

Neepsend Chinese chequered history

Shalesmoor workshop hammers pound
Night and day and all year round
Shifts of fourteen hours or worse,
Bent before the grinder's horse.

Fathers old before their time.
Faces lined with grease and grime.
Young lads follow in their tread
Earn their keep before they're dead.

Streets now sleek with ash grey blocks,
Where once the men in ragged smocks
Were ruled by bosses' ticking clocks
Piece work. Tick tick tick - tick tock...

No more the corner workers' pubs
Sitting after work in 'snugs',
Mirrored windows blanked with steam
A snatch of time to think or dream.

Take a beer, then home to hovels
Slammed up quick with picks and shovels,
Bread and dripping, off to bed,
Children's feet touch parents' heads.

Now – see units piled up high
Chairs and tables from Ikea;
Chinese students surf WIFI.
Their futures lie more in ideas.

Make their way up Hoyle Street hill
Uni lectures beckon still.
Now no trace of grime and dust -
A Progress March, as march it must.

What would those former grinders feel,
These Sheffield men of iron and steel
To see their streets now polished clean,
Replace their slums so tight and mean?

If they could now fast forward track
And see their world turned front to back.
No strength or sweat to earn one's bread
No work with hands, just eyes and head.

I write this and I vainly think
What another hundred years might bring?
I cannot guess - nor see that time.
... someone else must pen that rhyme.



Jude Warrender July 2018