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The Gift of Years

Well old friend here am,
I told you I'd be back
And as usual mate I'm bloody late,
It's seventy five years down the track.
For the last time here I stand
In this familiar foreign land,
Back with the mates I left behind,
Fixed forever in their time.

And of all the ghosts of all the boys
Who haunt this lonely place,
Only one of them wears your cheery grin
And your Queensland joker's face.
When I drown in old and bloody dreams
Of helpless young men's dying screams.
I feel your hand give my arm a shake
And your voice say 'Steady, mate'.

And the country that you died for mate,
You would not know it now.
The future that we dreamed of mate,
Got all twisted up somehow.
The peace that we were fighting for,
The end to stupid, senseless war.
So it couldn't happen to our kids,
Well, old mate, it did.

But thank you for the gift of years,
And the flame that brightly burned.
For the time you bought and the lessons taught,
Though often wasted and unlearned.
'Least we forget" cry the multitude,
As if I ever, ever could.
So forgive an old man's tears,
And thank you for the years.