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 and colors, including a prominent grey one. On the right, there are more sheds, some with red roofs, and garden beds with green netting. In the middle ground, several people are walking away from the viewer along the path. The background shows a line of tall, thin trees and a blue sky with scattered white clouds.

# 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.



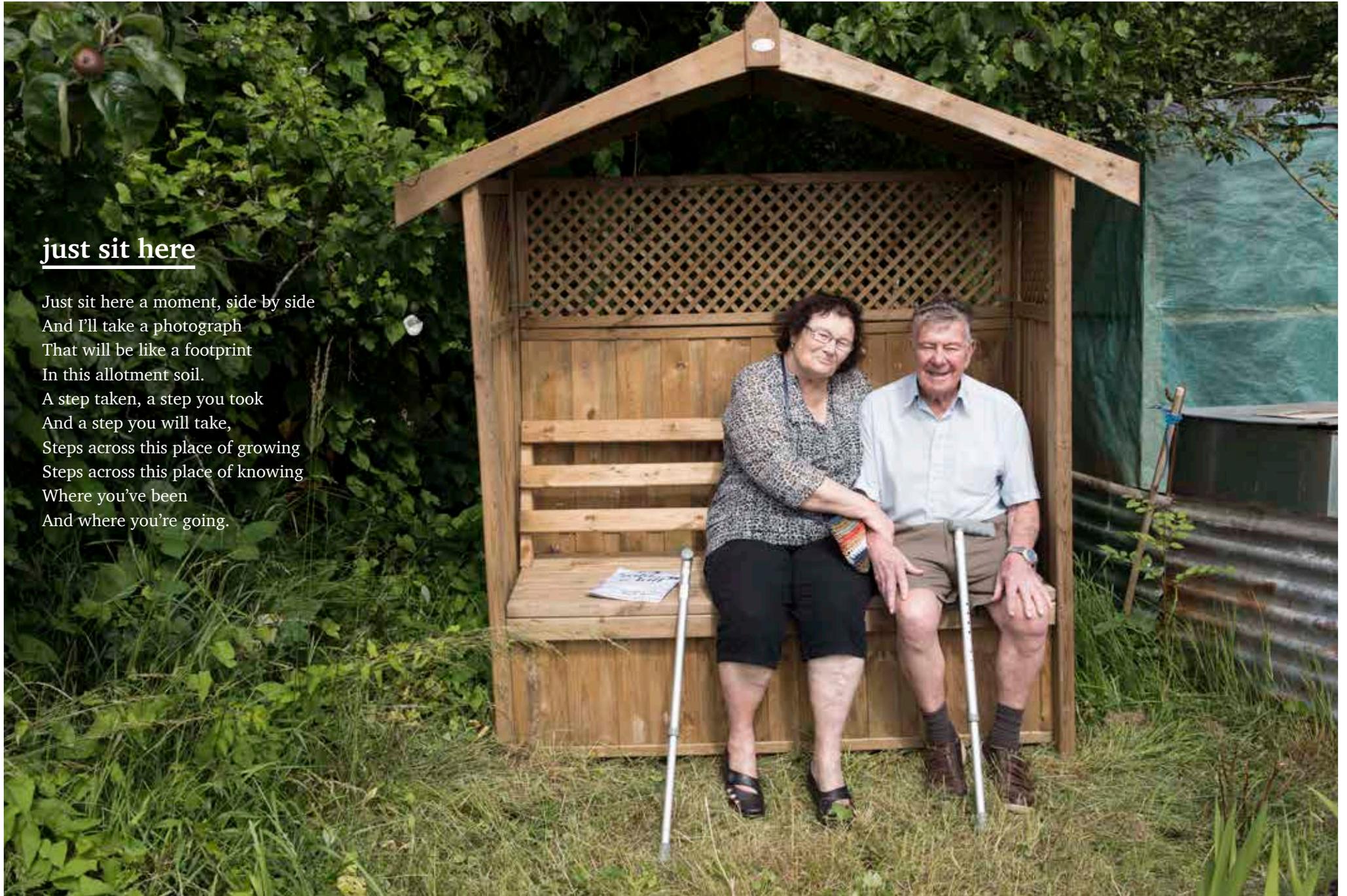
“I’ve been carrying it for years,  
reminds of me of who we used to be.”

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.”









oops sorry



Barrie  
BARRIE'S  
CONFESSION



Sarah

Barrie



Barrie

Mariann

Eric



Eric





Bill + Myra



'scuse me do you want  
any help in there?



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 they are holding shows a woman in a white wedding dress and a large bouquet of white and yellow flowers, standing on a staircase with a green patterned carpet. 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.



Oi... 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](http://www.idealproject.org.uk)

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