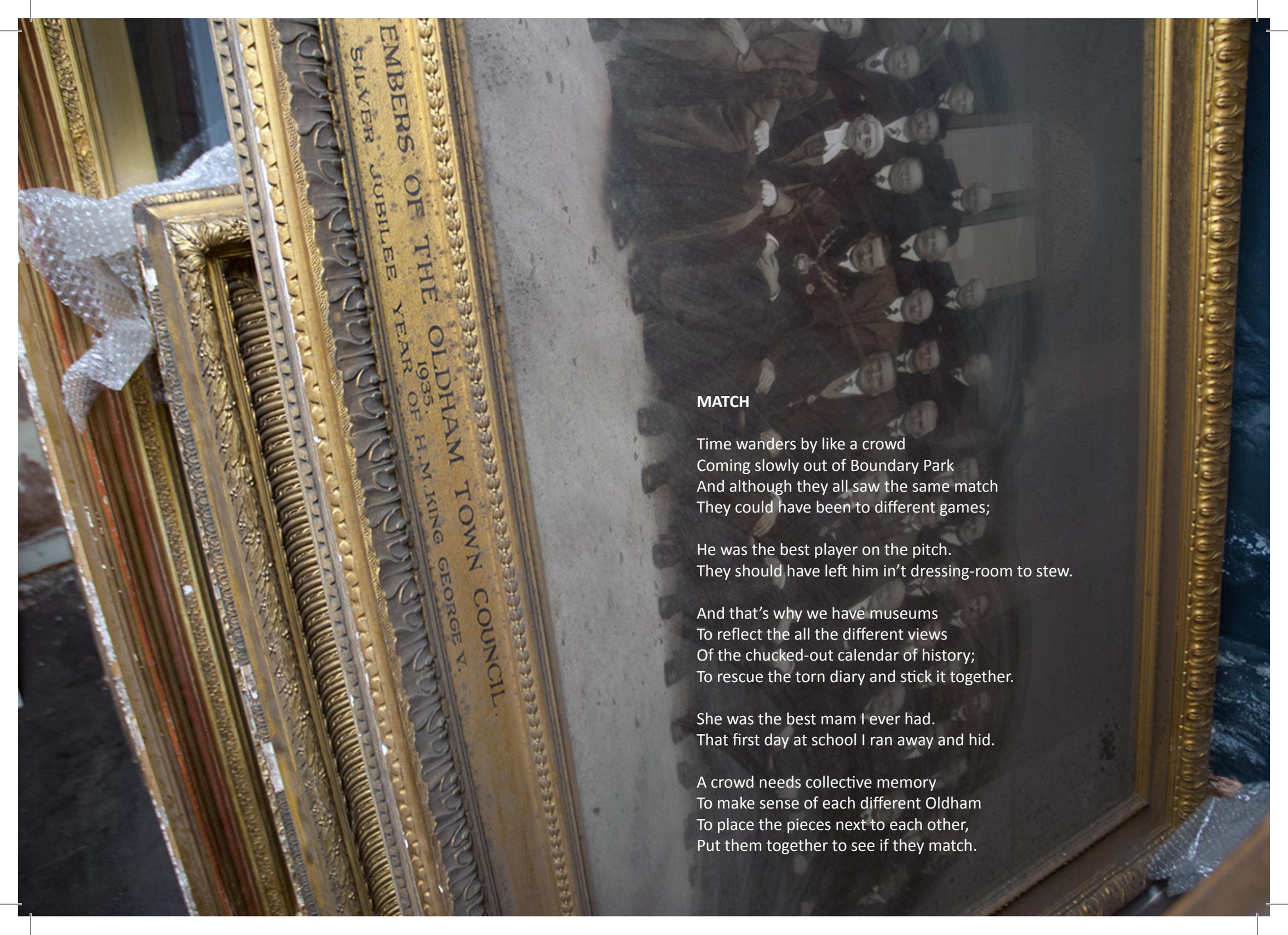


# A BOX FULL OF CUCKOOS

Photos by Ian Beesley

Poems by Ian McMillan





**MATCH**

Time wanders by like a crowd  
Coming slowly out of Boundary Park  
And although they all saw the same match  
They could have been to different games;

He was the best player on the pitch.  
They should have left him in't dressing-room to stew.

And that's why we have museums  
To reflect the all the different views  
Of the chucked-out calendar of history;  
To rescue the torn diary and stick it together.

She was the best mam I ever had.  
That first day at school I ran away and hid.

A crowd needs collective memory  
To make sense of each different Oldham  
To place the pieces next to each other,  
Put them together to see if they match.



BIRD JARFULLER



CUPBOARD OF THRUSHES



BAG OF STENTS



BAG OF DUCKS



Box of Cuckoos.



BAG OF SWANS

*CRISTOPOLI (Ranunculus aquatilis),*  
FRANCE, 1851. In early summer.

### SIGNAL

At a given signal, all the birds  
Flap their way out of all the bags  
And rise into the Lancashire air, circling.

The signal is The Future, of course.  
That's a given. Circling, they are,  
Someone says, circling.



## FEATHERS THROUGH PLASTIC

An owl's face, wise as you like,  
Looks at us from inside that plastic bag.

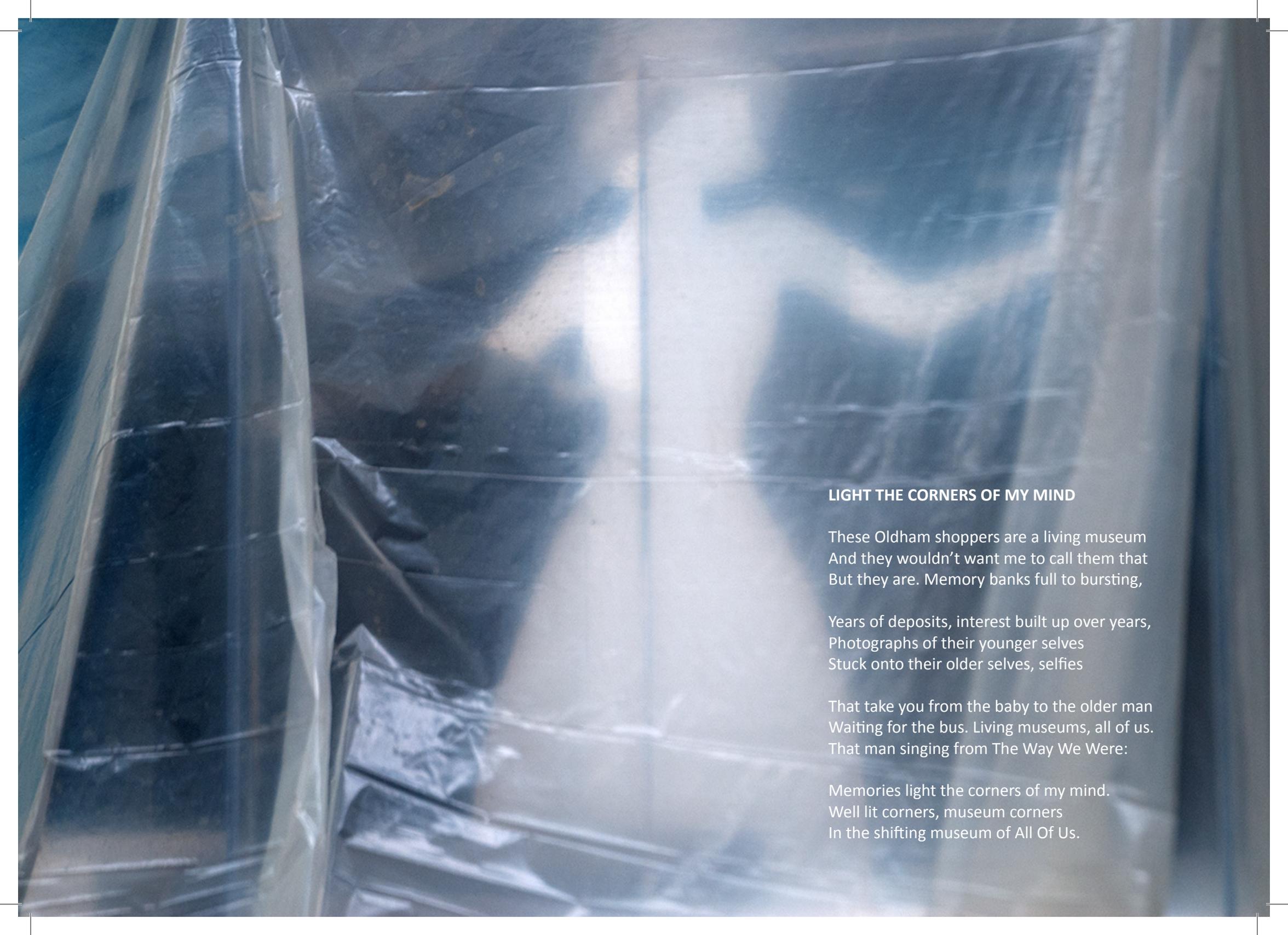
These wings will never fly again,  
But they might think about it.

This is a strange limbo to be in;  
Like being in a tight plastic nest, waiting.

Imagine them flying, all at once,  
Plastic bags catching the Oldham sun, winking.

It's as though evolution has stalled for a moment;  
It's as though it's waiting for a signal.

At night they sing, their songs muffled.  
But the notes still resonate. Listen.



### LIGHT THE CORNERS OF MY MIND

These Oldham shoppers are a living museum  
And they wouldn't want me to call them that  
But they are. Memory banks full to bursting,

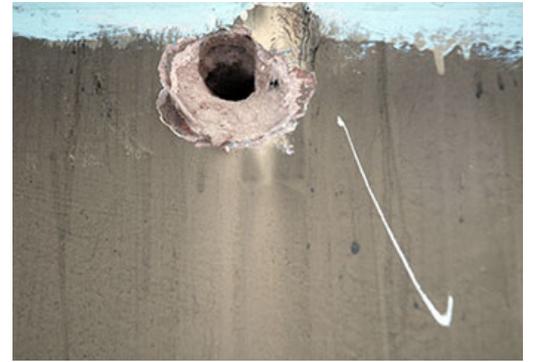
Years of deposits, interest built up over years,  
Photographs of their younger selves  
Stuck onto their older selves, selfies

That take you from the baby to the older man  
Waiting for the bus. Living museums, all of us.  
That man singing from The Way We Were:

Memories light the corners of my mind.  
Well lit corners, museum corners  
In the shifting museum of All Of Us.



IF you take the last  
item from this pile  
please inform Susan





### IMAGINARY DRAWERS AT GALLERY OLDHAM

#### The Drawer of Lost Bookmarks

1. Mumps train ticket.  
Only went one way.  
Walked home in the snow.
2. Boundary Park Ticket.  
Cup match; you could spear the atmosphere  
With a fork.
3. Photo of my mam.  
People say she's got my nose.  
Well it was always in a book.
4. Rasher of bacon.  
I meant to eat it  
Then I got tied up  
With that cowboy.
5. Postal Order.  
Never filled the pools in that week.  
Could have been a millionaire.  
A Greenfield Millionaire.

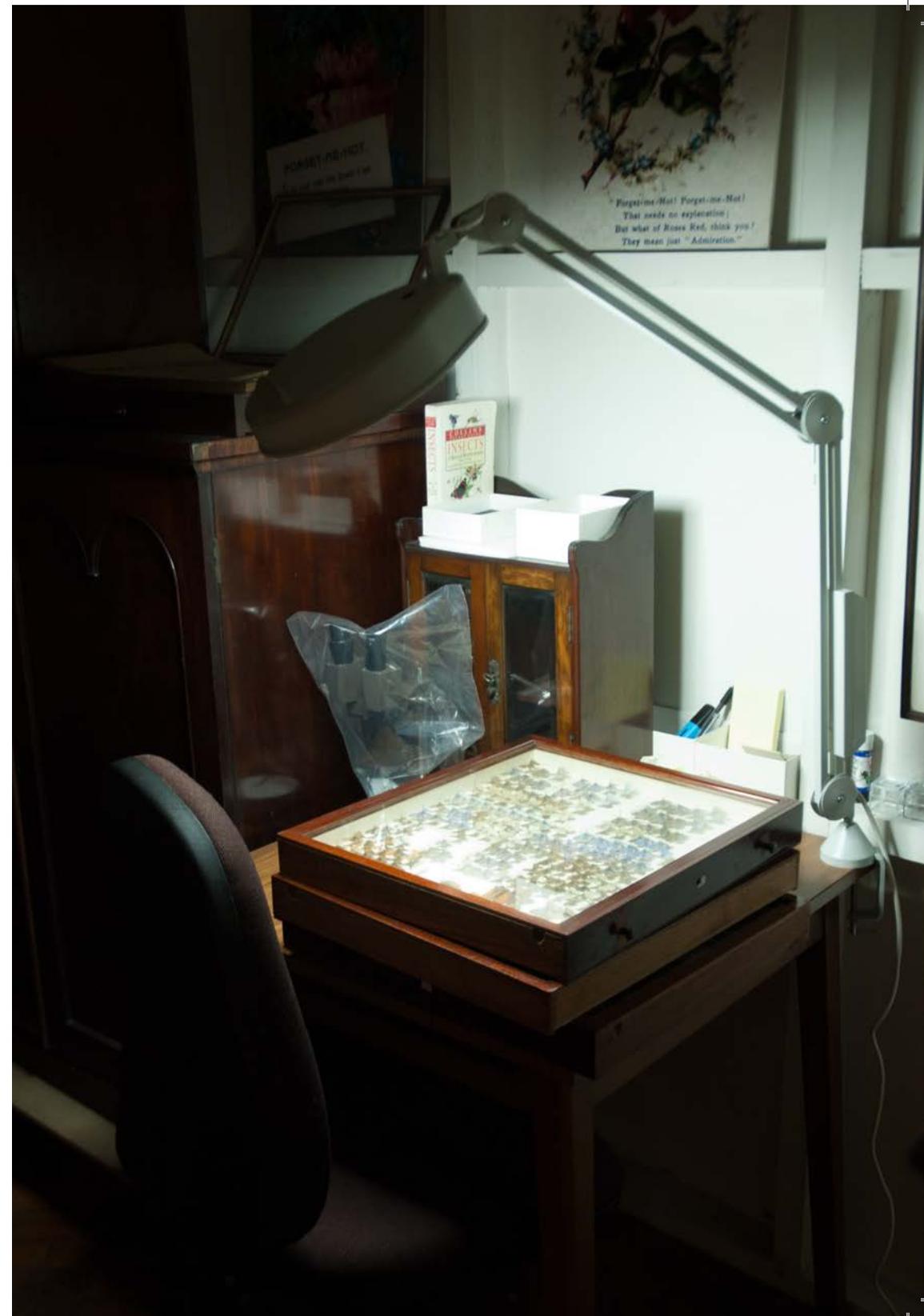


#### The Drawer of Curated Moments

1. The moment I first went to the library on my own.
2. The moment in the museum when my Grandma said 'I used to have one of them and I chucked it away'
3. The moment I said 'Let's meet by the gallery' and she turned up. In a hat.
4. The moment I dropped that penny in the museum and it rolled and rolled like it was rolling into the past.
5. The moment I just stood and looked at the sunlight coming in through the windows and my dad said 'That's Lancashire sunshine, is that.'

#### The Drawer of Oldham Breezes

1. Moor breeze. Hats will lift, slightly.
2. Town breeze. Hold your shopping, tightly.
3. Dark Breeze. Over the revellers, midnightly.
4. Litter Breeze. Make it dance, unsightly.
5. Blue breeze. Out of a clear sky, brightly.





Oldham's original Library, Museum & Art Gallery opened in 1883. Plans were unveiled in 2012 to transform the building into a new Heritage Centre at the heart of a vibrant cultural hub for Oldham. The project was awarded development funding by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Arts Council England and the real work began.



Photographer Ian Beesley and poet Ian McMillan were invited to chart the first stages of this development. They found some rooms already empty, others still used to store museum collections and evidence everywhere of exploratory drilling and structural assessments. A new Heritage Centre will restore much of the building to its look and feel. It will also enable the museum collections to be fully displayed and allow the cuckoos out of their boxes once more.







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