storms  
Left high and dry by an ebbing tide.

Andrew Shiston

# Still Waiting

Sea lies in the harbour  
Stone piers straddle the ebbing tide  
Ferryboats still bob and turn  
Bows on, moorings still tied  
Weak chimes from the river cats  
Spitting at reflecting puddles  
Pictures of flat cottages  
All in a minds eye  
Waiting here, time stays still  
For that reply.

Andrew Shiston

# The Colour Of Warmth

You cannot spin the sun's rays  
For they are golden light  
Clothing earth with warmth  
Encompassing, coloured green  
A rainbow of colour so bright  
Growing the flowers, the smell  
Seeing the sweet taste  
Tasting the colours on your fingers  
Bright as a bird in flight  
White as a gull's feathered wings  
Blue as the flooding tides  
Gray as the ebbing, yellow as the sand  
You cannot spin the sun's rays  
For they are golden light  
Clothing the earth with warmth  
A rainbow colour of sight.

Andrew Shiston

# The Emperor's Men

Through the Suez Canal, on to the Red Sea  
And towards the east  
Where lives the nomad tribes  
Across the dry and arid deserts  
That draw the throats of man  
Drink from the Arab's wells  
Slake your thirst  
Leave before you're found  
By the roving owners' tribe bands  
He possesses it all, the Emperor with his hands

Replenish, board your sailing ships  
Sail out into the lonely seas  
Keep sharp your eyes for pirates  
That roam and wait for ships as yours  
Sail fast before the wind  
When crossing far from sandy shores,  
This ship with cargos of spice and Saffron  
Destined for a calph of the east  
Who own the ports and desert lands  
The air, the trees, the river and the wind carved sands

Beyond the dry and dusty dunes  
Lay swathes of green and fertile lands  
Gold temples, statues of all the gods  
Reverence paid for by the Emperor's men  
Who strut the cobbled streets  
The guard him with a jealous hand  
Fear for the restless ragged mobs  
They hide in anger, in caves of stone  
For even if the walls to fall  
He is master of slaves and calph over all

Though he is but mortal man  
His lineage from a thousand years  
Handed down from father to son  
Drought, pestilence across the years  
Does not foretell of tears to come  
The wealth of these desert shores

Is not owned by one man  
But the desert tribes  
They bow to him as they cross his land  
But his frail destiny will never be in his hands.

Andrew Shiston

# The Menu

Rushing water, teeth eroding stone  
Spray suspended over a brightly coloured rainbow  
Descending a catalytic cliff  
Disappearing into a catacomb of caves  
Spewing torrents into a gorge  
Of satisfaction  
A menu of nature  
Eating the life of earth.

Andrew Shiston



# The Ship

The sky grows dark, seagulls scream  
The wind begins to howl  
The storm is close, we cringe with fear  
The sea grows larger still  
Our mouths grow dry, we hold on tight  
It's not yet time to die  
We battle on against the wind  
The seas go charging by  
Our vessel groans as if alive  
She fights against the storm  
Her heart beats fast, her head lifts up  
Searching for the dawn  
When daylight comes the wind has gone  
The sea is calmer still  
She proudly dips and rolls  
A mass of rust and weed  
All that's left of an aging ship  
That's carried us across the seas  
To ports across the world.

Andrew Shiston

# Those At Sea

Cloth cap, coat thin with tears  
Congregation of this grey coastline  
Fishermen's wives and fears  
Shuffling, eyes downcast to their pew  
Quiet noises, coughs clearing throats  
Rustle of hymn books, only few  
Song sheets old and worn  
With musty smell of old socks  
A murmur as the priest climbs worn steps  
Opening hymn 'For Those in Peril on the Sea'  
No organ, just tired voices  
Then out into the frigid ozone air  
A sea mist meanders amongst the graves  
Of old lost sailors, taken  
From their mothers grieving breast  
In line behind the walk the path  
Down to frigid cottages  
No smoke from these tired stacks  
While out at sea  
Their men, and a storm that rages.

Andrew Shiston

# Three Maroons

Three maroons on this stormy night  
Clinkered stalwart lifeboat  
On the oily slip, oars in rowlocks  
Held by splice and knotted rope

The lifeboat crew touch their forelocks  
To the master in the stern, a trawler  
From this tiny hamlet, fishing far at sea  
Is missing, all have thought she's sunk

On her stern only a coracle  
Waves high as a racing horses neck  
Troughs black as treacle  
Turned this boat into a wreck

On the grey old timbered pier  
Grieving wives of fishermen  
Stand like soldiers on leave parade  
In the wet and soaking rain

Faces drawn and etched by hardship  
Small in stature of their pain  
The lifeboat slides into the sea  
Oarsmen with a fathom blade

Pull with the gravelled shout of stroke  
These are local fishermen, none are paid  
Row for the lives of fellow men  
Soon the lifeboats out of sight

On the shore three burning beacons  
A light to guide them home  
Suddenly out at sea, a lantern  
The grieving women moan

Through the spume of falling waves  
A dark prow of the lifeboat  
Filled with the hamlets fishermen  
Soaking wet, but all are saved.

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