A shilling life? Just look it up online.
The internet will give you all the facts
(though facts are not the story - yours or mine -
the story’s in the words, the deeds, the acts).

Enquire within on (almost) everything -
the universe is at your fingertips.
Count angels on a pin, hear mermaids sing,
go back to the Big Bang, in youtube clips.

Just bear in mind a wise old poet spoke
of wisdom-lost-in-knowledge, knowledge lost
in too-much-information - it's no joke.
Post-truth is where we’ve come to - that’s the cost.

But crank up your search engine anyway.
Results? Two hundred thousand at a click.
Refine your search, see what it has to say
about your subject - make it specific.

Our man’s a hybrid, international -
he’s German-Irish, Pole, (Silesian),
his family divided by the wall,
by politics - ugly, dystopian.

And born of that, a search for openness,
a world without walls, freedom to explore
our endless possibility, and yes,
our oneness, our humanity and more.

It started with a gift from his grandfather -
a big old taperecorder, reel-to-reel.
A machine with a memory - a wonder -
And there it was, his own, a miracle!

Fast-forward sixty years to where we are -
a nanosecond only, in real time -
but in that time he’s followed his own star,
a true original, a paradigm.
He’s *primus inter pares*, first among his equals, unsurpassed, redoubtable. His intellect is sharp, his will is strong. The man’s hard drive is incorruptible!

His universe, the university -
Open it up! Invite the whole world in!
Welcome difference, diversity
push back barriers, boundaries - begin.

There’s innovation and good governance
to let imagination do its work,
the sciences, the arts joined in a dance -
light of the mind, a pure creative spark.

These massive online courses (*moocs* to you!)
a revolution - access open, free
available to all - can this be true?
(A million studying philosophy!)

So maybe information can still turn
to knowledge, knowledge grow into wisdom -
for that’s the hope, that we love what we learn
and what we love and learn we can become.

There is no end to what we still can know.
Infinity? Beyond? Let’s boldly go!

Alan Spence
November 2017