

# LOST WORDS

*dialect stories*



## Acknowledgements

Sponsored by Northumbrian Word Project:



Adult Writing Competition delivered in partnership with Northumbrian Language Society:



Young Writers Competition delivered in partnership with New Writing North:

# NEW WRITING NORTH

## **About**

The Word, National Centre for the Written Word launched a Lost Words Dialect Writing Competition which ran in late 2019/early 2020 that was sponsored by the Northumbrian Words Project.

There was an adult's competition, ran in partnership with the Northumbrian Language Society and a young writer's competition, for 12 - 19 year olds, ran in partnership with New Writing North.

The competition invited aspiring writers to submit contemporary short stories between 500-1000 words in length which used The Word's Word Bank of Lost Dialects.

The Word Bank of Lost Dialects is a collection of over 2,400 North East dialect words and phrases received by The Word during their popular Lost Dialects exhibition.

Entrants were expected to use the words and phrases to create a contemporary short story on any subject and were judged on the quality of the narrative as well as on the way they celebrate the North East dialect.

This anthology includes the winning top 3 winning entries from the adult's competition along with a further 9 stories that were shortlisted. It also includes the top 2 winning entries from the young writer's competition.

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- Adult's Competition 2<sup>nd</sup> Place – Landfill by Sarah Lenthall
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- Young Writer's Competition 2<sup>nd</sup> Place – Imagine by Jess Mews

### **Other shortlisted stories:**

- Dare or Divnt by Pete Donald
- Breaking the Mould by Geoff Soulsby
- Wrap these words around you like a scarf to keep you warm by Tracey Sinclair
- Keep Him Out the Clarts! by Julie Hedger
- Day at the Sands by Maureen Reed
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## **ADULT COMPETITION - 1<sup>st</sup> PLACE:**

### **A Canny Day Oot - by Paul Mein**

Ye'll hev nae doot hord the sayin', "Many a mickle myeks a muckle." Nowt sae true as when wa taakin' aboot bilberries.

It teks donkeys' years to fill a basket or pail with enough for a pie or tart. It's not just that they're deid titchy or that they hide away from yu; it's just yu canna stop eatin' them. Thiv got a tyeast like nee other. The blueberries yu get in the shop are wattery. Bilberries explode in ya mouth. It myeks for slow progress in the gatherin'.

Aa was up with the grandbairns in one o' the best places for bilberries - the hill up to the Draakstone. Porple handed, porple moothed, we med wa way to the Stone, hunkered doon to watch the clouds scud ower Harbottle. What a bonny place.

We went ower the top to the lough. Dark, deep, ghoustie.

Aa browt to mind the aad tale aboot when they tried to drain the lough. The workmen hord a voice from neewhere -

"Let alone let alone  
or a'll droon Harbottle  
and the Peels  
and the bonny Holystone."

They got such a gliff, they ran, muckle feart.

Aa cud well understand why, so we med wa way, tappylappy doon the hill to the car park,

lightenin' wa load as we wa gannin' alang. "Mind," aa sez, "divn't gan and eat them aal. Granny's ganna myek a lovely bilberry tart when we get hyem." Nowt quite like it, ye knaa. Crusty broon pastry, a sprinkle of sugar on top and evaporated milk to help it doon. Get yirsel' on the ootside o' that, ye'll come to nae harm.

By the time wi got to the car, it was blaa'in' a hooly and we just managed to get wa byeuts off and inside before the rain came stottin' doon. "Whey noo," aa sez. "Wasn't that good to get the stink blawn off ye, a bit of history and mystery up by the Draakstone and pick wa own supper an aal?"

The littl'un said, "Granda, I'm very cold and I need the lavatory."

(Livin' doon South has sharp got shot of their northern broughtins up). Aa cud tell he was borstin' so aa sez,

“Whey, there’s nae netties here hinny, but plenty of trees. Just gan ti that one ower there. Naebody’ll keek.”

The rain had eased off to a mizzle and I watched him trudge to the furthest tree he could and disappear ahent the trunk. Aa turned to Noah, the eldest. He aalready had his phone oot and wis tappin’ geet fast with his bilberry fingers.

“Did ye enjoy yersel’ this mornin’ pet?”

“Yes thank you Granda. But I want to finish this bit of my game, if that’s alright?”  
(Posh taak, lovely manners).

“Sartinly hinny. What are ye playin’?”

“It’s called Grand Theft Auto. It’s very exciting.” Aa thowt ti misel’ “Whey, aa cud play that in real life. Just leave me tractor unlocked and then chase the theivin’ nowts in me LandRover like Tommy Heppell did.” Aa didn’t share the thought - it didn’t end ower well for Tommy.

William came back, clarts up to his oxters.

“Granda, I slipped and fell in the mud and dropped my bilberries.” He looked as miserable as sin.

“So yiv cowped ya creels and lost ya catch. Wet arse and nae fish.”

Aa hev ti say, that raised a smile from both.

“Taakin’ of fish, whit about we gan and get some fish and chips on the way hyem?  
We’ll get some scranchuns an’ aal.”

We wolfed them doon and aa fund oot on the way back that Noah had eaten aal of his gatherins and aa hadn’t bothered to pick any, thinkin’ the bairns cud dae the lot; me back was bad an’ aal.

So aa wasn’t luckin’ forward ti tellin’ ’ Grandma aboot the failure. But when she opened the door, she had hor pinny on and there was a lovely smell comin’ from the kitchen.

“Ye’ll never guess,” she sez. “ Helen’s man Jimmy just browt is a whole load of bilberries. He came across some when he was oot on his rounds. Aa’ve med a lovely tart for afters, but aa’ve had nae time to cook a meal. Aa thowt ye cud get fish and chips for tea. Hoo does that sound?”

Wi aal nodded, the ‘hear nae, see nae, speak nae’ monkeys. At least we wad tyest a bilberry tart efter aal.

## ADULT COMPETITION - 2<sup>nd</sup> PLACE:

### Landfill – by Sarah Lenthall

A strike the match, gan up in a blast, engulfed in flames that rage, spit sparks, neurons fire 'n' visions start.

The landfill. Smells cling te me neb from years of work, hands black, knacked, aalways hurt. The earth's ripped-op'un sore, a gob, which we gag 'n' gorge. This shrink-wrapped, vacuum-packed, plastic generation, absentmindedly rages war against Mother Nature. A build-up of pressure, a spark of anger, a deep-seated fire that burns in the baron belly of the oppressed, a warnin' te the oppressor.

Then a face flickers, wor lass. Shi said shi'd never gan that way - packed up in a box, buried iway. But cancer burnt through a body, settled in a gut. A see a there, a long windswept hair, the sting of tears, a sorrow-worn face as the doctor confirmed our worst fears.

Now am at Newbiggin shore. Thirty-one years later, an uproar. A sperm whale washes up in thi bitta caad, last breath, after days of us watchin' a slow death. Even the moon 'n' sea can't pull a back, left on show for us aal te gawp at. Crowds gather, haphazard, there te mourn 'n' contemplate – was it somethin' we did? The coastguard stands vigil, tells tales of men with pliers who tear teeth from roots, rip skin te ribbons, strip flesh from ribs te use thum as archways, hang from walls, it's aal been done b'fore. The cordon off the area b'cos a stomach's swollen, not with a bairn but a risk of explosion. Two-hundred-'n'-twenty pund of plastic pulled from a gut, then it's announced shi'll be sliced up 'n' dumped.

A stab of shame. Shi shouldn't gan this way, nee dignity in death, chopped up 'n' thrown iway. So a protest, am cautioned, creatin' unrest. The cuffed me wrists so ad bite me lip but a snuck about the sorry dark, ready te leave me mark. A skin's gashed, wounds are deep - reds, pinks, whites – ooze 'n' weep. A douse a in petrol, pour it in deep, strike a match, watch it catch.

Back te The Burnin' Monk. Sets 'imself ablaze, unyieldin' face strong in the smoky haze. A grisly act of protest, the said. Saw the picture, read the paper, didn't think it'd be a beacon so many years layta. Old enough te remember, tee young te understand. The fire roars, claws at me skin as though am there in that foreign land.

But am here in this 'un. A moment of clarity. Was this the right thing te do? Aye. Te mek a point, te tek a stand. Wi pollute the oceans, stuff the land, 'n' now the want te butchered the whale 'n' tek a te landfill? Nah. For the mother 'n' the mothers that never were. For wor lass. For the doctor sayin' it's only a matter of time before the next riddled body is mine.

Only seconds ave passed, locals run doon the sands, squealin' en masse. Sat astride a fiery whale, a inhale, 'n' up wi gan. The sky is the sea, the clouds the waves - wi've made it, the landfill won't become our graves.

## **ADULT COMPETITION - 3<sup>rd</sup> PLACE:**

### **Echoes – by Barbara Williams**

The words were the first things that went.

My name disappeared one Sunday in the sitting room, like it had sunk into the green velvet cushions, or been obscured in the patterned chintz of the wallpaper. She was sitting in her usual armchair by the window, looking down at me as I lay prone in front of the fire. I watched her searching for it. Her mouth opened, but it wouldn't come. Her lips pursed in frustration. Silence stretched between us, unspooling like a cobweb. I knew I should smile but my face couldn't hear.

It was raining outside, or "teemin" as Nanna would say, wrapping the windows in a bleary blanket that obscured the back garden and smothered the occasional scream of car engines in the back lane.

Granda shifted uncomfortably on the three-piece as Nanna and I stared at each other.

"Barbara," he prompted.

But my name had evaporated, washed away in the rain. It was replaced by "Dolly", a comfortable mitten that slid easily over any missing digit. From that point on, we were all "Dolly"... even my brother.

Nanna was a lot of things, but mostly she was a voice. She was the "eeh!" in excitement, the cuddly "c" in "canny", and the disparaging tuts in "worky-ticket" and "picture nuisance". She was never tired but "jiggered", never ran but "skeetered".

She announced herself with an idiosyncratic "Yoohoo!", assured us she was on her way with an "As a-comin!", and signed off with a dependable, "Bye, Dolly". We weren't her grandchildren, we were "the bairns"; it sounded like a smile and felt like a verbal embrace. Her words staked her claim to us: no family member was a floating individual but "wor Ronnie" or "wor Janet".

Her idiolect was the soundtrack of our childhood, a patchwork quilt passed down generations. When my name disappeared, the first stitch became loose and the patches began to separate, leaving gaps or disappearing entirely. They'd turn up unexpectedly in the wrong sentence, or in the mouth of my mother, inflicting painful stabs of recognition, hot as a needle.

Nanna's words tied us not only to each other but to our home. They lurked in the ground like Roman treasures, echoing off the cobbled streets of her childhood, covered in coal dust, salty with sea air. When I took them to university, they were scorned by Southerners who thought their ingredients unrefined, pretending not to understand this speaker from a foreign land. They weren't welcome in essays or seminars, and I wondered if they'd die out completely.

As her words slipped away, my nanna was replaced by a young girl I didn't recognise, who searched for her mam in streets long demolished. "Mam" was one of the last words to go; along with "hinny" – a word her own mother had bestowed. Just

as they had once bound us to her, now they were gone she was adrift, unable to fathom her connection to the woman calling her “Nanna”. She stared out at me, locked in behind the cheek bones she had bestowed, frightened and lonely.

Eventually our words mutated too: “Nanna and Granda’s” contracted to “Granda’s”, and “home” took on a painful duality. Nanna regressed back through the names from which she’d graduated, swapping “Florence” for “Florrie”, eventually curtailed to “Flo”, a curtailing of letters that reflected her dwindling days. We conversed around her, the words swirling before her watery eyes like the old sitting room wallpaper. Our attempts to interact ricocheted off her blank countenance with only glimmers of recognition on her chalky face, like the blackboard at school with its faint ghost letters that resisted the complete oblivion of the wiper.

Following the words through the neck of the hourglass, the rest of her gradually disappeared too. Her red hair lost its vibrancy, her body wasted, and her spine curved until she bent like a flower under snow. Throughout the agony of erasure, one of her phrases played in my head on repeat: “Haddaway and loss yasel”. I wondered if she already had, and how much of us she’d take with her.

The words failed in the black car that drove us to the crem. The air was heavy with a backlog of the unspoken. I fingered the sharp edges of the paper folded in my pocket: “eulogy”.

Standing alone at the front, I thought the words would never come. The letters swam on the page, dark and sharp against the white – nothing like her. As I willed the words past the lump in my throat, I wondered if this was how she’d felt that Sunday afternoon when my name disappeared. Had she known that it would never come

back, and that it was taking her with it? What would she say if she could, would she have a message?

“Message” had always meant something different to Nanna – it was an errand she had to run, an item she had to source. She was always “goin’ a message”, often for other people. So I went a message for her: I brought her words back. I told everyone we were her bairns, sometimes worky-tickets, but mostly canny, and if ever we were in need she’d skeeter to our assistance, even if she was jiggered. And suddenly they were coming – as a-coming – filling my mouth like the delicious mix-ups of childhood, spilling forth a gluttony that had sustained us from the beginning. I said “Bye, Dolly”, one last time.

Today her voice echoes in mine. Her words survived university and came with me into the classroom, mixing with the delicacies offered by my students who aren’t angry but “rajy”, aren’t laughing but “decked”. The patchwork quilt reassembles itself with each successive generation, different but intact, with patches of our own, and covering more of us.

When I wipe the board clean I think of her and smile, knowing the words will be back again tomorrow, formed from the outlines of their predecessors.

## YOUNG WRITER COMPETITION – 1<sup>st</sup> Place

### Spoken Like Home - by Lily Tibbets

“Declan Carr, right on time. Please take a seat.”

“I havvent done nothing wrong, sir. Honest.”

“I didn’t say that you had done something wrong.”

“If anyone’s called to yer office it’s to get telt off, innit?”

“It’s told off, Declan. Not ‘telt’.”

“Same thing.”

“Don’t use that tone of voice with me, Mr Carr. I only want to have a conversation about your most recent essay for English literature.”

“Why’d’s everyone always think I’m being sarky? I’m not, like. Anyways, what’s that about me essay?”

“You tell me, Declan.”

“Muckle good I thought.”

“I thought, sir.”

“Alreet. Muckle good I thought, sir.”

“Thank you. It was very good in terms of the ideas and the content, yes, but I think you know what the problem is.”

“Well, you wrote some’in about the language, but that’s-”

“Not the language per say, but the dialect. It’s become quite clear that you’re using a lot of the idioms and phrases that you say out loud in your essays, which means that I have to mark you down. Miss Ainsley’s said it’s happening similarly in history.”

“Told yer I was gonna get wrong.”

“This isn’t me telling you off, Declan, I was only going to suggest that perhaps... this isn’t the right school for you.”

“Are ye having a laugh?”

“I know it isn’t ideal, but this school is very prestigious-”

“An’ I got a place, just like all the other posh toffs here.”

“Mr Carr, I understand that you haven’t felt as if you fit in here-”

“Giveour, you just said me writing’s good. The London kids and all that aren’t mint, but I’m doing fine here. Bangin.”

“A few weeks ago you punched another student.”

"What's yer point?"

"Declan."

"Alreet, simmer doon. That lad Jonesy was being a propa doylem, like, sayin I should go back to where I came from like I'm an immigrant or somein. He's probably a reet racist tw-"

"Declan."

"Anyhow, I got wrong for that ages ago. Me mam had to come doon just so I could get telt off in front of her, an' Jonesy didn't get nothing. Guarantee, if he came up North, he'd be up a height. With his muckle stupid accent everyone would laugh in his face."

"Do you think so?"

"Why aye. You divvent know up there like I do."

"If you don't mind me asking Declan, do you like where you come from?"

"Course. It's mint up there, like. Honest."

"Well, that's what I'm trying to figure out, Declan. If you liked it so much up there, then why did you come to this school?"

"Divvent kna."

"I think you do. Don't worry, this is strictly between the two of us."

"Look, me dad always wanted me to get a decent education an all that. Doon here there's more chance, he said, but everyone'll think yer reet stupid."

"No-one thinks you're stupid, Declan."

"Yeah right. It's nee botha, just makes it muckle good when I prove em all wrong and get some canny grades an a canny job."

"And what job do you want to get?"

"Museum curator."

"A museum curator?"

"Yeah, ye can giveour with the raised eyebrows an all. I like history and English. Lookin at the culture of places and stuff, innit."

"There are alternative courses that we could look at, places closer to home."

"So your saying I should just ganyem? After all them lot have said about me accent? Nay chance. It's important, sir. Language an all that. That's what I want to study- cultures and dialect. I can't dey that if I speak like a posh toff an give up me only connection to home."

"So you're saying the culture is what's important to you?"

"Now yea gettin it."

"That's... quite a unique perspective."

"Maybe for yea."

"You have to understand, Declan, that I can't fully give credence to you writing like this. It could impact your future school life and career massively."

"Only to people who canna be boshed looking past an accent."

"Declan?"

"Sir."

"I think you should stay at this school."

"Really? Mint, sir."

"Just please don't punch any other students, and obviously from a teacher's perspective I have to ask you to stop using idioms in your essays."

"Belta. Can I geroot now?"

"Get out now, sir."

"Yeah, yeah. Alreet. Can I gan oot now, sir?"

"Yes, Declan. Keep working hard. Shut the door on your way out."

"Reet. See ya later."

"Oh, and Declan?"

"Yea?"

"Have you ever considered becoming a lexicographer?"

"Divvent know what that is, sir."

"A lexicographer compiles words for dictionaries. They look at what words are in usage in different areas and how language can change across a time period. I think you would find it quite interesting."

"Sounds reet up my street. Thanks, sir. See ya the morra."

"See you... the morra, Declan."

"Now yea got it, sir."

## **YOUNG WRITER COMPETITION – 2<sup>nd</sup> Place**

### **Imagine - by Jess Mews**

It was faint but it could be heard. Not too far in the distance. The cry of pure joy. Round a thin winding pathway guided by fir trees either side, came Miya.

Now you've never seen anything like Miya; mud everywhere even in her hair, scrapes and bruises from her head to her bare toes from all her wild adventures, with clothes she'd clearly grown out of and ripped to fit on.

She had bright eyes though. Like the moon not the sun. They glowed.

You've never seen anything like Miya and neither had I.

She ran at such a speed, arms outstretched as if she were an aeroplane, I thought she was going to run straight through me. But she didn't, she came to a halt just a foot in front of me.

We were the same height and probably the same age - not old enough to be out in the woods alone. "Hiya, I'm Miya", then she asked, as if she'd never seen another person before; "Who are you?"

I didn't have time to answer before she spoke again, "It's areet, I divent need to know ya name. You can still play with 'is... haway, I've got something to show ya."

She gave me no choice but to follow her as she yanked my hand and led me away.

We walked towards a clearing through a cover of trees. I continued to follow behind this very peculiar girl as I had the whole way there. She let go of my hand to push away the branches hiding our destination.

All I could see was grass with two giant rocks dotted in the middle and the rest of the forest behind them. Miya ran excitedly over to these rocks and I have to admit I was intrigued - what could she find so fun about being here?

Standing at the foot of the biggest rock my strange new acquaintance turned to me and admitted, "people would think I'm a bloody barmpot for doing things like this," she began to climb the face of the rock, "good job there's nobody else here!"

'A barmpot?' I thought.

When I looked back at her she was halfway to the top of this rock and moving as agile as a cat. I rushed to the other side awaiting her next move. She looked around. Looked down at me with a smile. Squated slightly. And threw herself off the top striking a starfish pose in mid air. Then landed perfectly right next to me.

"It's geet fun! Try it!"

For some reason, despite sensing the crazy, I trusted her and began to ascend the rock.

“Aye, like that,” Miya encouraged as I made the climb. I hesitated when I got to the top. Peering over the edge, Miya somehow looked smaller than before and the distance from me to the ground grew tremendously in my head.

“Jump!” Miya shouted. And again I trusted her.

“Ready... Go!” She called.

And I went. Flinging myself off. Forgetting to pose mid air like she had. Landing imperfectly next to Miya.

“Bet you’re chuffed you did that?” she said, looking at me with a great big smile. I smiled back because for whatever reason, I was chuffed.

We spent the rest of the day running around and playing in the forest. Miya took me all around her little world. First we climbed the tallest trees we could find, all the way to the top so we could see the view.

“So ya got a ma and da?” Miya asked me. I shook my head and she replied, “neither do I ... don’t want them either.”

We picked flowers together and did cartwheels, I felt like we were free to do anything. That’s probably why Miya liked living out here.

She led me behind a giant bush.

“Right get geet low behind here, scoot over a bit, and shurrup.”

We crouched, listening to all the sounds of the forest. It was magical.

“Where do you live? I just live ‘ere all on me tod, since a was a bairn. It’s mint ... absolutely baltic on a night time though. Probably gonna have to divvy up me stuff now you’re here as well.”

“Watch the proggles through here... they bloody sting.”

She shared her rock collection with me and lay on the grass looking up at the sky and laughing together.

“You probably think I blather don’t you. I’ll stop for a bit - give ya noggin a rest. I’m paggered anyway, are you?”

“Wait, what’s that over there?” Miya cried.

I peered in the direction she was looking, I had to squint my eyes to see it.

“I think it’s a tunnel! Bagsy first one to explore!”

She ran over to the opening of a small tunnel that looked like two little trees had curled over to each other and formed an archway. She began to crawl through.

“Ew, I canne see anything in here. It’s all claggy. Come on...”

She beckoned me to follow her.

I waited for her to go through.

“Haway you numptie.”

She crawled all the way through the tunnel.

Miya jumped up out of the end of the tunnel. Infront of her was her dirty, cluttered living room. Empty beer bottles flooded the floor and there were piles of clothes and old takeaway boxes everywhere. Crashes and shouting could be heard in another room. She grabbed her ragdoll.

All Miya saw was fresh fields and the tallest most beautiful trees in front of her. She started running faster than she ever had.

She ran and ran through her living room jumping off the sofa and swirling about.

Miya couldn't stop smiling as she ran, doing cartwheels, whooping and laughing.

She ran straight out the front door, down the driveway and into the bonnet of a car.

## Dare or Divnt by Pete Donald

Wadd looked at the Tyne and the Tyne stared straight back at him.

It was never a good idea to find yourself in the river for any sort of reason. But to contemplate swimming across it, at night, for a dare, was foolhardy in the extreme.

“Are ya ganin lally tap. Ya kna the dare wasn’t to swim across it like. If ya really wanna cross it, ya dee kna ya cud gan up ta Hexham like, and it wud be loads shortor. Ah mean, even farther up its anly a tiddly beck and then it wud be loads dead more easier, Ye cud wark ower up there!” said Big Kev.

“Nah, everybody knas dare is ta swim ower and ah kna she means reet here, neath al the bridges. It’s the principle, ya kna,” said Wadd.

“The principle! The principle! That’s bloody rich coming from ye. Al of a sodden you’re a gadgie wi principles. Ya kna al she said was why divnt ya lowp in the rivor, and ya wor stupid enuff to say alreet ah will, and then she went and said ah dares ya, and ya were even more stupider. And now lyeuk at ya. ah mean de ya even kna wats in the watta, or mare importantly wats under the watta,” said Big Kev.

“Salmon, and otters, and the odd seal?” said Wadd.

“Exactly man. An odd seal,” replied Big Kev. “Nee seal in its reet mind wud be splashing about the quayside.”

Wadd seemed to make a plea to Big Kev. “But, if ah divnt dey it, ha am ah ganna face hor agyen?”

“By woords man, not deeds,” said Big Kev philosophically. “Ya kna if wu al just acted withoot thinking then wat sort of warld wud wuh hev?”

“The yen we’ve got nee?” replied Wadd.

“Point taken,” said Big Kev. “So, is this watta really dead clean these days,” he added in a complete change of conversational direction.

“Ah think see. Salmon and otters ya kna,” said Wadd.

“Divnt forget ya odd seal,” pointed out Big Kev.

Wadd started to reminisce. “Ya kna, wa back when, ya kna if ya fall in like, ya had to be rushed tuh hospital and ave six needles shoved in ya arse. And then ya had to hope ya hadn’t swallad tee much of the rivor watta tuh begin wi’. Wuh used tuh laik about doon da docks on the auld staites. Racin along the rotten wood as the tide came in. Anly took a couple iv inches and the hurl thin wud disappeared belaa the mucky watta. We’d dare the daft kids a tanner to keep runnin out as far as they cud, as the tide got ghigor. A bit like Russian roulette. Yee nivvor did pay them.”

“A tanner! And ya deing this for nowt. Just a dare. Neet evon a double dare,” said Big Kev.

“Well when de ya stop deing dares?” asked Wadd.

“Ah suppose it’s when ya get ta be al grown up like,” answered Big Kev.

“Exactly,” said Wadd. “When ya al grown up. Maybe ah like acting like a bairn sometimes,” he added.

“Well ya kna if this gaes al wrang, then ya waint be gettin any aulder. Suppose that makes it a win win, as far as ya concerned,” said Big Kev.

“Hey man, hoy man, had ya horses. Ah divnt intend to die ya kna,” said Wadd.

“Na yan intends to die,” said Big Kev.

“Ah daint kna. Them lot that think about topping themselves de. But divnt worry man that’s not me,” said Wadd.

“So, are ya ganna tak al ya claes off or what? Ah mean are ya just ganna dive reet in and al,” asked Big Kev, changing the subject from the grisly topic of death.

“Ya kna, ah nivvor thowt iv that. Ah mean it’s a bit caad to be stripping doon to me kegs,” said Wadd

“Ah bet ya the river is dead caad. Flippin proper Baltic,” said Big Kev.

Wadd bent down to the river and ran his fingers through the flowing water. “Bloody hell, its bloody freezing. I’m gannin back in to sez soz,” he exclaimed. As he wandered back to the pub he saw Big Kev staring out at the river. “Come on ya big lump,” he called.

“Wadd, I’ve just seen a seal. A real seal,” replied an excited Big Kev.

“Oh aye,” said Wadd, “did it lyeuk odd?”

## Breaking the Mould by Geoff Soulsby

Betty was enjoying a cuppa when Harry burst into the room

'You'll niver guess what, Uncle Charlie's givin' up 'is allotment', Harry blurted out,

'What!' exclaimed Betty, 'That for him is like, giving up the crown jewels.'

'Aye, yu reet there Pet, and he wants tu naa if aa wanna tack it ower

Uncle Charlie was a retired miner who'd lived in an ex-pit village all his life. He'd had an allotment for donkeys years, his pride and joy and a reason for living

'Well Pet, what do yu think? Harry queried

'Well, as we are now vegan, growing our own veg. would be fantastic, instead of spending a bloody fortune at Sainsburys'

'That makes canny sense Pet, let's gan and see him'

So on Sunday Harry and Betty drove to Uncle Charlie's village. Rows of old terraced houses were still there, but they looked quite swish now with their upvc windows and doors and the satellite dishes.

Harry spotted Uncle Charlie waving to them from his allotment over the road.

'Howay Lad, get yersel ower here', shouted Uncle Charlie gesturing to them.

Harry and Betty crossed over and as they pushed open the bodged up old gate, Uncle Charlie called out, 'Watch oot for them geet big puddles, it's canny clarty doon there', and mind yu divvent gan an' dunch into the barra handles, you might fall ower and cowp ya creels'.

'Pleased we browt wor wellies', Harry chortled, as they plodged through the clarts to where Uncle Charlie was sitting on an auld cracket dunkin' a lump of stottie into a bowl of soup

'Hallow Uncle, how you deeing?' Harry enquired

'Gud to see yu Lad,' said Uncle Charlie beaming, 'And you browt your Lass wi yu. Yu aal reet Pet?'

'Yes, I'm good, thanks', Betty said smiling.

'Uncle Charlie nodded, 'If yu divvent mind, am clammin', so aa'll finish me scan furst before we taak,

Betty and Harry looked admiringly at the wonderful array of produce growing around them.

'So Uncle, are you really giving this aal up?' queried Harry

'Wi Lad, am not in such gud fettle these days, me auld back's playin' up and aa ain't gettin' any yunga'

'But Uncle,' Betty said, 'This is your life''

'Aye that's reet bonny pet, but aall the diggin' and bendin' ower the yers hes tekin' its toll. Doc says aa shud give it up noo, before it gives me up'

'I'm sorry to hear that Uncle,' said Harry, 'So, what's the craic'?"'

'Wi Lad, aa wundad if you'd like to tack it ower'

'Well Uncle', said Harry, 'That sounds great, but, we're just amateurs at gardening'

'Oh divvent fash about that Lad', there's nowt tivit, aal gie yu aal the help you need'.

Betty was very excited, 'You know Uncle this is just great for our new venture'

Uncle Charlie looked rather surprised, 'What do you mean bonny pet?'

Harry spoke up rather proudly, 'We've become vegan'

Uncle Charlie's face grimaced, 'Yu what?' he scowled

'Vegan Uncle,' said Betty,

Uncle Charlie just looked blank, 'Look aa divvent naa what yu takkin' aboot, but aa die naa we divvent need any new fangled ideas ere. Aa tell yu what, just hadaway hyem and forget what aa said about the allotment'.

Harry smiled, 'Oh Uncle!'

Uncle Charlie just glared, 'Yu think it's funny do yu Lad?'

'Oh Uncle, let me explain, carnivores eat meat, vegetarians eat vegetables and dairy things'

'And', said Betty joining in, 'Vegans only eat things grown from plants, it's very popular now''

Uncle Charlie looked rather bewildered, 'Aa naa am an auld fuddy duddy and a bit aad fashint, yu must think am a silly auld bugga'. Am sorry Lad, you too Pet'

'It's nowt Uncle,' said Harry feeling sorry for the old man, 'There's lots of new fancy words around these days.'

'Ay aa dinna how an auld gadgie like me is supposed to keep up wi you young'uns, it was mare strite foward in the auld days'

'Anyway Uncle. Harry quipped, 'You've a great range of veg here, just what we'll need'

'Aye', quirked Uncle Charlie, 'You'll niver be withoot here Lad'

'That's great', said Betty, 'And we would like to grow some new veg to make Ratatouille'

'Rats a whoey?' Uncle Charlie snapped, 'Worra on urth is that?'

'Well', said Betty confidently, 'It's Mediterranean veg like courgettes, peppers, aubergines cooked with tomatoes and garlic'

'Ay aa divvent na why yu want aal that foreign stuff, there's nowt wrong with gud auld British veg'

'Yes Uncle', said Betty chirping in, 'We love what you grow here, but we do like to cook European food'

'Oh aa divvent naa what folks'll say roond here aboot yu growin' aall this foreign stuff, especially after aall that Brexit carryon,' Uncle Charlie said disgustedly, 'Aa think yu'll have to change yor thowts Lad or aa'll hev to change me mind agen aboot lettin' yu hev the allotment.'

At that precise moment one of Charlie's mates, Bobby was passing, 'How Charlie, ya gan doon the club?'

Charlie looked up rather surprised, 'Aye aall be doon shortly,'

'Try the new pies Freda's been maekin', Bobby said, 'Some foreign stuff aa think she said, Ratssndfooy or summit like that, but ivrybody loved them, even asking Freda for the recipe to tack hyem'

'Uncle Charlie looked a bit flummoxed, 'Reet Bobby, see yu later marra'

Bobby tappy-lapped on his way, whilst Uncle Charlie hung his head. 'Ave put me big byeut in it agen hevent aa?' Maeks me feel a reet stumer'

'Never mind Uncle', Harry grinned, putting his arm around him, 'We're never too auld too learn'

Uncle Charlie looked at them both and with a big grin said, 'Ee there's nay fyul like an auld fyul is there? Get cracking here, as soon as you like Lad.'

'Thanks Uncle', said Betty giving the old man a hug, 'As soon as we grow the 'foreign stuff' we'll bring you a delicious Ratatouille pie'.

## **Wrap these words around you like a scarf to keep you warm by Tracey Sinclair**

The words land like blow, or the sharp tug of a sleeve caught on a door she'd already walked through, pulling her back into a room she just left.

"He's geet lush, man! Eeee, look at him! Pure mint!"

Caron looks over at the source of the high-pitched squeal, a gaggle of girls leaning into each other in the four-seat booth of the Metro. A pretty, brown-skinned teen wearing a hijab, lashes as generous as a goat's, laughing as she taps her phone, sharing something with her friends that elicits a fresh round of glee. One of her mates is lanky and pale as a peeled potato – peerly wally, the phrase bobs unbidden into Caron's head in her mother's voice, but maybe that's a look now, she's been away too long to know. The other is plump with the regal poise of a ringleader, face as painted as an Old Master, framed by ironed-flat hair and geometric eyebrows, her true complexion only visible through the deliberate rips in her packed-tight skinny jeans.

"Gis a deek, then," she demands, pulling the phone for a closer look, and they tussle for control of the screen, a shoving match that turns into an opportunity for a selfie, and the three of them push and play and joke, oblivious to the attention they are getting from the rest of the carriage, censorious or curious, depending on the gender and age of the onlooker. Caron feels a surge of pure affection, so visceral she has to look away. She can't remember the last time she felt so excited.

Face turned to the window, scenery blurs into memory. A boy she thought was mint, lush, a proper belta – all those words and more that she never uses now. 15 years old, the pair of them, clueless and besotted and more innocent than she could believe possible. Courting, her parents said they were, though she didn't understand that antiquated phrase any more than she comprehends its modern equivalent, dating, with all the US-imported vagueness it seems to entail. Maybe that's why she's so bad at it.

Going out, they called it. Seeing each other. And they saw each other plenty, though beyond the obvious teenage fumbles she can't recall how they managed to so completely fill up one another's time. Knocking round the houses, hanging around bus stops with his mates, divvying up tabs nicked from his dad's sideboard, knocking back cheap cider, bottles of dog and alcopops. Occasionally just the two of them, snogging on the gravestones at the cemetery near the bus station because he was into The Smiths and he thought it was romantic.

Her parents tolerated their romance. Maybe even liked him, though her dad was baffled by the appeal of his Morrissey hair and his paisley shirt, jeans rolled up over second-hand Doc Martens ( 'pit boots', the family called them, her mother up a height when Caron bought a pair for herself.) 'He's a canny lad, but the clip of him,' he moaned, but her mum – Mam, back then – was sharp-eyed enough to see it was serious.

They were allowed in Caron's room (her doorplate spelling Karen, the now-discarded version of her name).

"Don't know how you can relax in that midden," her mum would tut at the discarded vinyl LPs scattered on the floor, posters blu-tacked on the walls Caron was cruelly forbidden from painting black. Clearly, her mum worried that relaxing wasn't all they were up to; the door was left an inch open, and she cheerfully arrived bearing trays of tea and sarnies if she thought things had gone too quiet.

It was Caron's gran who sounded warning. Door on the sneck – a habit no amount of watching Crimewatch could deter her from – her house was a haven, where she would make them some bait or send them off with black bullets (Caron thinks, wryly, that telling her London friends she had too much ket and bullets would raise a degree of alarm). But for all her apple-faced openness, the woman had a gimlet eye. "Gan canny with that one," she warned. "He dresses like your wan off the telly, but deep down he's soft as clarts."

She hadn't been wrong, had she? It was him who cried, when London called and Caron answered. Him who offered to pack in his apprenticeship and come with her, while she just shook off him and the city, desperation for novelty making her cruel. He was married now, Caron knew from light social media stalking, two kids and a wife in Washington Village, doing something impressively senior over at Nissan. She hoped he was happy, that staying had got him what leaving didn't get her.

"Ah, man! Delete that! I look pallatic, my dad'll gan radgie!"

The girls are laughing again. Caron's surprised by the sharpness of their accents, the specificity of their words. She thought everyone sounded like the internet now, homogenous and with bad grammar. It's a shock to hear the region embedded in their speech, as clearly as it had once been in hers. She thinks about her accent, smoothed by the south and the incomprehension of strangers, familiar words abandoned like unwanted baggage, for fear of being weighed down. She thinks of the man she left in London; no tears at this parting. Was some of their indifference that he never really knew her; there was nothing real to miss? If you shape and shear yourself down to a sliver, a spelk, to fit the expectations of others, what is left of you?

She'd been wondering what had drawn her back, after so many years of rare, sporadic visits and much-postponed trips and the ever-accepted London lie/excuse of "working". Why this latest break up, the last in a long line, has sent her careening home. And she realises, suddenly, certainly, that what she has finally come looking for is the sound of her own voice.

## Keep Him Out the Clarts! by Julie Hedger

I am waiting on Luka to take me to the park.

“Haway Luka - are you taking Dog to the park?”

Luka is lazy. I lick his face.

“Argh gerrofus!” This means he’s going to take me to the park. I am excited for the park. I will roll around in the mud.

“Aye, alreet Mam,” Luka says.

“Good but divn’t bring him back covered in clarts.”

We are out of the house. Luka’s friends are here.

“Oyu cummin wi wu?” they say.

“Supposed to gan to the park with Dog but aye.” This means we are all going to the park. I will have lots more fun.

“He’ll have nowt to do like, will he be alreet?”

“Aye, he’ll be champion.”

Luka does not know the proper way to the park. But it’s okay, I like the big rumbly box with wheels on it and the man who drives it.

“Where you gannin with that?” he says

“The Toon.”

“Keep a had of it then, divin’t let it on the seats.”

We are not at the park. But it’s okay, there are lots more people here. I want to greet all the people.

“It’s chokablock, you sure he’ll be alreet?”

“Aye, he’s canny.”

“Come have a quick skeg at this then.”

“Sit doon Dog an’ divint gan anywhere, a’ll only be a minute.” This means I can go and explore but I wait until Luka is not looking.

Luka is not looking. I am off to explore. I smell food. I ask for food.

“WOOF!”

“Neeky beggar, that dog’s after some scran!”

“Gis a burger mate for the dog, he looks starving.”

“Wey ya bugger, that didn’t last him long!”

“Hey mate, have you seen me dog? He’s a geet lanky greyhound.”

There was a hoond at the burger van.”

I see Luka, he does not see me. I am exploring. I hear things, I want to make noises too.

“HOWL! Hooowwwl!” I am singing.

“Alreet bonnie lad, lovely tune that like.”

“Hoy a bit money in for him.”

“Divvent suppose you seen me dog mate? Geet big silly thing, he’s ran off.”

“Daint kna but there was a dog singing wi’ the busker.”

“Gerraway, was he?”

“Here mate, is that your dog ower there?”

Luka looks over at me. I am still exploring. I see fun things. I join in.

“Eeeee man! Look what that dog’s deeing.”

“Hadaway, a dog cannae jump through fire.”

“He’s a belta look at him gan!”

“He lowped reet ower that last one.”

“DOG!” Luka shouts. This means Luka is impressed and wants to congratulate me.

“Dog, come ‘ere.”

I am happy I run to Luka.

“What you playing at man? Come on am gannin yem.” This means we are going home to tell mam about how clever and good I am.

‘Bleep’ Luka’s bleepy buzzy thing make a noise.

“Hiya mam,” Luka groans.

“You still at the park with Dog?”

“Err aye, comin back now like.”

Back into the rumbly box we go. Time for a nap – I have had a busy day.

“Come on Dog, off we get.”

Water is falling out of the sky. Luka wants to run. I can run fast.

“Ah man, it’s stotting doon.”

I see our house, I pull Luka...

“Had on Dog!”

...Into our garden. I see big puddle. I see mud. I like mud. I pull Luka into mud.

“Ah man DOG!

And there is mam at the door.

“I told you to keep him out the clarts!”

## A Day At The Sands by Maureen Reed

Sunday 4th August, North Shields

Eeh. Tis such a nice day. A think wu might aal gaan doon tiv the sands at Tynemouth the safta. Gi the bairns a treat. Get the galopy oot. It's been a laang while since it's had a bit ov a run. Glad a filled a up yisterda, wat wiv petrol still being rationed an aal. The nippers'll luv it. They'll be chuffed ti bits. Ad luv te tek them ti The Spanish City as weel, mind. Gi' them aal a go on the dunchen cars... But am a bit brassic at the minute. Ee wey. Nivvor mind. Wull still hev a reet canny time.

Will ya luk at the weatha. It's propa beefin the day. Al get the missus t mek some peecies. Corned beef wiv plenty salt and peppa. Shi might even use that stottie cyek that's left in the pantry. Shi meks a crackin sarnie, wor lass. Mair fillin than breed. Not like lady fantush's at number five. Hor shives ov bread are that thick and the fillin that thin, yud need a pair ov binoculas t find owt in th middle. Spot the corned beef. Wud betta tek sum jam 'n' breed an aal fo the kiddies tho. They'll like that betta. An a bit boilie fo the babby.

Wull hev a gyem o footie on the sand, me n the lads. Though they'll likely kick mair sand than baal. Se lang as theyor happy, a winnit care. A might even rowl up me kegs and hev a bit ov plodge in the watta wi them, if it's not ower caad. Or a cin fill me pipe wiv a bit baccy and hev a sneeky puff while the littluns are runnin roond. And wor lass'll open the poke ov bullets a knaa shiz been hiding and shill likleys have a neb inside one ov them penny dreadfuls she fund in the attic amang that geet pile ov beuks some owld gannie must've left up theor. Aal ket if yi ask me. But as

laang as shiz happy. So, while weer deein that, al gi aal the bairns a hapenny each fo a torn on the shuggy shoos and mebbies if av any lowie left ower, wul let them hev a go on the gallowas. That shud stop them whingin fo a bit. Wul aal be clammin by then, so wul get the flask oot an hev a bit char. Wul hev t mek sure its not scaddin tho. That thormos keeps it reet hot for a laang time. An wull tek sum pop fo the nippers. An share the bait oot. Complete with a sprinklin ov sand, nay doot. Gives new meanin ti the word sandwich. A thowt wud gaan t Haddaway's fishop on the way yhem. Get them aal some jockey whips wiv a few scamptions hoyd on top.

Weez that hammorin at the door? It'll be that gaumless neeby wife from numba five. Shiz a barmpot, hor. A bit doolally tap if y ask me. Shi'll be on the cadge agyen. A hope wor lass duzn't let a in. If she diz, theyorl be sum writin' on the bleezer, aal bet. Shiz got a mooth on hor like Tynemouth, that'n hez. A canna hack a yarpin. Shiz enuf ti giv an aspirin a headache. Hez she got cloth ears o summick? Haddaway woman. Give ower rattlin' the sneck. Ya not getting in.

By the cringe, she's tekkin nee notice.

Florrie, I telt yi – divvent oppen the door. Tell a wiv aal got typhoid. Bet that waddn't evin stop a.

Wey aal gaan ti the fut o' the stairs. She's waaked in withoot an invite. Gerroot woman. Did naybody tell y that this is not a public waitin room. Florrie, hoy a oot.

Divven tice a pet. A waddn't be a bit sorprized if shi had lops. Hacky coo. Shiz a worky ticket. Tell a aal mangle a if shi duzzent buzz off. Ee, a tell ye, av nivvor hord a body wi such a hacky dorty mooth on it. Shid meck a navvy blush. By, but shiz ugly an' aall. Look at the fyess on it. Miserable owld wife. Shiz elwiz got a monk on. Last time a saa a mooth like that, tha wuz a hook in it. What duz she think shiz deeing, waakin in withoot bein invited? The impittance ov it. Tch. Shiz browt a sparrin partner wiv a. Here thi cum, the pair ov them. In tha white oerralls. Fatty and skinny. Cods an muscles on one like Joe Louis. Torn the other one sideways, get hor ti stick a tongue oot, and yid think shi wiz a zip. Reminds me ov that norsery rhyme.

Fatty and skinny both went to bed

Fatty torned ower

And noo skinny's dead.

If a shut me eyes, a cin imagine tha not heyor. Get oot. Av alriddy telt ya. Hadaway and fasten ya flap. Giz a bit ov peace man.

\* \* \*

'Come on Albert. Let's get you up. It's no good pretending you're asleep. We heard you talking. Albert, come on. Don't be difficult. We need to get you out of that bed, washed and looking smart. Your grand-daughter's coming for you in a bit, and you want to look your best for her, don't you? Come on Albert. Sit up. You can't lie there all day. She's coming especially to take you for a little trip in her new car. It's one of those electric things that you don't have to put petrol in. Remember, she told you about it last week. You haven't forgotten, have you? No. Of course you haven't. There's a good lad. Up you get now. One, two, three... heave. That's it. Into that wheelchair. She'll be here soon. You wouldn't want to keep her waiting, would you? Not after she's driven all this way.'

## Sand Dancers by Mary Elliot

'Hey, wor lass! Y'up yit? Bet ya still in ya jammies. Come on, bonny lass. High time wu got

ower worsels an got sorted. It's deein' naebody any gud jest lyin' in wer pits, like.'

Chantal groaned.

'Ah, me heed. Giz a minit, will ye.'

She turned over, holding her head.

'Luk , ah kna that reely, Jimmy, but it's geet hard ta mess about wi' me mam's stuff - ye

kna wot she wus like.'

'Aye, ah kna that, pet, but naebody's ganna dee it forus. Git goin' an' ah'll see ya doon the

metro in half an hoor. Mind, divvent forget that pile o' placky bags ye sed ye wa ganna

bring.'

'Oh, aye, alreet. Ah'll see ye doon there.'

Chantal staggered te the netty, desperate for a piddle, trippin' ower the proggy mat, a

prezzie from 'er grannie , made when Adam wuz a lad, that'd prob'ly been made from

pulled oot sweaters from the war years.

'Bluddy Nora!' she yelled, grabbin' the door handle to stop hersel from cummin a cropper.

She started to pull on her trackies, then thought better of it and reached for smarter kecks.

It was 'er mam, when push came to shove.

\*

She got dressed quickly, and grabbing her bag and chubby, ran to the metro, where she

collided with Jimmy pacing the platform.

'Divvent dunch us! It's aboot time ye got here,' he grumbled at her. 'Ye look like the wreck

o' the Hespras!'

'Wey man, ah'm jiggered. Ah heven't had much kip, an me head's killin us.'

'Aye well ye shudda got te yer bed sooner.'

'Oh, cut yer mitherin'. Ah'm here aren't a? My, it's blowin a hoolie!'

\*

At the Terrace, Jimmy reached into his jerkin pocket, and pulled out the key.

Chantal took a deep breath.

'Eeh, wor Jimmy, it feels geet weird, wor mam bein' gone. Shu'd torn in er grave if she

knew we was gannin through er things.'

'Wey, man the sooner it's done, the better. Anyhow, wor lass, put the kettle on forra cuppa.'

'Gud idea - ah rushed oot without me brekkie an ah'm clammin!'

Chantal reached for a cloutie to wipe the benches. Their mam hated mess. She might've

allus been skint but she put on a good front. Chantal stuck on a brew and they sat suppin'

the tea at the kitchen table afore they got started.

,

Eeh, Jimmy, what we gonna de wi all this stuff?. A lot of it wuz me grannies. See that owld

cracket? Remember me granda when he cum in from the pit? He used tae sit on his hunkers by the fire and get warmed through, then sit on that with 'es legs stretched oot

while 'e had a tab and his first cuppa. He was allus chowkin after work 'e was.' Used te tell

us tales aboot the gallawa's doon the pit. Mind, if ye got on 'is wrong side he cud be a reet

radgie gadgie. Ah divven kna how me ma and da cud stand it sometimes. 'Ee, d'ye mind

me grannies panackelty as well? Ah cud kill for some just now!'

'Aye, she did some canny scran, me gran, but divvent get maudlin', we've got te get on.

Wherewe gonna start? Ah thought mebbes we shud start at the top and work doon. Bring

them bags, ah've got bubblewrap.'

\*

Pointing at the flying ducks in the hallway, Chantal shouted up, 'Mind, ah bagsy these!'

Jimmy snorted. 'Well, ye've got first dibs.'

In Hannah's bedroom, they opened the curtains, and gazed at the knick-knacks covering

every surface. Hushed now, they wrapped the ornaments, putting them in pillowcases

from the double bed with it's gold eiderdown.

'Careful wor Jimmy. Summa these are geet femmer.'

Chantal opened the drawers, and started to push neat piles of undies into a black bag.

She stopped suddenly and went very quiet.

'Wey ah nivver, wor Jimmy, cum an hev a gander at this!'

She'd come across a satin slip, folded around a photo of their mam, facing the camera

with a big grin on her face, her arms wrapped round some gadgie that definitely wasn't

their da.

'Hadaway, wor Chan, whae the hell is that?'

'Ah divvent kna, but me mam luks proppa smitten. Ah'm ganna tak it oot it's frame. Mebbes there's sumthin' on the back.'

'Giz it here, hinny. 'Ah'll dee it.'

Jimmy undid the catches, and hoicked the back out of the frame. He took out an envelope, and passed it to Chantal, then turned to read the scrawl on the back of the photo.

Me and Jim at the beach in Shields

Sept '75

(the day we told them)

'What the f- ?'

'Jimmy!' Chantal yanked his arm and shoved papers in his face.

It was their birth certificates, showing they were born 10 minutes apart in March 1976.

'Wey ah nivver. Blummin heck! Ah've only ever had the little 'uns.' Chantal looked like she'd

been hit with a truck.

'Wey, hadaway ye bugger!' Jimmy stood there looking like one-a-clock half struck.

'Whae the hell is John James Barnfather?'

'Ah divvenah, but where's wer da?'

Chantal, all of a lather, began to rummage frantically through the rest of the drawers. In

the back corner of the big bottom drawer she found what she was after - a pack of letters

and diaries. At the bottom of the pile she found clippings from the 'Gazette'. She caught

sight of some headlines: 'Death on the tracks'.

Oh, Oh! Trying to get up quickly she swayed 'Oh! Ah var nigh chun a wobblor just then.

Ah've hed a reet gliff.'

Jimmy helped her up.

'By, ye divvent luk ower clivvor. Divvent fash yersel, pet. Grab all this stuff in yer bag.

Whaddya say, bonny lass. Shud wu leave this lot for now and gan doon the Duck? we'll hev

sum scran, and gan on the lash and decide what wer ganna dee. Nivver fear, We'll get it

sorted.'

Chantal linked his arm.

'Alreet, Jimmy. Ah'm oota here. Howay then!'

## Geordie's Reason by John O'Neill

It was lookin' like snaa but for noo it was just blaain' a gayl 'n' raynin'. We'd been oot since forst thing. A wuz caad, 'n' up to me oxters in clarts. Some of it wasn't as polite as clarts. Me hair was clagged onto me brow and in me eyes but A didn't dare brush it back from me fayce; me hands wor in such a state. We'd tried the draining rods three times. I was diggin through – let's cal a spayde a spayde – the shiteyest grund. At least there were nae steeyens to mek the diggin' harda. The cundie was blocked for yards along, by an overenthusiastic septic tank. When A straightened up the rain ran doon the back o' me neck. A was aa but done in.

Gen-rally A enjoyed workin' with Geordie. Some jobs were belta. Inside. In the waarm. Not much heavy liftin'. A bit o' pointin' mebbe or some shelves. Not this yen. We'd bin caaled oot tiv a farm, more a steading really, in the north o' the county. A blocked drayn. We'd crossed what little inbye there was, 'n' carried on doon outbye. It was a good job we had wa wellies cos we were plodgin by the time we got to the problem. Normally A would hev enjoyed the scene, a cleugh runnin' doon to a haugh, then the river. Not this day.

Geordie got on his hunkers. Some iv the land tiles were knackered 'n' would hev to be replaysed. Othas were just blocked 'n' needed diggin oot 'n' cleanin'. So, basickly it all had to cum oot. It would need careful diggin'. A couldn't just howk away 'n' risk brekin' more tiles. Aal unnescessary. They should hev taken more care what they put doon the netty.

I was clamming 'n' ready for me bait. In me brayk I like to dae a bit readin 'n' aal. A aalwus hev a buke on the go. Geordie wanted the whole lot done before we stopped, but my mind wis on the yem-bayked stotties in me bag. My wife wus the last doon wore back lane to mek a aan stotties. She's a bit aad fashint is wore lass. Meks a aan pease puddin 'n' aal. A used to hev ham wi it. Then one day - A must iv been feelin' guilty or sommat - A towld a hor pease puddin' wis that good the stottie sanwiches didn't need the ham. Wey man, since then, nae ham for me. A mek shua Geordie doesn't see me pease puddin' aany sanwiches. Still, it's betta than aad Pegg and it's more ham for the bairns A suppose.

A ses to Geordie, "If that gadgee comes doon once mair ti ask why wa tekin' su lang; to gan on aboot hoo this is a smaal job; that 'e's not ganna pay buildas' rayts for labouras' work, then A shall be findin' a new play-us to store me shovel."

Geordie didn't manage a smile.

A ses, "Wore lass is ganna gan mental. Shis used tiv is cumin' yem hacky but am mingin'. Man, it's aal reet for ye. Yuv got the van. Av got ti gan yem on the bus. A look a propa clip. A right fyul. Folk kna is yi knaa.

A stopped diggin. Geordie looked at is. "Why?" A sez. "Why? Why are we heeya?"

Geordie had become mute. 'e'd been uncommunicative for quite a while. Me, a prefor words – readin' 'n' taakin'. For buildas we hev quite philosophical discussions at times, but Geordie knaas that me askin' why are we heeya is not an existential

question. He took that lang to answer, I thowt he didn't kna why wi were in the back o beyond, on a wreck iv a farm, working on a cundie which had been clogged up for yonks and has torned fully two thords of an acre o' field inti, what A would caal, a malodorous quagmire. Did 'e feel sorry for the aad gadgee? The aad gadgee 'n' the aad bat a'd aanly seen through the window of the cottage when we forst got here? Did 'e hev a secret, let's just say, peccadillo involving rivers of excrement 'n' gallons of ingratitude?

A looked at Geordie. E's fayce was solemn.

"Cos," he said, "where othas should of 'n' didn't," - 'e give is a look - "e came to me fatha's funral."

A felt that guilty. Aa'd ha been there mesel, usually we hang together like the folks o' Shields, but A thowt it wis famly only. Torns oot that wis just for the graveside. If A cud gan back... but A cannit.

"Marra..." A sed.

"Divent ye 'marra' me."

A didn't knaa what to say. What could A say? A went back to diggin'.

## Church Doors by Lindsay Bray

It was just a normal Sunday. Panackelty was simmering on the stove, ready for Sunda dinner as wa got dressed in wa best tuckers and headed oot ta church. It was blowin' a hoolie, but wasn't exactly Baltic cad, an' we arrived in good time.

After the service, I decided te hang aboot to arrange the babby's Christenin'. Tommy Junior was two months auld. I didn't wanna leave it too long.

"Mrs Clark. Did you wish to see me?"

"Aye, Father. It's aboot lil Tommy's Christenin'," I replied.

"Ah, yes. Of course. Come with me."

The service was arranged for a fortnight's time. I left the church happy that it was sorted, and grinned as I stepped oot into the sunlight.

And stopped dead in me tracks. Everything looked completely different, yet the same, somehow. Buildin's stood where they hadn't existed before and the roads were smooth, not cobbled like they were an hour previous. Fowks walked with their heeds bent ower some small black things in their hands while weirdly shaped tin cans in all different sizes and colours lined the street on black and metal wheels. Even the stench was different. I could feel me jaw hittin' the floor as I gazed aroond. More of the weird tin cans roared by me in all different directions. People spilled oot of the church behind me, twisting their heeds to gawp as they went past. Lassies wore troosers. Tommy and the bairns were nowhere to be seen.

"Eeee, hinny," said an auld grannie in an indecently short frock as she touched my elbow. "Ya dressed just like me auld granny, God rest her soul"

Are ya gannin to a re-enactment?" asked a gadgie in a green gansie.

"What are yas talking aboot? Am gannin hyem te me dinner," I replied.

"Why, it's just the way ya dressed, bonnie lass. No one wears claes like that anymore. It's 2019."

"Hadaway, ya barmpot! It's 1880!"

A youth inside a red tin can popped his heed oot of the window. "Hey, Missus," he said, "The 1800s called. They want their clothes back."

Three more youths wi' him threw their heeds back an' laughed.

The auld grannie tutted. "Skedaddle, ye young ragamuffins, afore A cloot ya. . ."

I was so distracted by the youths and their tin can disappearing doon the road that I failed to hear the lady's question. "Eh?"

"I said, what do they call ya?"

"Oh, me name's Kate."

"I'm Mary, and this is me hubby, Jim." Jim gave me a friendly wave while his wife continued to talk. "Why don't ya come wiwa? I think ya a bit lost."

"Why? Where am I, like?" I asked.

"Ya in Jarra, pet, but ya look lost."

"I know Jarra like the back of me hand." I could feel their eyes on me back as I started to walk away from them.

"Jim, I think we should follow 'er, just te mek sure she's alreet."

I got halfway doon the street and was aboot to cross ower when a blue tin can honked. I jumped oot of me skin and felt a hand dragged me backwards.

"Eeeee, hinny, ya dinnae wanna dee that," said Mary, concern written on her face. "Ya'll get yasell ran ower. Haway wiwa and wa'll see about gettin' ya back te ya family. Jimmy, fetch the vicar. Mebbe 'ee'll kna hoo ta get Kate back hyem. A'll get the jalopy. Haway, Kate. You come wi' me."

Mary led me to a long, beige tin can and pulled a handle to reveal a door. She stepped aside. "Gerrin, pet."

"Is that what these are called? Jalopies?" I asked.

Mary chuckled. "Na, they're called 'cars' really, but we call them jalopies. . . Ah! Here's Jim an' the vicar."

The cleric bent his heed doon to peer through the window at me. "Well, now," he said, "what do we have here?"

"Wa found 'er, standin' just ootside the church, Father," replied Mary. Says sh's from 1880."

"She's certainly dressed for the period," agreed the vicar.

"Any idea how we're gannin' te get 'er back hyem?" asked Mary.

I got out of the car and stood while the Father straightened up. His green eyes locked with my brown ones. "How did you get here, Miss?"

I shrugged. "I dunno. I wus arrangin' me babby's Christenin', went to rejoin me family, who were waitin' forrus ootside, and the next thing a kna, Mary here is talkin' to us."

The Father nodded thoughtfully. "I see. Well, maybe if we take you back inside the church, and you do what you did before you left last time, we can send you back home."

Mary, Jim and I exchanged glances. Could it be that simple?

"Why aye! Worth a shot," I said.

"Excellent! Well then, let's get inside."

While Mary and Jim waited at the door, the vicar and I headed doon the aisle. I crossed mesel, then turned and walked back towards the door. The auld couple were still there, with their jalopy and buildin's that shouldn't exist. I stifled a sob.

"It didn't work!" I cried. "Me bairns! Tommy!"

"Divvent fash yesell, lass," said Jim. "Just think. Did ye dee anything before you came oot of the church?"

"I did Communion, and dipped me heed in the Holy Watter," I replied, frowning. "But I did that with the other two, an' all an' I never ended up in 2019 then."

The vicar took a deep breath in and exhaled slowly. "Let's try that, then," he said.

Back doon to the altar we went. I repeated me movements from a couple hours earlier, plunged me heed in the Holy Water, then made me way back to the church doors. I even made sure I was grinning as I walked.

A familiar back appeared outside the church door. "Tommy!"

He turned rain drippin' from 'ees hat. "Where ya been, lass?"

"Ya'd think I'd gone doolallytap if I telt ya," I replied, hugging him tightly.

## Up A Height by Lorraine Weightman

Mickey stood still and looked at the papers the solicitor had given him after her death. He and his twin sister were the only beneficiaries as his parents were divorced and his Nanna had always said,

‘A diven’t trust the in-laws!’

He was canny chuffed to be the main man, but the whole thing was giving him the hee bee jee bees. He met Lisa in the corner cafe where she was tucking into a ham and pease pudding stottie and a large mug of strong tea.

‘Giz a gander then’,

Lisa tried to snatch the papers.

‘Hadaway man, wind ya neck in.’

There were a list of instructions to follow and places to visit before they could claim their inheritance. Mickey, although he thought it was a bit of a faff, carefully entered the details into his phone and passed the papers over.

‘This is absolutely mint’

Lisa gasped, as she read on,

‘It’ll be nee botha gettin to these places’

Mickey paid the bill and shouted to his sister,

‘Howay, stop clartin about, let’s gan.’

They headed for the bus station, and waited for the 773.

Getting off just outside the church, they looked to find the war memorial.

‘It’s blowin a hoolie up here’

Lisa fastened her coat and put up her hood, while Mickey headed over the road,

‘How Lisa, diven’t plodge in the clarts’

‘I’m gannin canny’, leave is alone’

The war memorial was just where his Nanna had said so Mickey knelt to read. This was the first clue, he quickly typed the letter into his phone.

‘Howay Lisa there’s a coffee morning on, I’ll treat ya!’

They walked into the noisy church hall, leaving a trail of mud on the polished floor and sat down at one of the cloth covered tables. They chose homemade sponge and a fruit scone with their piping hot tea. The bus wasn’t due until almost 2pm and it was only half eleven. An older couple beside them started up a conversation and asked them where they were headed.

They said Blanchland in unison and the canny couple offered them a lift. Not wanting to reveal their reasons for visiting they pretended they were having a day out,

Happily dropped off outside The Lord Crewe Arms, they walked towards the Abbey.

‘How Fantush, ha’d ya horses, I need to follow the instructions.’

Lisa, who was off like a shot, slowed down and waited as Mickey checked his phone.

‘It says to go round the back and look for the words!’

They did just that and there it was, exactly what they were looking for.

‘Our Nanna’s a right workie ticket, like, Mickey’

Aa knaa, bit it’ll be worth it in the end’

They headed into the ancient church and sat down staring at the font.

‘We best be heading back Lisa, I’m canny knackered and it’s been a long day’.

Lisa nodded and they crossed the road to The White Monk Tea Rooms to kill time before the bus home.

The next day was Saturday, and they were heading for Hexham. Mickey had warned Lisa not to drink too much the night before as she was going out on the lash for her mate’s nineteenth birthday.

‘Gan canny tha neet kidda, we’re getting the early bus in the morning!’

‘Chill out man, all be reet, give is a shout early on’

He stayed in and explored his phone trying to work out what his Nanna was trying to tell him.

Mickey practically dragged Lisa onto the 689. Her pasty face told last night’s story and she clung on to a can of red bull as if her life depended on it.

‘As me Mam would say, you look like the wreck of the hesprace!’

Mickey grinned and slapped his sister on the back.

‘Al knack ye’

Lisa half whispered, then leaning back tried to sleep.

She felt a nudge in the ribs and a sharp dig.

‘Gerrofus!’

Mickey, pressed the bell and the bus stopped outside Minsteracres.

They walked up the long drive, heading for the church, Lisa swaying a little but keeping up.

‘Only one more to go after this pet.’

Mickey grinned.

They entered the quiet little church and viewed the memorial plaques around the walls checking Nanna's instructions. Mickey typed into his phone while Lisa sat still on the wooden pews trying to sober up.

'Are ya any the wiser like Mickey'

'Nah but am gunna crack on, how ya feelin'

Lisa jumped up, lying,

'Fit as a lop, nowt's abohta.'

They walked out together and had a punch each at the giant redwoods before returning to the bus stop near the lodge.

It was raining when they arrived in Hexham so they headed straight for the abbey, their hoods protecting them from the downpour. Once inside the ancient church, they stopped to get their breath and looked for the exhibition. Lisa couldn't resist heading for the dressing up box.

'Ah luk geet canny as a bishop like!'

'How man, you'll get us hoyed oot!'

With the last clue in place Mickey and Lisa wandered about the old market town as they were in no hurry to get home.

Their appointment was at 9.30 on Monday morning.

Mickey checked his phone. He'd actually written the letter clues down on paper to make doubly sure.

Lisa turned the corner,

'Howay man, I'm up a height as it is, it's nearly half past!'

They sat in front of the large desk fidgeting as the solicitor reached into the top drawer and produced a long white envelope with a five letter word written on it.

Mickey put his paper with four letters beside it. It spelled out

**L a s t l a u g h**

Underneath the cheques, addressed to them in Nanna's writing, they read,

'I'm glad you two got off yer arses, and did something at last. Ya both Bobby Dazzlers, but diven't spend it all at once!'



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