melancholy occurrence
Also by John Seed

*Spaces In* (Pig Press, Newcastle-upon Tyne 1977)
*History Labour Night* (Pig Press, Durham 1984)
*Interior in the Open Air* (Reality Studios, London 1993)
*Divided into One* (Poetical Histories, Cambridge 2003)
*Pictures from Mayhew* (Shearsman Books, Exeter 2005)
*That Barrikins* (Shearsman Books, Exeter 2007)
*Manchester: August 16th & 17th 1819* (Intercapillary Editions, London 2013)
*Some Poems, 2006-12* (Gratton Street Irregulars, Cheltenham, 2014)
*Smoke Rising* (Shearsman Books, Bristol, 2015)
John Seed

melancholy occurrence

Shearsman Books
These pieces are appropriated from mostly nineteenth-century English newspapers or inquest reports and rewritten. Without changing significant details. They are not fiction therefore any relation to persons living or dead is not entirely coincidental.

A handful have already appeared in
Weight, pressure, and accidental movement together with resistance are the four accidental powers in which all the visible works of mortals have their existence and their end.

—Leonardo da Vinci
quoted by Edward Robert Zurko,
SAMPLER
'One always fails to speak of what one loves'
on blank paper Barthes left
in his typewriter the Monday morning he

stepped off the curb at 44 Rue des Écoles
ronron the drone of traffic
art of the contingent  there’s always something else

something about the sky the cold the winter light
and was hit by a laundry van one afternoon

25 February 1980
SAMPLER
Sunday 26th December
1820 London
in French-alley Goswell-street
the watchman going his rounds
calling the hour of one
discovered a new-born infant
lying in a corner entirely naked
a few old rags around his head
About six o’clock Saturday evening

18th May 1850

a man staggered down High Street Glasgow

reached North Gray’s Close

and fell down

and died in the infirmary a few hours later his

name is unknown

his dress that of a labourer
A stonemason died a short time since at Woolwich

employed three years making his own brick grave
and erecting his own tombstone

he carried the work on to the finishing
of the inscription leaving only

a blank for the date
About three o’clock
Monday October 31st 1814
south-west corner of the Bank

one of the figures
dropped onto the head of a passer-by
who had just received a dividend

killing him and leaving a fracture
almost an inch wide
visible in the west wall
Edward Charles Luard
of Jesus College Cambridge
wishing to see some friends
at Southampton
leaving for Jersey from the end of the pier
midnight Wednesday 28th June 1854
making haste in the darkness
being short-sighted he
fell over the quay
wall into the water
and disappeared
Henry Farley, a very quiet man, having little to say, got out of bed about half past five in the open door of an outhouse at the back of his cottage. He got up on a four-inch set-off in the brickwork, then slipped off.

A widower aged 67 suffering from rheumatism, a shepherd out of work, and given notice to leave his cottage at Upper Woodford by Michaelmas, hanging from a beam his feet scarcely an inch from the ground.
Sunday morning going over his farm

Mr Way noticed the tools and coat of a labourer named Tremlett

employed the previous day

10th of November 1877

to level a cob-wall

his body buried beneath the ruins

pocket watch stopped at two minutes to four o’clock
Jennings an illusionist
and conjuror at the Royal Aquarium
entered a butcher’s shop on the Fulham Road
and fell through an open trap-door
During the rejoicings Thursday evening
5 November 1807
somebody discharged a musket behind the watch-house
the ball passed through window shutters
on each side of the watch-house
and through the head of Sarah Osborne
fourteen years of age
standing in a shop in Bristol’s Horse Fair
then through the windows of the house opposite
shattering a picture on the wall
Mrs Mary Rothes a pew-opener
performing her duties during morning service at Cripplegate
Sunday 8th of February 1835
fell suddenly to the ground saying

*O god have mercy on me*

and before anybody could reach her

ceased to exist
private of the 14th Regiment
Charles Sturges
aged twenty-four
shot himself through the heart
at four in the morning
Tuesday 10 May 1876
on sentry at the barracks

Plymouth
in the dressing room at the Victoria Skating Rink

Friday December 2\textsuperscript{nd} 1910

William Lewis of Druid’s Lodge
dressed as an arctic explorer
head to foot in cotton wool
lit a cigarette
next minute a flash
a sheet of flame
rushed out of the room
Agnes Harriet Gilman aged three years
a winter night Friday about five
stepped into Ashborne-road Derby
and onto the tramway
and turned and ran
straight towards the car the horse
knocked her down across the rail

it was dark
the red lights of the car threw no light on the track
and the child was very little
and dressed in dark clothes
and the wheels went over her