

**DID YOU EVER?**

Botanic Gardens. Marbled globes, stacked and rolled,

shiny colours, dark and bold, triggered memories of old.

Rest and balance, style and poise.

Kaleidoscope of childhood joys.

*Did you ever play with marbles , during break-time, with your mate*

 *and lost that bobby-dazzler, blue and yellow met its fate?*

*Down the channel, round the tree root, earth compacted by small feet.*

*Spinning, swerving, bouncing, curving. Try to win, but then defeat.*

*Did you ever sleep on camp-beds, afternoon, post meal-time snooze?*

*Drink milk from tiny bottles, either that or orange juice?*

*Have a wonderful head-teacher? Nature walks and puppet shows.*

*Fall in love with your Miss Charlesworth? Married, South Africa she goes.*

*Spend your money at the tuck shop, gob-stoppers and wagon wheels?*

*Sherbet fountains, liquorice whorls, don’t spoil school dinner meals?*

*Spuds and beans, ham and greens, turnip, spam, sago or rice.*

*Stir in jam, disgusting pink. School nurse checking height, and lice.*

*Did you ever have an accident, squirming, hand up once again?*

*Just wait until the bell rings, her repetitive refrain.*

*Sent home shame-faced, head-bent disgraced, seeking comfort from my stain.*

*Mother’s temper, Grandma’s disdain, bath and bed to nurse my pain.*

*Then once Father, working harder, fetched from school on motorbike.*

*In his lap, holding fast, red and chrome soon brought me home.*

*Ran to Mum, tripped-up run, cut my knee, tears, can’t see.*

*Cleaned and soothed, felt a fool.*

*Did you ever jump off haystacks, build a den up in a tree?*

*Prop that bike against the wall, pushed, fell ten times then cycled free?*

*Roller skated and then snaked in line behind a speeding trike?*

*Built a go cart, greased and painted, fitted ‘cow horns’ on your bike?*

*Did you ever try at sports but always failed to make the grade?*

*Were you ever chosen last when teams were picked or new plans made?*

*Did you play in schools cup-final, level score near whistle time?*

*Goalie booted, ball rebounded off your knee and crossed the line.*

Better leave this reverie, nineteen exhibits to see.

Giant Foxglove, monkey learning, Madame Heron, bronzed, sat yearning.

Tent and boat ceramic glazed and a pineapple of spades.

Fountain stepping top to toe, birds cut out and free to go.

Did you ever?