

Redgum "Ted"

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On a back block down Salisbury Plains
Ted was born in 1895
Thrust from the loins on to rusty soil
And the cord was cut with a scythe
He said "People there are city folk today
And they couldn't tell shit from clay
A ripening crop of stobie poles
There's no regrets when the memory roams
That earth is in me bones"

Did his bit in the first World War
Took the shilling to fight the Hun
Mud up to his crotch in Flanders fields
And the gas eating out his lungs
He said "Me best mate died hanging on the barbed
wire
And when the attack was through
We took some prisoners to HQ
And shared a fag and a yarn or two
They were the same as me and you"

And I asked old Ted what history meant
As he sharpened his hedging shears
"What a bloody fool question that is my boy
I lived it for 83 years"

See him every year on Anzac Day
Swilling beers down at the Rex Hotel
He'd laugh with his mates and go deep in thought
Where he went even he couldn't tell
He said "King and Country, cock'n'bull
We fought just to survive
The anger might have faded still this feeling grabs me
deep inside
I guess you could call it pride"

As a navvy on the line in the Nullabor
The Depression left its scars
Heaving cold steel rails in the burning sun
And freezing beneath the stars
He said "If you escaped the susso queues
You had a hell of a price to pay"

And when time flowed like an open wound
I'd blow me dough on a Saturday
And drink the pain away"

On Sunday arvo he'd sit and talk
Over a dozen cold West End
Of what was gained and what was lost
And would never come again
He said "Money you know it comes and goes
On booze and rent and fags
You can make a fortune on overtime
And lose it all on the nags

But years of toil with a bunch of mates
You know it leaves you satisfied
Though we never moved a mountain
We sure gave it a try"
Pick the wheat from the chaff
And the steel from the scurf
And the honest man from the liar
If wisdom came by other names
Ted was earth and fire

On the day that old Ted died
No-one would have known
Buried in a pauper's grave
He lived and died alone
And the 727s roared overhead
With the drone of the angry roads
There seemed a pause for just a while
And the silence was heard around for miles
And the silence was heard for miles

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