Notebook for a new decade

I put it all on paper now.

You start by writing what you know.
In March, at dawn, a blackbird starts to sing;
It must be five am; two streets away.

Later, in silhouette,
The heavy pigeons
Tumble and clown
On twigs too thin to bear them.
Through the trees, the sky is blank as foolscap.

Slowly an engine is purring back to life.

The old forget
Despite what children say.
Memories deleted cannot be reclaimed.
The past is cordoned off - a crime scene, an archaeological dig -
The evidence fragmentary, misleading, insufficient:
A shard, glass bottles, encrusted nails,
Perhaps a bone or two,
And press cuttings yellow with antiquity.

Of 1945, all recollection’s gone.
Except that I remember a five-day crossing on perilous seas,
My father, out of uniform, pacing the deck,
A Senior Service between his nervous fingers,
And then the bells, the recorded bells at Trinity,
Telling us something; telling us everything.

I tear off the page and start again.

Alastair Best