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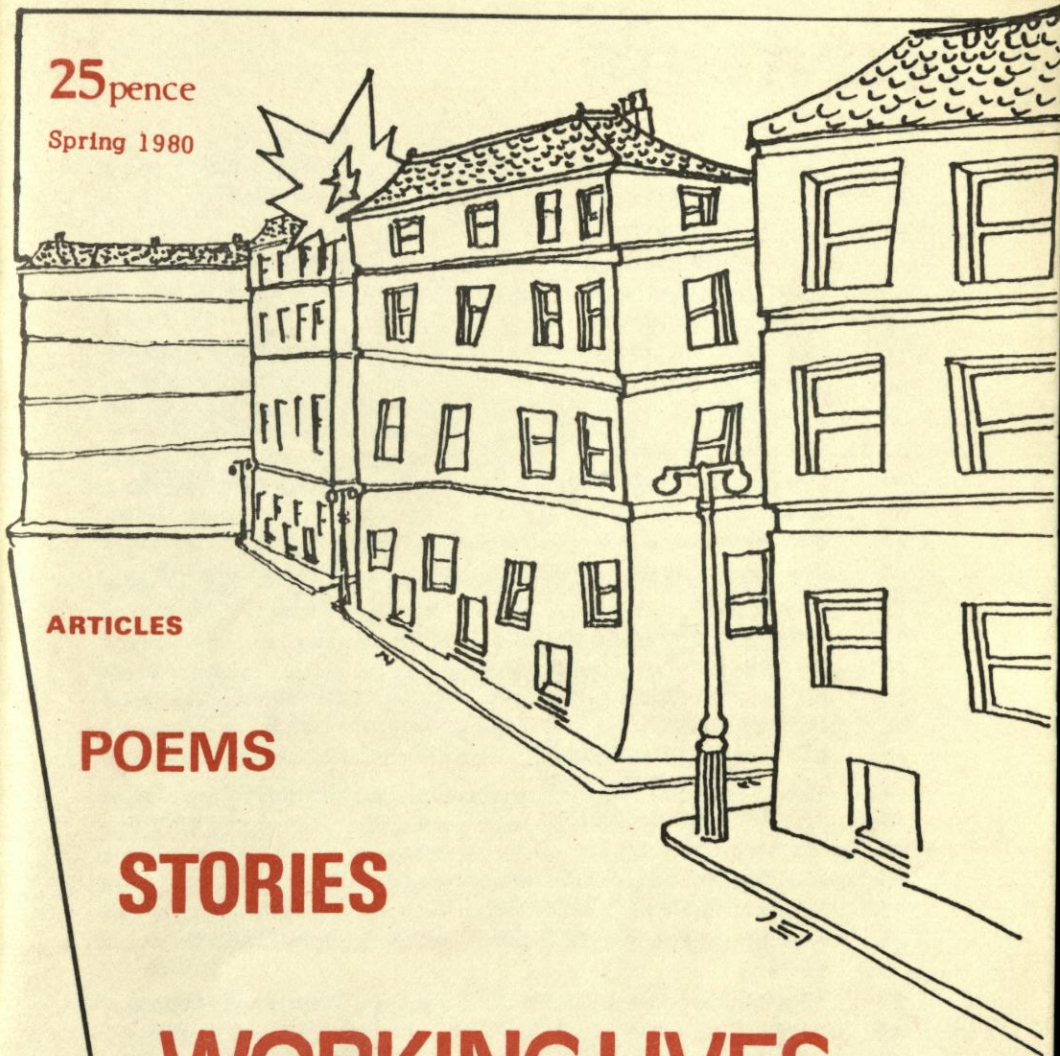
ARTICLES

POEMS

STORIES

WORKING LIVES

WRITE ON 12



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# INTRODUCTION

WRITE ON 12 marks an important step forward for Commonword in that it is the first quarterly magazine to be printed on our offset litho machine, as opposed to being duplicated, and in quality it compares very well with commercially produced magazines. But while it is heartening that there have been continual improvements in the production of the magazine, there still remains the mammoth task of getting it properly distributed among all the retail outlets. If only we could afford to mount a massive advertising campaign as they do in the commercial world! Meanwhile, it would help if all our readers undertook to sell a few copies to other people!

It is in their content that the WRITE ON magazines differ radically from commercial magazines and newspapers. There is nothing slick, sensational and deliberately distorted between these covers. Nor is there any patronising writing down to an imagined mass-market lowest-common-denominator. What is guaranteed is honest creative endeavour, plenty of humour and stories and poems which working people can easily relate to.

Work from several of our regular contributors is included again and it is particularly pleasing to see that Joe Smythe, a very practised poet, has presented us with a fascinating short story. There is also an article by Rick Gwilt about Joe, his work, and the recent award of a three month writing bursary by his union. Let's hope it is the first of many bursaries for worker writers!

We continue the serialisation of Doris Sydenham's autobiography, *A Way Of Life*, and Frances Higson also offers some acute observations of life, as does Joan Batchelor whose book of poems, *On The Wild Side* is now available, price 25p. It must qualify as bargain of the year!

There are also several new contributors, two of whom; Kevin Fegan and Derek Gannon are also playwrights. The others are all members of a creative writing class in Wythenshawe and offer a very varied selection of work.

Ray Mort

exercise to be avoided. Her mother was looking blankly at the coffin.

Sexual voracity, snorted Chrissie to herself, there isn't a spark in her. Never had been. She realised then, her father had been making some kind of joke, maybe against himself, calling her mother a nymphomaniac.

The joke's on you, daddy, she thought, she might turn out to be the good yet. And if she doesn't, I shall.

As the coffin was lowered, the token bits of earth thrown in, clattering emptily below, Chrissie gave herself up to her favourite reverie, her firelight enthralling stranger, undressing her slowly, in a packed football stadium, with the crowd singing You'll Never Walk Alone, in a frenzy of orgiastic admiration.

Two old women, sitting on a bench provided by the municipal authorities for cemetery browsers, saw the rapt whiteness of Chrissie Brabble's large, untidy face.

"It's her father", one said.

"She must have loved him", said the other.

"It does you good," the first smiled, "to see young girls pray at their father's funeral. Not a common sight these days."

"I remember my father's funeral," the second enthused, "as if it were yesterday. Hundreds came."

"Funerals were funerals then," her friend declared, "none of these scatty little family affairs. People in those days knew instinctively what really mattered in life."

A small dog with a large head, looking as if used regularly by a training boxer, lifted a threadbare leg against one of the women.

"Ugly swine," she shrilled, flailing the air with a long, black almost coffin shaped handbag.

The dog, easily avoiding the commotion above him, wandered over to the burial party, who were beginning to move slowly away.

Mrs Brabble, her arm through Chrissie's arm, was gazing fixedly at the ground, a small smile upon her face.

She's just realising, thought Chrissie, we're free of him.

Behind them, a small dog with a large and battered head was emptying his bladder against the mound of earth, soon to fill the hole that had been opened for a singularly unmourned man.

The insurance agent was tall, bulky, old pouched eyes, turpentine smelling hands and a long, ancient overcoat, ending somewhere indeterminately about his ankles.

"Prime of his life," he sniffed down at Chrissie and Mrs Brabble, both seated on the sofa, "that's how the best ones go."

He drew an impressive looking sheet of paper from his brief case, almost wiped his nose on it before handing the paper to Mrs Brabble, then vigorously blew and wiped his nose on a paint streaked rag fished from the depths of his capacious person.

"Twenty four years", harumphed the man, "that's how long he had been with us. Pity he couldn't have lasted another year. You would have been three thousand better off. Still, eight thousand isn't to be sniffed at," he sniffed, wiping his nose again, leaving it with a jagged line of purple paint along one twitching side.

"And there are still your policies," he continued, "both of you. Your husband, Mrs Brabble, swore by insurance."

"We want to realise them," Chrissie said, "both of them."

The insurance man blew his nose, seeming to polish it in the wiping. "My dear girl", he protested, "this is not the time for you to make precipitate decisions. Not grieving as you are. A fully matured policy is one of the delights of heaven, and, I am sure, would delight him who was the creator of it all, your husband, Mrs Brabble."

Before answer could be made, a loud knocking was heard at the front door.

"That'll be Reen," said the rising Mrs Brabble who entered the living room followed by a short, round, cheery faced woman wearing lint white hair and a skin tight, red cat suit, all the lumps and bumps of her globular body moving as she moved..

"It's Reen Morecock, my friend," Mrs Brabble said to the insurance agent.

"I know him," the friend said, "aren't you Leonard Lumper and haven't you buried everyone?"

"Forty years," smirked Leonard Lumper, "have seen me. Coming and going, coming and going."

"I've heard you used to take some peculiar premiums in your younger days, didn't you?" queried the unabashed Reen.

The old man clutched his briefcase.

"Scandalous tongues," he replied, "are wagged by scandalous people. If you would sign where it says 'signature', Mrs Brabble,

I shall take my leave."

"No need to rush off on my account," drawled Reen, bouncing herself down on the sofa. "I knew a lot of your old customers." The insurance agent grabbed the sheet of paper as Mrs Brabble finished her slow signature and was hurrying out of the room with Chrissie behind him, asking her about her and her mother's policies.

Chrissie rejoined her and the two women. "Says we have to go to his head office," she said. "He'll fix us an appointment."

"What about your Dad's money?" asked her mother.

"You'll get a cheque next week."

"Old fool," Reen Morecock laughed, "Did you see him run? I don't know a thing about him, just rumours. Now then, girls, how much are you getting?"

— TWO —

From the hill above the Dorset holiday town, the sea was apricot coloured to the sun bronzed Chrissie Brabble, gazing out past the headland, the winking light of a far-off lightship, the vague horizon of the early September evening.

She could smell apples on the light wind curling from the dark mass of land behind her.

Must be harvest for the apples, she thought, stretching back in the thick, dry grass.

The sky above was lightly yellow fading to the apple green mistiness, and warm air and a gnawing disquiet in Chrissie's mind. Six weeks sea bathing and sun dozing had changed her pale skin to something like prettiness, she walked straighter, her breasts were firmer and noticeable now, her legs had been whistled at, men had spoken to her before; she had been brusque with them, rude when necessary.

Two months ago such attentions would have seemed miraculous, since her father's death, but a feeling of unfinished business ruled her mind, distancing her from other people, especially her

mother and the unspeakably vigorous Reen Morecock. What a mistake it had proved, allowing Reen Morecock to spend this holiday with them. Chrissie's mother, who had always been the quiet shadow of her friend, had changed to a loud imitation of her. Money had been spent regardless, Expensive hotel, clothes, hired cars, boy friends, and such boy friends. Disgusting old men with wandering hands and phoney blazers, or young men with shiny, vacant faces and loud talk of racing cars and a super disco fifty miles away along the coast, but last year, darling. Always last year.

Perhaps her father had been half right, given the opportunity, her mother was sex mad.

Chrissie had listened to the two middle aged women laughing about the performances they had aroused in a car the previous night, in a cliff top field near to the town and near enough to the road for car headlights to sweep over them.

Darkness and Chrissie pressed the heel of her hand deep into her groin. I wish I was old, she thought, and passed all this. She sniggered aloud, I've not even started and I'm wishing I was finished. Men are only good for one thing. I want more from life than gymnastics in a car seat.

Chrissie dozed off, legs crossed, eyes pressed tightly together, hands limp besides disconsolate thighs.

Hours later she awoke cold, the wind was blowing in from the sea, her hair lifted, she shivered.

Walking down the hill Chrissie saw the lights of the town below, like a brightly coloured dream, she thought, nothing but good can happen there, if you can afford the good.

Reaching the curving road she crossed swiftly, climbed over the low stone wall at the other side of the road, dropping into the steeply sloping field finishing at the cliff's edge, eight foot above the arousing sea. There were five cars in the field, spaced apart. Trust them to do it in company, she complained to herself, vulgar cows.

They were in the third which she crept upon.

She could see Reen's head bobbing about somewhere near the roof of the car, then descend swiftly in a squeal of laughter. Opening the driver's door, Chrissie released the hand brake silently, two pairs of feet above her jerking in ignorant bliss. Leaving the door on the first catch she moved on all fours to the rear of the car, nearly vomiting after the smell inside it, beer, scent, sweat, sperm and the voices, reeking of old obscenities. Knees up and braced against the back fender, Chrissie lay, tak-

ing deep breaths of the sea fresh air.  
The car began to move from the volition of its occupants,  
Chrissie straightened her legs with all the strength she could  
find, feeling her leg muscles tighten and almost cramp with the  
effort.

Propping herself on one elbow she watched as the car quietly  
gathered speed, two doors opened, then all vanished, long  
before expected.

A single star shone in the last space left vacant by the  
dispatched vehicle.

She heard the tearing crash of its landing on the rock and water,  
no echo, nothing.

No life was visible from the other cars, they remained silent,  
closed, locked in their quiet ecstasies.

Chrissie crawled to the deepest shadow in the field before re-  
gaining her feet. The mile walk downhill was the happiest mile  
of Chrissie's life. As if she had leapt from the roadside field to  
the promenade, she found herself, blood leaping, heart thumping,  
walking beneath curved street lamps, between couples or lone  
promenaders, noticing an admiring glance or two, as she strode  
impressively towards the wide steps of the expensive, glittering  
hotel.

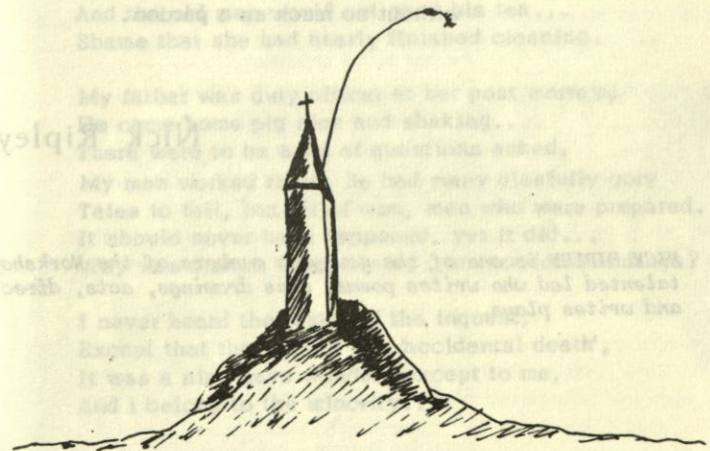
At the top of the steps she looked back at the neon illuminations,  
a crimson flare scattering the purple sky, bunched stars and a  
surge of triumph carried her through the warm glass doors, like a  
queen returned from exile.

Joe Smythe

*JOE SMYTHE writes prolifically. This is the first story of  
his we have published, but previously, we have published a  
book of his poems, COME AND GET ME. For more on Joe, turn  
to page 41 where he talks to Rick Gwilt about his poetry and  
his backing from the NUR.*

## Hartshead Pike

The exposed tower of  
Rainbeaten stone squats  
Beside the Pennine heather  
A cold memorial  
To someone's wife and to  
My childhood. Each time I  
See it I can still see a  
Kite strung out high, skyward,  
From a time of innocence  
And windy days. Now the  
Wind never blows as hard  
The kite has faded and  
Is without discernible shape  
Yet still it flies, haunting  
The skyline above  
The stone memorial.



## Two Different Tales

### THE FARMER'S TALE

The farmer, mind tethered to the earth,  
grapples with hay bales  
to release his livestock  
from the white wastes  
of crippling snow.  
The sheep's survival is his  
livelihood and ambition for profit.

### THE CANNIBAL'S TALE

The pin-striped man battles  
with paths around words  
to break political barriers  
and supply a market for the hill farmer  
But each time he stops  
to nibble at his tainted meat  
his delay bites into another farmer  
swallowing him whole  
without so much as a pardon.

Nick Ripley

*NICK RIPLEY is one of the youngest members of the Workshop. A talented lad who writes poems, does drawings, acts, directs and writes plays.*

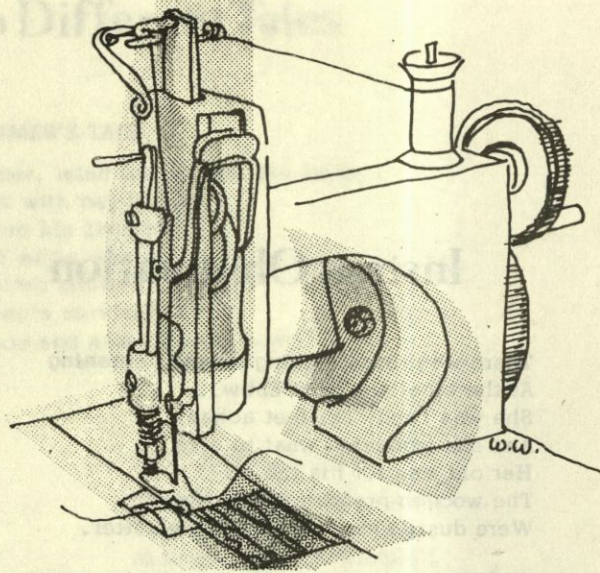
## Instant Obliteration

There was this cleaning woman, cleaning  
At the steel works at Ebbw...  
She was tired, her feet ached  
And she wondered what to give  
Her old man for his tea...  
The wooden prefabricated offices  
Were dusty and hot. They grew hotter.

One false move, one slip of the giant ladle  
Filled too full of bubbling, molten steel,  
And the offices exploded, instant obliteration.  
She never knew just what it was that killed her.  
She was tired no more, her feet ceased to hurt,  
And the old man would not need his tea...  
Shame that she had nearly finished cleaning.

My father was duty officer at her post mortem,  
He came home pig sick and shaking....  
There were to be a lot of questions asked,  
My man worked there, he had many gleefully gory  
Tales to tell, but all of men, men who were prepared.  
It should never have happened, yet it did...  
Why was molten metal swung over wooden buildings?

I never heard the result of the inquest,  
Except that the verdict was 'accidental death',  
It was a nine days wonder, except to me,  
And I belong to the minority...



## Factory

Machining, robot like,  
 An automaton  
 Dressed in flesh  
 As my mind reaches  
 Through the factory walls  
 To probe the exterior,  
 Life passing by  
 In technicolour.  
 I feel impatient for release  
 And work faster, faster,  
 As if the hours could be  
 Made less by my speed.  
 My machine stops  
 With a sudden thunk  
 And I look in astonishment  
 At the twisted needle  
 In my crushed finger  
 And the bright, spreading stain.

## Grampa Showed Me

Grampa showed me how  
 To prune the apple trees,  
 And I cut off the new shoots.

Grampa showed me how  
 To feed the chickens  
 And I left the door ajar.

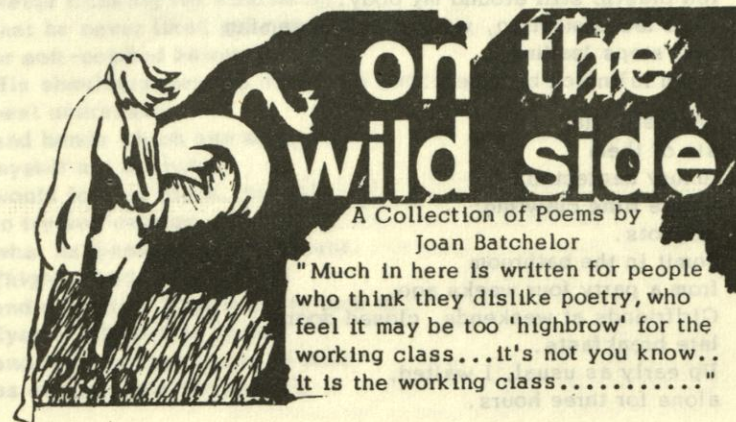
Grampa showed me how  
 To draw water from the well,  
 And my boot fell in.

Grampa showed me how  
 To clean a gun  
 And I shot the dog.

Grampa showed me  
 To the bus stop...  
 And sent me home.

Joan Batchelor

*JOAN BATCHELOR is Welsh and proud of it. Most of her family is grown up, and she finds lots of time to write. ON THE WILD SIDE, a collection of her poetry, has just been published.*



## The New Extension

I had a husband five years  
and two before of courting;  
7 years altogether  
brought it to an end.  
Divorce.

I'm three years on now,  
and in my second marriage.  
Going for my silver someone called it.  
Wasn't very helpful, only clever.

It's something left unfinished:  
there's always an occasion  
to recall those David Days,  
when I found someone still alive  
in a Dead City.  
Or found life in myself.  
Found life enough to wear a red mac  
ankle-long to London.  
Bought a train ticket, caught a train,  
the first journey I'd ever made, alone.  
Walked up a crowded platform  
red plastic stiff around my body.  
Cold faces meeting, warm breath steaming  
fast steps leading  
to an Islington basement.

Batchelor flat  
six of them  
luxury neglected.  
Waste bins crawling:  
maggots.

Vomit in the bathroom  
from a party four weeks ago.  
Girlfriends at weekends, closed doors  
late breakfasts.  
Up early as usual, I waited,  
alone for three hours.

I bought a paper.  
But not the Times,  
the wrong one.  
Didn't speak the same either,  
and worst of all, I was working.  
Never had the chance to go to college,  
and I'm sorry, I was only born in Leicester.  
Must be nice to come from India -  
"Dad's in the Army, you know":  
"Oh, mine? Er, he's a glorified Rep."

Still, we had some fun though,  
and I learnt to love the theatre.  
Not through them though,  
I loved it all by myself,  
and the Opera, galleries and all that Town could offer me  
and more.  
I soaked it all up,  
and at night times we sweated it out  
together.  
So that hair fresh and shiny on Friday  
was limp and curled by Sunday  
with London dirt and eager love.

Last day of December....  
Saw him in a pub last week in Leicester,  
me in soft pink polo  
and long hair again.  
Never thinking till afterwards  
that he never liked polo necks  
or soft-combed hairstyles.  
His shoulders were as square as ever  
best undressed,  
and hands which any artist  
myself not excluded  
would love to touch, to feel  
to try and capture  
what happens best by accident.  
Thighs I had once stroked  
and a hairline I knew every inch of.  
Eyes a difficult to fathom  
and face as impossible to read  
as any genuine batchelor's



So at ease I felt, he might only just have left the room  
and returned a minute later.  
But perhaps it wasn't really me sitting there  
feeling like a housewife  
and uncomfortable about it;  
feeling soft and feminine, foolish,  
rounded and homely  
and not some bra-less bony half-cast  
into Stalinism and astrology  
which I could never be  
nor any one woman.

But he'd had a nice time in America,  
and I was glad of it.  
The divorce had yielded well  
and from the Devil's seeds we'd sown together  
sprang a warrior of his breed:  
confidant, unashamedly sexy,  
travelling, writing, giving all to work  
and women, plenty of them:  
but most of all, happy.

Pinned down for a few days  
with his family for Christmas  
he said his mother had built a new extension.  
What for, I asked,  
the house was empty enough already.  
Whilst in exile there at home  
he watched them  
and knew his father tried to keep her happy  
and himself busy  
so they wouldn't hear the silence  
around them.  
And because there were no children this year  
again  
to sit around the tree on Christmas Day  
salvation was found in some nieces and nephews  
whose Christmas only started at their Auntie's.  
Nothing was quite said  
"It isn't nice, you know",  
but he knew  
they thought he was queer.  
He'd never mentioned any others after me.  
They'd never seen knickers in his bathroom

or letters from a lover.  
Funny, when I filed for my petition  
it was her face I kept seeing  
not his.

On Christmas Day  
I had to walk you out of my system,  
walk you through the traffic  
holding thoughts of you close  
closed in by the sounds  
watching the kerbstones  
squinting at the sunlight  
racing to the silence  
of a nearby canal.

And far away from it all  
I threw thoughts of you out:  
The countryside must be littered with people's agonies  
dead hopes, crushed dreams.

A long time ago  
I gave you a hip-flask  
engraved with, 'We only part to meet again'.  
This time you gave me tea  
Darjeeling  
'thus far, no farther', the legend it bore.  
Perhaps that's true as far as you're concerned,  
but for me  
there'll always be David Days.

## Wendy Whitfield

WENDY WHITFIELD: ex-radiographer, ex-art student, ex-sales clerk, ex-tremely talented and as a result works for Common word.

## A Way Of Life Pt 2

*Readers of WRITE ON 11 will remember that in Part One of A WAY OF LIFE, Doris Sydenham writes of her earliest recollections as a child with an alcoholic father, of starting school, and of the hardship of a hand to mouth existence.*

"We will take away the nasty pain, and you will be right as rain in no time at all." That remark was the start of yet another gap in what might be laughingly be described as my education! That 'nasty pain' had kept me doubled up for weeks. So I suppose mum really had no choice. Whatever the lump in my tummy was, it couldn't stay there. It caused me a lot of sleepless nights, that lump did. My knees drawn up under my chin, trying to get some relief. It's funny about that operation, I never did find out what it was.

After the operation I was put into an adult ward because that hospital didn't cater for children. Now, you may think that I was spoilt by all the grown up patients. Not so. In those days children were still expected to be seen but not heard! I'm afraid I was heard - laughing! They could keep me out of the conversation, but not even the sister could stop me from joining in the laughter. It began with the lady facing me being asked for a sample of urine. (I'd never heard of it before.) She couldn't do it, so the nurses sat her on a bedpan and left her there until the rest of us were tucked in nice and tidy, ready for the doctor's round. No urine, not a drop. Sister took charge. "Nurse, you turn all the taps on in the sluce; and you, nurse, turn on all the taps in the kitchen. That should make her do it before the doctor gets here." Such efficiency! Then bedlam broke loose. Twenty patients all dancing about in their newly made beds, singing out loud and clear, "A bedpan, nurse, quick! I'm wetting the bed." Yes, it worked. Worked, that it, for everyone except the one who had to do it! I think I could write a book. I know what the title would be, What Happened To Me On The Way To The Theatre. I couldn't possibly leave out the doctor who bent over me to take out the stitches so neatly sewn into me, his scissors poised at the ready, then said, "This shouldn't hurt you, but I've left my glasses at home".....

Where was I? Oh yes, the operation was successful and I was back home within three weeks. A short stay at home and I was as good as new. Ready for school once more. With a little change of lessons. Two mornings a week I had to go for sun-ray treatment, which is why I am hopeless at religious studies and history: both were morning lessons.

Mum had just had her seventh baby, so the trips in search of my dad ceased. She could hardly trudge from pub to pub with a string of youngsters behind her. To be fair to dad, he did improve a little once we moved into that two bedroomed house. You can guess what was needed next. Yes, a three bedroomed house! Before that could be, mum had to wait until my brother and I were working. He went to work at a dairy, and I started work in a factory. I had neither the courage nor the confidence to try for anything better.

How I hated it. The other girls made fun of me because I was a timid creature, unable to stand up for my rights. They sneered at the way I spoke, the way I walked. In fact everything about me seemed to annoy them. Never was there such a miserable soul as I during the six months I was there.

Then a trivial thing made them start to treat me with a certain amount of respect. The time! Very few of us could afford a watch in the early thirties, and yet when someone wondered what time it was, I could always tell them. They must have thought I had PSYCHIC powers! The explanation was simple, but I was certainly not going to tell them. I worked steadily, silently and discovered that I stuffed one cushion a minute, so ten was ten minutes, thirty was half an hour, and so on. Would you have given the secret away if you were in my position? I don't think so.

Six months later I left. I was glad to see the back of that place. After that I worked packing flour in a very small firm. Only a family worked there and they were very good to me. But even they had to pull my leg a little.

The one thing that spoiled the year or so I worked there was rats! Each morning before we entered the premises, a beautiful dog, a Chow, was put through the door. We would wait until the din had died down, then we followed in. Sometimes the rats were not quite dead, and the foreman had to get them onto a shovel and take them away. Where he put

them, I never knew. I didn't want to know! There was a terrible morning when we went in as usual, thinking that all the rats had been cleared, only to find that there was still one in the big machine that was used to sift the flour. George, a young driver, climbed up to the platform that they stood to pour the sacks of flour into the machine. He jabbed at the rat with a long pole, hoping to kill it. To our horror it ran up the pole, and attempted to jump the distance between it and George. It missed his face by a couple of inches and fell to the floor, and to the waiting dog. It was awful to watch. The rat fought for its life for what seemed like an eternity, but finally the dog won. Not that the dog looked like a winner! It had been badly bitten around the head. She needed to have treatment from her owner, and was kept at home for a few days. In the meantime, we had to beat and bang before we dare set foot inside the building. The rats had a reprieve while the dog was recovering.

A few weeks after I had started work there, my new work-mates met me at the shops with my mother. They couldn't possibly miss that mum was pregnant again. Next day they joked about it. How did we manage? Where did we all sleep? In the end they got to know what they wanted. I shared a bedroom with my brother. Was that so wrong? I hadn't thought about it until then, but they somehow made it sound nasty. The fact that I was fifteen and my brother seventeen, had something to do with it, but what?

Shortly afterwards we moved again, before the baby was born. I was given a tiny room for myself, and my brother shared a large bedroom with the other boys. I liked that, it made me feel grown up. Best of all it meant I could tell the people at work that I no longer slept in the same room as my brother. They seemed genuinely pleased about it. What a pity though, that adults don't realise the hurt they can cause youngsters by thoughtless remarks.

My last brother was born on Easter Sunday. The nurse told us he had arrived in an Easter egg. She didn't fool me! I was growing up fast! Not that I gave the secret away to the other children. Somehow the big world outside had affected me, and I was ashamed of my mother. She should know better than have a lot of children. Adults may be cruel, but so could teenagers. Cruelty begets cruelty. I thank God that I never

let mum know my thoughts.

It was around that time that I first saw my friendly 'Spirit'. I was dozing off one night when I distinctly saw, near my bedroom window, a shape, a sort of misty white, if that is the correct description. (I don't know why I thought it was a she.) Nothing very dramatic happened. She just remained motionless for a few seconds then faded away.

Next morning when I told my mother, she gathered the lads together and asked which one had been playing a practical joke. They all denied any knowledge of it. Of course, they were telling the truth. How could one of them climb through my window without me hearing? Anyway, I know what I saw!

One of mum's children had died, when only a few weeks old. She had been born with what is called a cleft palate. In those days not much could be done. So mum was left with one drunken husband, two daughters, and six sons.

I think it was having those six brothers that first put me off the opposite sex! Later they were to become an asset. Any girl with brothers will tell you that brothers have mates, so what better way to discover all the faults and failings of the opposite sex? I was one of the boys to them. And I was also treated to respect by them. What more could a quiet, shy teenager like myself want? With strangers I used to blush scarlet, but with "the gang" I felt at ease.

The rest of my teenage years were uneventful, except for the fact that I went from job to job. After the flour firm, I moved on to steaming umbrellas, polishing stairrods, making paper hats...

Then at seventeen, I went to a job that was to change my life. I was a dogsbody in a firm that gave gifts in exchange for trading stamps. It was there that I first met people that had been properly educated, and for the first time in my working life, did not feel out of place. The three girls I worked with had all had grammar school educations. Although I had not, I felt I belonged.

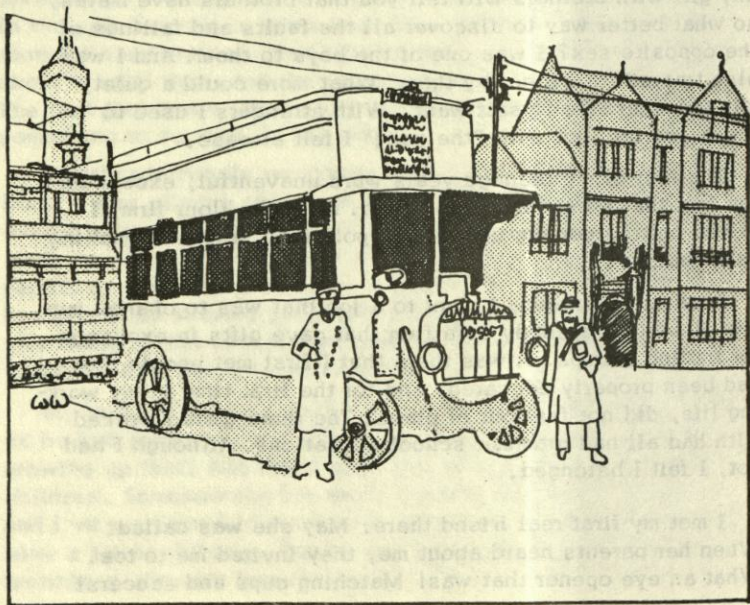
I met my first real friend there. May she was called. When her parents heard about me, they invited me to tea. What an eye opener that was! Matching cups and saucers!

Milk in a dainty jug! Sugar in a cut glass dish!

Was I an inverted snob because I would not let May know about my family? Yes, I was ashamed. Not of my family, but of my family's way of life. The only way of life that I had known for more than seventeen years.

### Doris Sydenham

*DORIS SYDENHAM has spent most of her life raising a large family. She now finds time to write poetry, and this, the second part of her life story. It was originally written as a record for her children.*



## Chauvinistic Men

I hate chauvinistic men  
who talk about the anatomy of women  
not as works of art, but of bits  
and peccs and spare parts  
to be taken at their leisure.  
I hate these chauvinistic men  
who call young women birds  
but use such ugly words  
to describe the parts  
that give them pleasure.

## Me Pension

I gets a bit of pension,  
it isn't very much,  
I spends a bit at grocers  
on bread an' milk an' such,  
Puts a bit aside f' 'lectric,  
a bit aside f' gas,  
An' by the time I've paid me rent  
me bit of pension's over spent.

I gets a bit of pension,  
it don't go very far,  
I buys a bit of baccy  
an' then goes for a jar.  
Now! I'd like to tell tht government  
I'd manage quite alreet  
If it wasn't for the simple fact  
I likes a bite t'eat.

## Snobs

I dislike snobs 'oo sit on their asses  
sippin' champagne cocktails  
after lunch,  
'oo look down their noses at us workin' classes,  
'oo sit on their bums  
makin' chit chat  
an' talk with their gobs full o' plums.

## Lads And Their Lasses

Lads never made passes at girls that wore glasses  
- that is when I was a girl -  
but now they make passes at all the young lasses  
because they wear nothing at all.

Frances Higson

*FRANCES HIGSON was moved to start writing poetry by the roar of heavy traffic taking a short cut past her Pendlebury home. She hasn't stopped since, and is now embarking on the story of her life.*

## The Wizard's Potion

The magic Wizard had a notion  
To try out a brand new potion  
To make him handsome, strong and brave  
So he mixed this mess in his magic cave

Into the cauldron he put a bat  
And he covered the thing in this and that  
Eye of dragon, tooth of worm  
All sickly things to make you squirm:  
A girl guides hat, the bum of a toad  
He mixed it up and said the magic code:

Dinga ling, lunga din, make me great  
So that all the women will sigh and faint

There was a blinding flash and a terrible boom  
And into the yuk he dipped the magic spoon -  
A mouthful of the fiendish mix  
And the Wizard exploded in a billion bits

And when the dust was settled down on the magic mat  
Where once was the wizard was a big white rat  
The rat ran out into the town  
And all the women fainted and fell down  
The rat was chuffed as he stopped to think  
It was bloody good stuff that I put in my drink!



## The Secret Of Invisibility

When  
I have more than eleven pints of Newcastle Brown  
I  
Become invisible  
To those  
Who have had less than eleven pints of Newcastle Brown  
I  
Know that I'm invisible  
Because those  
Who have not had eleven pints of Newcastle Brown  
Behave  
As if I'm not there  
I  
Know exactly when I am becoming invisible  
Because  
Those  
Who have not had eleven pints of Newcastle Brown  
Turn away  
When  
I'm half way through a sentence  
(Just as if I'd disappeared)  
A  
Symptom  
Of becoming invisible is  
Extreme  
Vomiting

## The Morning After

My toes have disappeared  
My legs contain all  
My blood  
My bowels have their own control system  
(And it's out of control)  
My stomach suspends on fine elastic  
(That's about to snap)  
My hands are somebody else's  
(And he's sick)  
My brain's asleep, but  
My eyes are awake, but have been nailed to  
My skull of jelly in the grip of  
My shrinking skin  
My groans are two hundred decibels too loud for  
My over amplified ears, and  
My mind says - most definitely - never again  
Never, Never, Never Never again  
My God - It's Friday - and we're out tonight.

Alan Butterworth

ALAN BUTTERWORTH: draughtsman and drinker, author of radio sketches, poems and good times. His poems leave a taste in the mouth that needs to be washed away with Newcastle Brown.

## The Day Grandad Came To Visit

Our new log-effect gas fire  
Was Dad's pride and joy  
"Wonderful piece of advanced technology" he'd go on  
Like a kid with a brand new toy

Then one day grandad came to visit  
Grand ol' chap, war hero, quite exquisite  
A man of great grandeur wisdom and wit  
On the best chair by the fire, he'd always sit

Dozing, snoozing and snoring  
Cos that's all grandad would do all day

Then about half past two  
Half way through the Sunday film  
Right out of the blue  
To dad's dismay and ours too

Grandad suddenly without warning shot up  
And forgetting himself - as he always did -  
Cleared his throat 'a hum, a hcarrgh'  
Took a m and...  
'Oh no!' shouted dad, 'No! Grandad No!'  
Spit...  
Too late for our ace marksman - a direct hit

'Can't fool ol' Grandad' he'd say  
Without realising his folly  
'Damn gas fires, can't beat the ol' coal uns, real uns'  
He'd go on grumbling in his Grandad sort of way

Then slump back in his chair  
Both blameless and shameless  
To doze the sleepy afternoon away...

Dave Prestbury

*DAVE PRESTBURY works for ICL computers. He is in his early thirties, and lives in Failsworth. He writes poems and songs.*

## The Navy

It's a long, long day  
since the building of the motorways:  
the fights in the town  
when the tricolour flew and down  
with John Bull's red white and blue.  
Aye, the jack was like a red flag to a bull.  
And in the camps, hutsful  
of Paddies working to stay alive,  
working to keep up with the man in front  
or was it out: there were five  
in line in the great hunt  
for every job lost on the motorway.  
His mother would have liked a letter the odd day;  
but words don't come easy to a labouring man.  
There would always be the drink to work for,  
always the old songs by a new band  
of tear-jerkers:  
singing of the fresh colleens  
with their hair of darkness,  
the drunken old da who lived for his weens  
and the old dear who laboured nearly every year  
so her young could work in some foreign wilderness  
for the motorways and the beer.  
Now the young will drink and fight for the faith  
'til their days are brought to a final breath:  
for there's no time given for what thought can bring  
when it 's work at four in the morning.  
His family - God bless 'em -  
were never full enough to share:  
when there's thirteen kids, there is no fair and square  
when there is no unity in men.  
So he prayed despite his mortal sins  
for forgiveness in the form of a woman  
who could bear him in love in the form  
of a family who would never be torn  
from their own by their flags and their hymns,  
by their northern and their southern.

## The Shift Worker

He was a skinny youth at school:  
he used to buy me sweets.  
Look at him now:  
not the sort of bloke to nudge  
down a back street.

Beam-shouldered, breeze block chest,  
his face, as warm as a donkey jacket,  
dirty-brown, the colour of a wage-packet;  
choc-legged, piston armed,  
with a fist  
like a skin mallet.

He finishes his twenty packet -  
must be like a mine down there.  
He remembers  
as a child  
he would hold a match until it burnt.

Snap-box and steel-capped boots,  
he sits alone on the bus,  
mascara-eyed -  
you can always recognise a miner.  
Bearded overnight,  
his bristles throb like dry taste-buds.

"Ten-penny, love,"  
he wonders if he'll ever get off.

## By The Sea

Should ever a man feel bright enough  
to outshine other men,  
stand him in the light  
that he might see his spark in a tram cable,  
electric blue against a gold sun.

Should ever a man feel strong enough  
to force other men,  
stand him in the air  
that he might shout at a hurricane  
and breathe against the north wind,

Should ever a man feel quick enough  
to surpass other men,  
stand him in space  
that he might race  
the waves of light and sound.

Should ever a man feel power enough  
to judge other men,  
stand him by the sea  
that his significance be swallowed  
in its immensity.

Kevin Fegan

KEVIN FEGAN is a relative newcomer to the Workshop. He lives in Stretford, and writes poems and plays.



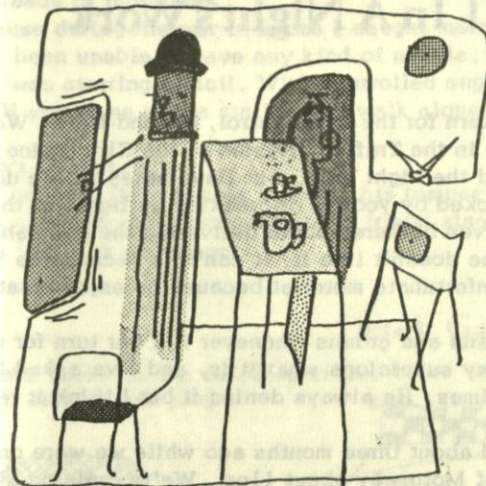
## Perspectives

Addicts would inject themselves beneath this wall:  
Dogs would urinate into its shadows.

After dark -  
when the old clock in the cathedral tower  
had offered us the midnight -  
I too would walk beneath this wall,  
Like a criminal returning  
To the scene of his crime:  
And reflect upon my arms  
And ruminare upon my wrists  
And laugh, and cry,  
And bring my life into perspective.



Kevin Otoo



## Eating Habits

I  
(Like you, maybe?)  
Would prefer to be in a field  
Surrounded by sheep  
Eating my particular  
Portion of shit  
From a rusty bucket.  
But,  
As you do  
I stay in the city  
And eat my particular  
Portion off porcelain  
Watched by pigs -  
And smile through a second helping.

KEVIN OTOO is unemployed. He has been writing poems and stories for years, and is getting better all the time. He is also a member of the Hulme writers group who have just published a story of his, *ORT AND THE GREAT BIRD*; see advert on page 62.

## All In A Night's Work

It was our turn for the night patrol, me and Dave. We're both constables in the Traffic Division of the City Police force.

I don't mind the night shift, but Dave hates it! He doesn't mind being attacked by yobos, or breaking up fights at the local pub. He's not even bothered about delivering the odd baby. He won't say why he doesn't like it. It can't be because he has to book the poor unfortunate motorist because he enjoys that during the day.

He just moans and groans whenever it's our turn for the dark shift. I've got my suspicions what it is, and I've asked him outright a few times. He always denies it but I think it really upset him.

It happened about three months ago while we were on patrol on our stretch of Motorway about 11pm. We're cruising along when this car comes screeching past us doing about ninety and weaves about all over the lanes. Dave's driving and he's after it like a flash.

He pulls in front of the offender and forces him onto the hard shoulder. Dave grabs a breathalyser and this geezer staggers out of his car and nearly falls over the bonnet.

Dave politely asks, 'Would you mind blowing into this bag please, sir?'

'I can't do that,' he says.

'Why not?' asks Dave.

'Well you see,' starts the bloke, 'I was in Burma during the War and I caught a respiratory disease and I can't blow hard or I take ill.'

'I see, sir,' concedes Dave. 'Would you mind coming to the station to give a urine sample.'

'I can't do that,' replies our friend.

'Why not?'

'Well, during the war in Burma, I caught this infection of the bladder and ever since, well, you know....'

Dave was a bit sympathetic then, but it soon passed. 'I see, sir. Well, would you mind accompanying me to the station to give a blood sample then?'

'I can't do that.'

'Why not?' Dave exploded, exasperation starting to show.

And I get ready to intervene.

'Because during the war in Burma I caught malaria and ever since I've been unable to have any kind of needle.'

Dave was starting to boil. With controlled anger he asked, 'Well, will you come to the station and walk along a white line?'

'I can't do that.'

'Why not?!' Dave almost sobbed, his temper had gone and I was just about to cool things when our friend staggers slightly and says, 'Cos I'm pissed up.'

Derek Gannon

*DEREK GANNON works in the building trade, lives in Stretford and writes stories and plays.*



## Why I Kicked The Doc

The Mirror will tell you I kicked Tommy Docherty  
thrashed him within an inch of his life  
not out of any disrespect for property  
noses, teeth, shins and the like

It was more of a combination of circumstance  
like a falling star or an eclipse of the moon  
it happened too fast for wishing or reverence  
and all in all it was over too soon

I was riding a train I might never have been on  
but for once I was giving Old Trafford a miss  
I'd been drinking a few of them cans of McEwans  
and I chanced on the Doc as I went for a piss

He was wearing a face like a well battered haddock  
as he brushed roughly past without saying a word  
like I was just one more mug from the Stretford End Paddock  
but it wasn't just then that the rumpus occurred

Gos the Doc had his first class reservation  
but I'd lost my seat so I couldn't go back  
and the lights of my life all flashed by like the stations  
as I leaned on the door and looked down at the track

I could see all my Saturdays strung out behind me  
since I gave up the game to watch it instead  
I took the field once after that and they fined me  
the magistrate said to try using my head

My dad said, well son, that's a good idea in't it,  
so I thought about just who I wanted to be  
I'd have libelled the Doc except no-one'd print it  
which is why Willie Morgan's more famous than me

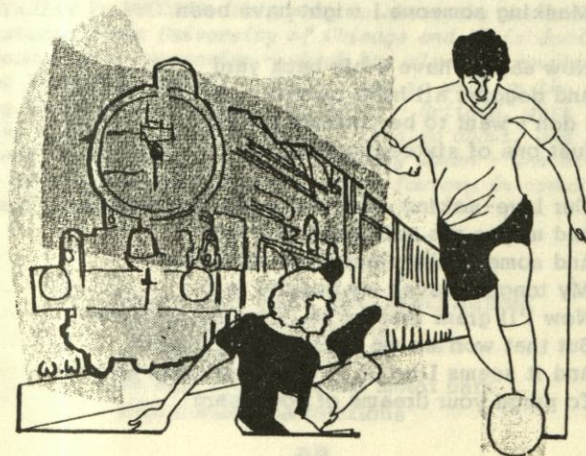
I've seen Denis the king of the jumping and weaving  
and some of the goals that he's scored from the air  
I've seen Everton's goalie turn round disbelieving  
when the ball's been lying full ten seconds there

And I've seen how the Red's souvenir shop  
turned in Busby's most promising babe  
and how Louis issued some more shares for Martin  
and it made me wish I'd had the good sense to save

But it wasn't until that train passed through Bramhall  
that I got the real chance to start using my head  
and I knew, with the Doc and me eyeball to eyeball,  
that if I didn't nut him he'd nut me instead

All hell was let loose as we pulled into Edgeley  
with a blue-and-white scrum using Doc as the ball  
you could see that his shirt had been laundered quite freshly  
even though much disarranged by his fall

And I think that's what made me do something quite sickening  
but thrilling like the rush of a brake that's released  
and somehow it wasn't the Doc we were kicking  
but all the game's godfathers still in one piece.



## Breaking Loose Poem

I don't recall when I first met you  
It must've happened gradually  
And you made an unnoticed impression  
Like a rock gets, in time, from the sea  
Now I'm conscious of all your erosions  
As if you've been carving a shelf  
Although, admittedly, just like the sea  
You were being your natural self

Now eagles have a big back yard  
And doggies all have owners  
I don't want to be your basic wage  
I just want to be your bonus

I remember your full length overcoat  
So full that it trailed on the floor  
And, against a world that was stronger than you,  
The determined set of your jaw  
Now self-consciousness changes your image  
I love you in glimpses unseen  
But I'm conscious of all your attentions  
Masking someone I might have been

Now eagles have a big back yard  
And doggies all have owners  
I don't want to be your number one  
Just one of sixteen runners

Our love-making once shook the floorboards  
And maybe the neighbours as well  
And some of the places you took me  
My tongue leaves my body to tell  
Now I'll grant that we're living on concrete  
But that worries me less than your tears  
And it seems I make love in some vain attempt  
To purge your dreams of your fears

Now eagles have a big back yard  
And doggies all have owners  
Now too much of your company  
Devalues your aloneness

You lifted me from where I'd fallen  
And steadied my frame of mind  
And I tried exorcising your childhood  
Of the man treating mother unkind  
But now do you see the villain in me  
As callousness shows in my eyes?  
And do I see the victim in you  
Of society's compromise?

Now eagles have a big back yard  
And doggies all have owners  
And you and I we're living proof  
To everyone who's known us  
That everyone needs a big back yard  
And no-one needs an owner.

## Us And Them

*MONETARISM Vs MECCANO. This poem is about the academic gangsters of the University of Chicago and their deadly brand of economics - monetarism - which has already wrought havoc in at least one country - Chile - and is well on the way to doing the same in at least one other - Britain, with the help of the Mad Monk, Keith Joseph. It is also about, and for, the Workers at Meccano, Liverpool - mostly women - who at the time of writing were occupying their factory in order to prevent a massacre of people's jobs.*

Times were when MECCANO trained  
successive generations  
of adolescent engineers  
on nuts and bolts and metal bars  
with curious perforations

When heavy industry was like  
our passport to the future -  
the long hard slog to gain the crest  
then lives of dignity and rest  
through mastery and nature

Now jobs in coal and steel are lost  
with many more to follow  
not in the name of greater ease  
but through that self-induced disease  
they call the Yankee Dollar

Cos Yankee medicine holds no brief  
to widen life's enjoyment  
its remedy, like letting blood  
(ours, not theirs, that's understood)  
would drain us of employment

For some the wages of despair  
for some the world's wild hoping.  
They offer us the traitor's perk  
the twelve weeks' well paid shutdown work  
on jobs they'll not reopen

But some of us are sticking fast  
Like Jacob to the angel  
we'll wring a blessing from the saints  
or anyone that carries weight  
with that mad monk in Whitehall

They say that if we sell the toys  
the Law will feel our collar  
but Fortune's known to aid the bold  
and no-one touched the swine who sold  
us out to Yankee Dollar

Rick Gwilt

*RICK GWILT is a lorry driver. He is also the editor of VOICES, the national magazine of working class writing.*

## Joe Smythe: Railway Poet

*This article was first published in THE MORNING STAR. We re-print it here for the benefit of readers who may be interested to hear more about Joe Smythe and his plans for the future.*

For many of us winter is a season of struggle between the desire to keep our beds and the desire to keep our jobs: the dark mornings and frozen fingers - and if you are a railwayman, frozen points as well. For years that's how it's been for Joe Smythe, Manchester railway guard and poet. Working the late shift, cycling home to his council house in Fallowfield, writing poem after poem in the small, quiet hours of the morning while the wife and kids and grandchild are fast asleep.

A couple of years ago Joe had his first poem published - in VOICES. He let on that he had written a few more besides, which turned out to be the understatement of the year. VOICES put him in touch with COMMONWORD, also a member of the Federation of Worker Writers, which led to the publication of a book of Joe's poems: COME AND GET ME.

The media caught on and Joe became Manchester's answer to the singing postman. When the BBC asked him what were his influences, he said Burns and Brecht. They ran the interview again leaving that one out. Joe thinks they were expecting him to name some establishment figure: "If I'd said Betjeman they'd have come and kissed me."

Meanwhile, Jo Burns, literature officer at North West Arts, showing a bit more enterprise than we've come to expect from her counterpart at the Arts Council Of Great Britain, was getting in touch with the railways on Joe's behalf. The result was three months' leave of absence from BR, wages made up by the NUR, and a commission to write a book of poems commemorating 150 years of Britain's railways: THE PEOPLE'S ROAD.

That makes Joe (as far as I know) the first trades unionist to get a sabbatical for creative work.

Working-class writers who survive literary recognition usually take the opportunity to smartly exit from the working class. Does Joe see his way clear to becoming a professional writer?

The answer is no. Joe has no ambitions to be anything other than a poet, and there's no money in that - and if there were, it'd probably take away what moves him to write.

Joe doesn't see himself as some conscious pioneer in the field of union sabbaticals or anything else: "If I had a clear commitment to something it'd all be simpler. But it's all a matter of travelling.....better the road than the inn." I query that one. Joe, who is widely read, reckons it's from Don Quixote.

To hear Joe talk you might imagine his poetry to be as inoffensive as Pam Ayres'. Not so. He lets you know where he's coming from, though it's never predictable and sometimes hard to unravel. Some of Joe's friends fear NUR pressure on Joe to versify union policy. I'm more concerned about how he bridges the gap between high-brow and moron-in-a-hurry. Has he written much with his workmates in mind? Joe hopes THE PEOPLE'S ROAD will reach them. As a railway guard you don't see much of your workmates. Recognition tends to come via the media rather than directly from reading the poetry. "Saw you on the tele last night Joe."

Bobby Starrett (Glasgow shipyard painter and cartoonist) once said to me that his ideal situation would be working mornings on the ships and afternoons on his art. If you were prepared to face the icy mornings and frozen steel plates, the 'bears' on the job would be less likely to write you off, and you'd still have the motivation behind your art.

Writing a newspaper article, I feel bound to bring out Joe's uniqueness - a quiet spoken man, given to few but piercing words - unique but not unlike other people I know, other workers and worker-writers.

Today, as a response to unemployment, trade unions are increasingly turning to ideas of a reduced working week, early retirement, sabbaticals. From being something that existed only in universities and dictionaries, the sabbatical is being brought closer to reality. If other unions start to take up the lead of the NUR, we may well be able to test the slogan, "Every man - and woman - a special kind of artist."

Rick Gwilt

## Jone O' Grinfilt's Infant

I'm a Railway Goods Guard without a Goods Train,  
They're breakin' up Yards an' leavin' the Main,  
The Roads o' my life are burnin' for scrap,  
Nobody knows what the gaffers are at:  
Nobody Knows not even the Gaffers  
Except they'll keep their jobs.

I'd go on the Dole but the Dole is a curse  
Bleedin' the strength o' the best an' the worst,  
Livin' off money that should have been spent  
Makin' this land the way it was meant:

Gaffers are canny wi' money that's ours,  
Dolin' it out keeps them in jobs.

Signal Box, Siding, Depot an' Station,  
Silent as islands o' desolation,  
Weeds where junctions once were bright steel  
Rage as the empty miles unreel:

Gaffers are buildin' a high speed train  
Wi' nowhere to go but faster.

Workin' jobs that now never fail,  
Crippled wagon an' redundant rail,  
Headed for t'scrap yard an' wreckin' crew,  
Tail-lampin' History we're blowin'-through:  
Exceptin' Gaffers an' Gaffers' Gaffers  
Rationalisin' all but themselves.

I'm a Railway Goods Guard at the end o' the line,  
Preparin' trains o' a finished time,  
Shacklin' wagons that carry away  
A hundred an' fifty years Railway:  
Gaffers don't know, Gaffers can't tell  
A stop-board from a Distant.

Joe Smythe

This poem is taken from Joe's book:COME AND GET ME

# VOICES 21



STORIES  
by John Gowing, JB Taylor,  
Jimmy McGovern, Arthur  
Frances, Ruth Allinson.

POEMS  
by NUPE members, Canadian  
worker writers, and  
worker writers in Britain.

CARTOONS  
by Brian McGeoch, Bobby  
Starrett, Dave McDonald  
and many others.

60p from bookshops or direct  
from VOICES, 61 Bloom  
St, Manchester 1.

*working class stories & poems*



## *Come And Get Me*

64 pages of poems. The subjects  
are mostly Manchester with poems  
on the World Cup and Royal Family  
thrown in for good measure.  
The history of a big city, its  
beauties and uglinesses. Childhood  
and sex. The world is viewed  
through another pair of working  
class eyes. Illustrations by Dave  
MacDonald.

25p + 15p P&P from Commonword.

## An Insatiable Lust For Broad Bean Pods

I popped into my psychiatrist's office  
He weighed me up with skill,  
"You're not eating and you're not sleeping,"  
He announced, "You'd better come inside  
The hospital for a few days - just for observation"  
He said soothingly.  
"Eliza Dolittle to you" I retorted firmly.  
"Who? - oh you mean Not Bloody Likely."  
As the penny dropped. "Oh well, I'll  
Put you on a new special drug, Nardil."  
He handed me a list which showed  
Food and drink etc. that I must not take.

No cheese, No Oxo, No Bovril, No Marmite,  
No laxatives, no nasal sprays,  
No bananas, no pickled harrings,  
No alcohol, except bitter beer  
And shandy. No Chianti wine  
And especially - No BROAD BEAN PODS!

I was shattered. No BROAD BEAN PODS!  
It was an unbearable deprivation  
It gave me a neurosis  
Just to think of it.  
How could I give up my craving for  
Broad Bean Pods! I told him  
I'd stick to Broad Bean Pods and gave him back his Nardil.

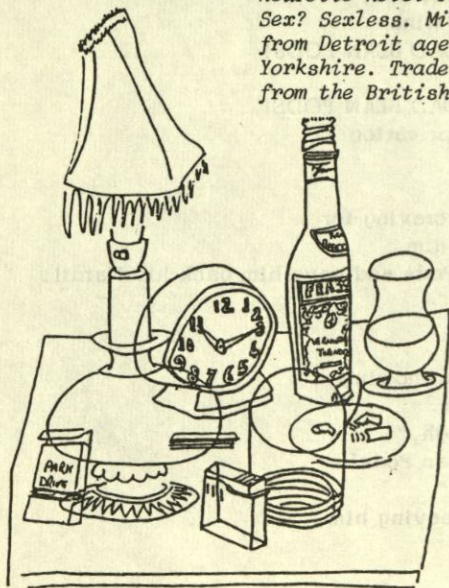
He smiled back at me  
"You'll be back" he said knowingly.  
I stared haughtily at him  
"No Chianti is bad enough,"  
I said, "But no Broad Bean Pods!  
Why you must be crazy."  
I walked quickly away leaving him  
To think that one out.

That evening I had  
 A Bean feast, so to speak,  
 Lovely Broad Bean Pods  
 Stewed in Oxo and Bovril, followed by  
 Pickled herrings, a banana  
 Some Leicester cheese and  
 A bottle of Chianti. Just  
 For the hell of it, I took  
 A nasal spray and finally  
 A very strong laxative.

Later, I felt pretty rough  
 I think I must have overdone it.  
 Next time  
 I'll take his advice  
 And have a nardil.

Stan Preston

*A member of Withenshawe Writers' Group, Stan Preston was born to write, especially poetry; but he has completed an eratic, neurotic novel recently. Age? Ageless. Sex? Sexless. Mind? Mindless. Banished from Detroit age 3, banished from Yorkshire. Trade: tinker. Further details from the British Museum.*



## The Market

Walking through the local outdoor market, I was suddenly aware of its dullness and drabness. It didn't compare, I thought, with the market I knew in my childhood. The weather certainly was the same, cold, wet and windy, but the atmosphere was different, or was it that distance of time had lent enchantment?

Monday night was the time when my mother and I went to our local market. True! we had to walk through murky wet streets, where the dim light from the spluttering gas lamps reflected on cobbled road-ways and pools of stagnant rain turned the blackness into a dirty yellow. When we arrived at the market there was noise light and bustle, a relief after walking through winter quiet streets.

Under the hissing curling light of the naphtha glares lighting up the market, the stallholders seemed good-humoured and jolly, each vying with his neighbour to attract the crowd. The man on the crockery stall used to fascinate the people with his ability to juggle about six dinner plates along one arm, while with the other, he waved and pointed at the crowd, shouting, "Who'll give me three shillings for this lot? C'mon ma: give the old man a treat, give him his dinner off a new plate." When ma refused to pay, the plates were usually then offered at two-and-sixpence, and so it went on till he made a sale.

On the next stall quilts, sheets and blankets were held up for inspection; the crowd were told by the vociferous salesman, "These 'ere blankets are the best in town and I'm giving them away, letting them go at this price." At this point the blankets would be given a hearty slap and his attention would be aimed at one potential customer with "C'mon now lady, how about buying these for your daughter for a wedding present?"

Back would come the reply, "But I haven't got a daughter." "Alright then, buy them for your son." And so it went on, quip and counter quip.

There were stalls selling gaudy, cheap but colourful floor coverings, oil cloth and linoleum. No carpets: wall to wall carpeting was not with us at this time but off-cuts of oilcloth were eagerly snapped up by housewives for their back kitchen floors.



Curtains were another crowd puller especially near Christmas time. Seeing swathes of this beautiful Nottingham Lace cascading down within the back and sides of the stall was quite something. Some of the lace had big bold patterns, while others were as fine as a spider's web.

The toffee stall was Aladin's Cave for the children with its variety of boiled sweets all laid out in boxes on the counter. It may not have been as hygienic as today's fancy wrapped sweets, but oh! I'm sure it was much more fun. Choosing which to buy - pear drops, aniseed drops, acid drops, or mint humbugs shaped like three-cornered, satin-striped, miniature cushions took a lot of concentration and a juggling of ha'pennies and pennies. But all in all no trip to the market was complete without a bag of market toffee.

Stalls laden with groceries, others with green grocery, the greens of winter and white cabbages, carrots red and turnips white, cheek by jowl with pyramids of red and green apples, flanked by golden oranges all made a gay splash of colour on a cold winter's night.

If anybody felt hungry there was always the stall where hot pies could be bought and eaten, while waiting to go into the tent of the fortune teller, who for sixpence would reveal the future for the curious, - and who amongst us is not?

There was a venue and rumbustiousness about those market men who used their showmanship with skill to draw the crowds, and with ready wit and plausible tongue plied their wares. In this manner they created a warm, often noisy, but free-and-easy happy atmosphere.

It is this bon-homie which I find missing in today's local market - or perhaps it is hidden under our more abrasive and aggressive society.

### Hannah Chetham

*Hannah Chetham is a retired housewife. Her first job at 14 was as a dress-skirt machinist. From there, she went on to sell furniture and bicycles; became a centre lathe turner during the war, and then a petrol-pump attendant. Finally, she had to give up her job to take care of her sick mother.*

*She was born in Ardwick, but has lived in Wythenshawe for 47 years, where she is now a member of the Writers' Group. Her hobbies include sewing and home-dressmaking.*

### Vandal

Gnashing teeth in anger, rending hair with grief,  
Raining rocks and stones thro' windows,  
Death is in the street.  
Whence this sad commotion, threatening England's weal?  
Are we once more facing Hun and Axis steel?  
Ghengis-Khan and Attila! Again to wreak their wrath?  
Surely, this the reason, for English mouths a'froth.  
Old England's sons are massing, eh,  
To smite with might and main,  
Those thrice accursed foemen who'd shatter peace again!  
Then tell me, tell me truly, what brings them in the street?  
G-d dammit, sir, what do you mean,  
A football team got beat!!

Jim Cocksey

*Jim Cocksey worked in Smithfield fish-market for many years, then for 17 years at Manchester Airport as airport marshaller.*



## The Grant

It was getting on for midday when one of the workmen called to Mrs Turner to say as it was Thursday and pay day, they would all go to the office but would be back in about an hour.

Mrs Turner, so very house proud, looked around her living room and she began to cry. What a mess! Would she ever get straight? And so near Xmas too! She looked to where her old fire place had been and saw the big black massive hole in the wall, her old fireplace had not been able to withstand the heavy blows of the big hammers of the four workmen. She had made some good meals in that old oven, and as for her cakes and bread, well, she could always say that it was a rare thing for her to buy shop bread or cakes. The fireplace was now in a thousand and one bits on the floor with all the dirt and soot and rubble. She stepped over the mess that went into the back kitchen where half her back kitchen floor had been taken up. The cold November air came in where her windows had been at 8 o'clock, the windows and the frames both in the back kitchen and the living room had been the first to go. God Above, cried Mrs Turner, will I ever get this lot sorted out?

Both Mr and Mrs Turner had seen the advert in the paper: Apply For A Grant For Your Home. Have this done and that done etc. Mrs Turner had to admit that their little terrace could do with a few improvements, and as they only had to pay 25%, they decided to go in for it. Looking around and still very upset with all the mess, no windows, no heating, no gas, no water, and as for that hole where her fireplace had been, Mrs Turner was having second thoughts about the grant.

Still, she had to admit to herself that the four workmen had really got cracking since they had been there at 8 am. They had said not to worry about her windows as they would cover it all over with plastic sheeting. "Just don't worry love." She had heard one of the workmen curse as he put his pick into one of the main water pipes which was why they had no water. "Don't worry love, we'll sort it out."

She heard her name being called from where the front window should have been. "Mary, Mary are you there love. By Gum, lass it's a right old mess," said Mr Turner putting his leg over the

window sill, "Looks like a bomb's hit it. Where are the workmen, Mary? Gone for a bit of dinner and their pay? Odds on they'll go for a pint afore they come back." Mr Turner had very little respect for what the newspapers called the British Workman. It was about time they took their fingers out and got the country back on its feet instead of all these silly strikes. Those were Mr Turner's comments.

"What have you come home for anyway?" said his wife. "Did you say your dinner? You've got some hopes of having your dinner here. Don't you think I've got enough to do sorting this lot out? I'll make you a cheese butty and a cup of milk. We'll have to go to the chip shop tonight and make do."

Mr Turner having nowhere to sit, just stood there with his cheese butty and cup of milk, the dirt, soot, rubble and smashed up fire place. "What time did they say they'll be back Mary? About one? It's ten past now, workmen! I'm going to ring up the office and see about this and...."

"Oh, stop it Harry. It's only just turned one now and anyway, what if they have gone for a pint? Those fellers have worked damn hard this morning, they didn't even stop to drink their tea. They really got going, so hush Harry."

It was well turned 2 o'clock when Mrs Turner said to Harry, "What time to the pubs shut? Is it 2.30 or 3 o'clock? 2.30 you say? Tell you what, Harry, give them till just turned half two and then we'd better ring the office about it. They did say they would be back in an hour."

It was 2.40 when Harry said he would ring up the office and sort this out with his comments about the British Workman. No wonder the whole country was going to the dogs. He could not find the phone in all the dirt and rubble in the room. He had to trace the cable to where it had been buried. The phone was covered in dirt. "What's the phone number of this firm, Mary? How do I know where that bit of paper is with it wrote on? Can't find a damn thing with all this muck and mess in the room."

"Is that Smith and Morgan, the builders? Oh good, my name's Turner, no TURNER, must be all the dirt in the phone. TURNER, that's right. Well, it's about your men at my house. What do you mean, where do I live? What work? Why, they are dong a grant job at my....NO! I said a grant job, not a bloody grand job...."

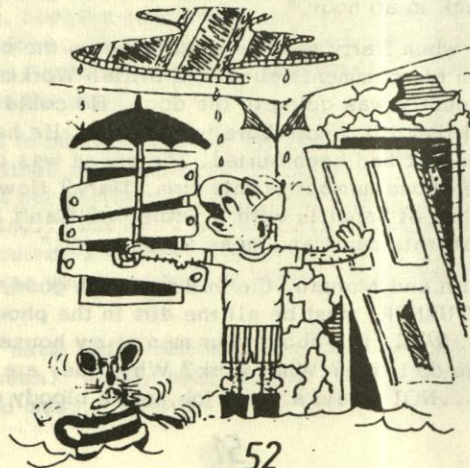
Don't you tell me not to get excited.....It's about the workmen..  
 ...I know they've been here all morning. I want to know where  
 the hell.....I'll swear as much as I want.....I'm not bothered  
 who you are. What's that you say? ...But what about me 'ouse,  
 they can't do that! What do you mean they've done it already....  
 ..but..but what about....." Mr Turner held the phone in his  
 hand. His face had the look of a man in a trance.

"What is is Harry? Are the workmen coming back in a few min-  
 utes? If so, I'll put the kettle on for 'em and....are you alright,  
 Harry? You do look upset and, Harry, I wish you wouldn't get so  
 excited while you're on the...."

"Excited! Excited! You're on about puttin' kettle on for the work-  
 men! Just don't bother over kettle. Why? Because they've all  
 been sent home. The firm's in queer street. Going bust. The dir-  
 ectors have fallen out and there's no money to pay the sub-con-  
 tractors to complete the job. British Industry - Bloody marvellous  
 isn't it!"

### Victor Irving

*Another member of the Wythenshawe Writers' Group, Victor Irving, has worked as a spectacle-frame maker, bus driver, self-employed taxi-driver, and assistant funeral director. He hasn't worked since 1974, owing to blindness. He is married, and lives in Bramhall.*



## The Geriatric

They call her a cabbage now you know  
 She cannot knit, she cannot sew  
 She's old and bent, confined to a chair  
 You have to shout or she might not hear

But when she smiles you see she's a being  
 Full of love and joy and certainly living  
 No cabbage is she but a soul and a mind  
 Rejected, neglected like most of her kind

### Sheila Charnock

*Sheila Charnock says: "I'm an ordinary housewife, married to the same man for 36 years- so I suppose that makes me not so ordinary. I've had 5 children, 2 who are in the Armed Forces, and I'm very proud of them. I also have a son who's a butcher, two smashing daughters, and five grandchildren. I knit on a knitting machine, and handknit for a hobby." Sheila is also a member of the Wythenshawe Writers' Group.*

## PM

When you took that job,  
 It was not one job that you took,  
 But thousands.

### Andy Mitchell

*ANDY MITCHELL works at North Hulme College where he expects daily to become victim to Thatcher's hatchet blows.*

## The Lifters

"Come on Simmy," yelled a scruffily dressed boy who looked no more than eleven. The remark was addressed to a fat youth who was lagging behind his two companions, the group behind being made up by a tall, skinny lad with a scowling face.

The same boy spoke again. "What's up Simmy? Done something in your pants?"

The scowling one turned on him. "You leave Simmy alone. He done alright. First time you went lifting, you was shriking all the way home."

"Where we going Spider?" Simmy asked, breathless. He had hurried to catch up but was still a yard or two behind the others.

Spider, obviously the leader among the three, answered without turning round. "Place I know, nobody ever goes there."

"Bogs in the park is no good any more," said Eca, the small boy. "Too many bum-boys around there. Course, you'd be alright. With them tits anyone'd think you were a girl."

Eca, who despite the swaggering appearance he tried to effect was really the most nervous of the three, started to chatter again. "I would have liked to knife that old cow who threw us out of the coffee bar. I might go back tonight and wait till she closes up, then knife her. I don't like people that push me around."

"You wouldn't ever knife no-one. You an't got the class." Spider spat out the words derisively, knowing that Eca was trying to impress him.

"Would if they really got up my nose. I got a flick-knife." He tried to sound hard and cold, pulling out the knife and snapping it open to back up his words. Simmy, who had noticed the whispered conversation and thought he was missing something, hurried up to see what was going on. He looked in awe at the knife.

"Cor what you got there, Eca?"

"A pig sticker, for sticking fat pigs like you," Eca jerked the knife toward the fat boy who jumped away.

Grabbing Eca's arm and twisting hard, Spider made him drop the knife. "Stupid berk. You want to get nicked? Fuzz see you larking around with that and we've had it."

Once free, Eca retrieved his weapon and the three of them carried on in silence. They had been on a shoplifting expedition, a regular thing for Spider and Eca. Simmy had never done anything so seriously wrong in his life. He had no need to steal, nor did he find the idea of wrong-doing for fun particularly attractive. Now, he was enjoying the exquisite guilt that comes from having rebelled against all the values of his upbringing.

"They'll take some notice of me now," he thought to himself as the gang walked in silence for a while. "I've shown class, Spider said so." He visualised the scene at school the following Monday, Eca animatedly describing the adventure in vastly exaggerated terms and Spider answering the other boys requests for confirmation with a curt 'he done alright'. After that Simmy would be accepted into their circle, even looked up to by most, for the majority still thought that taking a chocolate bar from the corner shop was a big deal.

There would be no more bullying now, he had class.

In Simmy's year at school there were three distinct groups. Eca described them as the sports-idiots, the brain-idiots and the Aces. Simmy had been outside all three and because of his build and lack of pubic hair had become a natural target for the juvenile cruelty of all three.

"You should fight them, one by one," his father told him. "Use your size, they'll leave you alone when they see you're not afraid of them. And Simmy, overcoming his gentle disposition, had fought. It did no good. Often after giving one of his tormentors a beating he was set on by a gang, or pelted with stones as he walked alone somewhere. He quickly learned that killing one rat did not get rid of the whole pack. Finally he had nerved himself to go shoplifting in an attempt to win the respect of the others on their own terms. Now, as Spider led the way through the dingy streets and dirty back alleys strewn with cast off possessions of slum-dwellers, Simmy listened to his conscience as it constantly reminded him of the magnitude of his sins. And he liked what he heard, for it also told him at

last, he belonged.

Eventually the boys arrived at the old canal, at a place that had once been a busy wharf. Disused warehouses lined the towpath.

"Just up there," Spider said and led them a few yards along the canal bank to the bricked up window of one of the old buildings. Some of the breeze blocks were loose and once kicked away left a hole big enough for an adult to enter easily.

"In here. Make sure no-one's looking," Spider snapped. Eca pushed forward to be first in.

"Jesus, you could easy burn this place down," he shouted on seeing the tinder-dry debris inside the warehouse. Spider spat into the dust on the floor. It was typical of Eca, he thought, to want to destroy something useful.

"Let's get upstairs then." Eca charged off, his footsteps thunderous in the empty building.

"One day I'll bring that stupid get down to size," Spider told Simmy. But he would not. Eca was useful.

As they set off up the stairs, they could hear the wild shouting of their companion as he danced about two floors above them.

An old man who brought his dog to the towpath every day also heard the sound and, convinced that he had stumbled onto the hiding place of a torture gang, scuttled off as quickly as he could.

The three lifters made their way to their goal, the top floor of the decaying building. Simmy was panting uncontrollably after climbing the six flights of stairs. They finally settled by one of the old windows. The little lights that still trickled through was enough to illuminate their business.

"Do with a drink?" Spider asked Simmy, withdrawing a quart bottle of cider from his duffle bag. Simmy took it gratefully, unscrewed the cap and drank deeply. Somewhere in the gloom Eca was prowling around as if looking for something. Every move he made filled the cavernous room with sound.

"Got one!" he cried, holding up a mouse. Simmy looked up but Spider did not show the slightest interest. Moving to the window, Eca opened the old, swivel-type ventilator, put the mouse on one of the panes and with a sharp tug at the cord, sent it flying to a wet death in the canal below.

"You lift anything good," Spider said to Simmy, ignoring

the hysterical capering and giggling of Eca who was still amused by the murder he had just committed.

"Not really, I only did it for a laugh." He started to empty his bag. Eca calmed down and joined them, disappointed that neither had noticed his trick. Eca had to be noticed. He was several inches smaller than most boys of his age, a fact which he had to try and make up for by being a braggart and a hard-case.

"What d'you think of the stunt with the watches on that old geezer's market stall, eh Simmy? Pretty cool eh?"

"Watches ain't nothing," Spider said flatly. "Only thing, never take a risk for watches. They're so easy, anyone can lift them. You can't get nothing for them"

"It's fun doing watches though" Eca defended himself.

In the meantime Simmy had finished emptying the spoils from his bag. There was a torch, a bottle of aftershave, some small trinkets and a pocket radio.

"Don't know what I'm going to do with these," he said, "Don't want any of them."

"Give you a quid for the radio," Spider said quickly.

"Here you can have it, it's yours." Simmy handed over the radio. "Anything else you want?" Spider took the torch.

"I didn't have a bad day," he said, starting to empty his own bag. "Thanks for the radio, always get a bit for them."

Simmy's eyes opened wide at what he saw emerging from the duffle bag, it was like a treasure trove, but every item was saleable or useable. There were lipsticks and cosmetics, children's clothes for the younger members of his family, a woman's purse with six pounds in notes and change, two cheap watches, a pair of jeans for himself and an assortment of costume jewellery. Emptying the purse, he slid the money into his shoe, then started to repack his bag, calculating the value of everything he put into it.

Spider, unlike the others, was not just a schoolboy larking about, he was learning the art of survival. When his father was not in prison he was a burden to the family, spending all his time and most of the Social Security money on beer and racehorses. The mother, with six children to bring up, and not enough education to understand the claim forms she was given, had long since become broken in spirit. Spider, as the eldest child, felt his responsibility to the others very deeply. He always managed to find money for fish and chips so that the young ones

would not go hungry when their mother in fits of depression, lay in bed for days at a time. He saw that they were adequately clothed and shod, and even contrived to provide a few small luxuries. At school, when he chose to attend, he was written off as bordering on retarded, but even among the teachers, there was nobody in school with a sharper business brain. The father could have learned from his son how to make a living off others.

While Spider dealt in his businesslike way with his plunder, with Simmy looking on in amazement, Eca had been methodically smashing the things he had stolen. Every time he did this, he promised himself that one day he would take everything home, tip it all out onto the highly polished coffee-table and calmly announce to his parents that he had been out all day, stealing. It would at least make them give him the one thing they had always withheld: their attention.

Down on the canal bank two policemen looked at the hole in the bricked up window.

"That's where they went in," one said, "Let's go and have a look what they're up to."

"Probably just some lads having a quick smoke or looking at a mucky book they've got hold of. Same as we used to do," said the second who did not like the things he had to do to the young. In his youth there had always been freedom in the locality to do the things of the young. It seemed to him that now there was always somebody prepared to complain about the most trivial things. But a bunch of little girls playing hop-scotch were obstructing the pavement according to the law, and he had to do his job.

"Kids are driven to dangerous places like this," he said. "You can't expect them to sit at home watching the telly all day."

"A crime is a crime." The other did not like being a constable. He did his job by the book, studied for his examinations, and charged everybody he could. There was nothing in his book about sympathy.

"Someone's coming," Spider hissed. "Anything we don't want, out the window." Quickly he gathered up his things and hid them behind a loose panel in the old lift shaft.

The sympathetic copper managed to make so much noise ascending the stairs that neither he nor his colleague heard the loud splash as something thrown from the top floor hit the water outside. When they arrived on the top floor all they

found was a half empty bottle of cider and three sheepish looking boys.

Ian Thorpe

*IAN THORPE comes from Accrington. He used to work on a market stall, but now makes his living out of computers. He writes stories and poems which he reads on Blackburn radio.*

## The Great Computer

You've 'eard about these 'ere computers,  
'ow they is so brainy and smart.  
Well 'ere's 'ow we built a big 'un  
all made up of second 'and parts.

One night on't late shift, me mates and I  
found we 'ad nothing to do,  
so John said, "Let's build a computer."  
It seemed a good thing to do.

An idea to fire the imagination  
to build a machine so grand  
that it could answer any question  
from any part o't land.

"It'll 'ave to talk," said Donny,  
"It'll 'ave to brew tea," said Pete,  
"It'll 'ave to play crib," said Kevin,  
"But programme it to get beat."

Well we searched 'igh an' low for t'pieces,  
to build our grandiose scheme,  
we even raided the dustbins  
an' robbed t'works cat of it's cream.

We were all workin' like beavers,  
puttin' the bits 'ere an' there,  
we added a small piece of seaweed  
to see if the weather were fair.

Then the moment of truth it approached us,  
as the shift it were almost gone,  
then it began to dawn on us,  
that someone 'ad t'switch t'bugger on.

"I'm not going near it," said Rodney,  
Kenny said, "I'm a brave sort of bloke,"  
an' as 'e connected the power  
'e vanished in a big cloud o' smoke.

'e staggered out all blackened,  
like t'phoenix from t'ashes 'e rose,  
'e said, "Well bugger me," and "Sod it,"  
an' other such north eastern prose.

Well we all stood there in blank amazement,  
as t'machine began t'whirr an' 'um.  
"It seems to be working," said George,  
"urry up, let's give it a run."

"Command," we typed, "Obey us."  
The machine gave a quick cough  
an' after a pause of a minute  
said, "Eee 'eck, by gum....sod off."

"I know," said Val right joyfully,  
"It wants a programme I'll bet."  
So 'avin no ideas for the moment,  
we sent 'im to get a cassette.

'e came back 'alf an hour later,  
'is face a teeny bit red,  
sayin', "I couldn't find any programmes,  
will Pink Floyd do instead?"

Well we didn't think much o' this notion,  
but Dave said. "Give it a try,"  
so placing the tape in the orifice,  
the machine gave a terrible cry.

It shrieked an' it squawked an' it shuddered,  
we stood there transfixed with fear,  
then a lever reached round an' took out the tape,  
an' shoved it in Roy Stratford's ear.

but it evens out later on. The same thing tended to be a regular  
sport. I know in my case I would miss days when I'd English  
and Maths - or miss their periods, but games and PE I'd make  
sure I was there. One of the kids I knew followed the Duke of

A security man approached us,  
sayin', "Shift that bloody lot!"  
The machine took umbrage at 'earin' this,  
an'grabbed 'im in a tender spot.

"Get the bloody thing off me,"  
'e wailed, turmin' quite red.  
"I reckon it's 'ungry," said Dicky,  
"cause it 'asn't yet been fed."

Well nearer an' nearer it drew 'im,  
an' before the end of the night,  
'e'd arrested it twice, then booked it  
for trying to start a fight.

Mike spoke up at this juncture,  
"It's time to clock off," said 'e,  
so we all buggered off right smartish,  
leavin' the copper still shoutin' 'is plea.

"Leave me alone, bloody well will yer,"  
we 'eard as we walked out of sight,  
"Ey up" said Les quite soberly,  
"Do yer think 'e'll be allright?"

"Don't fret," said I, "Just leave 'im,"  
As out ther door we tripped,  
"An' anyway, if 'e's still 'ere in the morning,  
we'll leave it to t'other shift."

Gordon Jackson

GORDON JACKSON works for ICL. This libel was written for the  
benefit of his mates at work.





## ORT and the GREAT BIRD

by kevin otoo

Ort was not a man although he walked upright... he resembled a bear but his head reminded one of an otter with its whiskered snout.

The Great Bird was an awesome creature with huge wings of flame red feathers that blazed in the sunlight.

A 32 Page story published by Hulme Community Arts. 10p to kids, 20p to adults.

## Putting It Across

*STEVE who wrote this article is a member of a reading club in Manchester. The article was sent to us by GATEHOUSE, the adult literacy project in Crumpsall which publishes work by and for literacy students; and as they explained in their article in WRITE ON 11, organise workshops with the various reading clubs in the city, helping students write and produce their own magazines.*

There's this difficulty of putting it across - I think people are ignorant. It occurs to me that some of the kids in my class had missed and through that go uptight about coming back and starting low down. So they would wag. Several cases like that, my mates and me. It used to be the lower forms at primary school,

but it evened out later on. The same kids tended to be better at sport. I know in my case I would miss days when I'd English and Maths, or miss them periods, but games and PE I'd make sure I was there. One of the lads I knew followed the Duke of Edinburgh schemes. He had to go to English for map-reading and all that. It tended to pull him out but that was the exception. I wouldn't have minded doing it - he asked people to help him but he was still considered thick in many aspects. That's why you find it hard to communicate: you can't read because you seem to get put down. I think some teachers don't understand that much, especially in Upper schools where they are all geared up to expect the child to read.

When I was at primary school, because I was particularly good at football I was 'one of the lads', with the teachers. I think I was excused too many things, it was too easy. For example, you get reading books with colour schemes - the highest I ever got was Green 3. Most of the time I was given Lego and Meccano. When we read round the class my reading was so slow it spoiled the flow for the other kids I thought. That's where the system went wrong for me there. Like, you do these reading tests - Schonell - where you have to read words down from the card. All the clever ones used to surge forward to show how good they were. Being the forceful type I was, I got them to tell me the words and memorised them. I'd quite a good memory.

The first year at upper school - for a kick off, you're all nervous and they've got it all worked out beforehand - what form etc I found for the first six or seven months I found I was in a higher form than I should have been. I was in with kids that had done well in that test. I thought it was great! I soon got sussed out! Took them a long time, they couldn't understand because I'd done so well in the test. The astonishment of the kids I moved in with - they thought they'd all been down-graded!

The reason it started to come out - my homework was quite good because I was getting help of my mam and dad and our kid, anything they didn't know I'd get off the others. When it came to the classroom, I'd grasp all they were going on about but when it came to History and Geography they knew I could answer questions verbally but when it came to the books.... You had to do a certain percentage of work in the class to be marked there and then and that's where the embarrassment would



come - because you can't beat up everyone in the class. Certain things would be said, not only by the pupils but by the teachers. I could take it off the kids as you could always find a way of getting back at them but there's no way in such a big school you can get. . . . Then people would sit up and start to take some kind of notice and try to explain to you about outside school and getting jobs. One example - I'd got that worked up inwardly because at one stage they stopped me playing rugby for the school because I was supposed to do homework and I kept palming it off on my rugby practice, no time. Because of all this trouble I started losing hair - alepaecia - and that's what they put it down to. Coming up to exams, third, fourth year and I'd wasted two or three years of my life, they tried to start and rectify it. I was getting pressured off school, off my mam and dad. I mean, it looked bad for the school - they had to have so many passes. My attendance record was good.

When you're young you don't know why you have to read. Nobody tells you that you'll have to fill in a tax form etc. Learn the alphabet - what for? It's just a jumble of letters. The only people who did anything constructive were the Careers people because they put me in contact with here.

I'm a groundsman. I have to be careful because you get stuff you could poison your mates with. Luckily they keep getting the same stuff and it's graded J1, J2 etc. Being an apprentice, you're told what to put where. If I'm not too sure, weed-killers etc, I always take one of the younger apprentices with me and ask them to get 'such and such'. So they find it. If I'm sent on my own I've got to the stage where I can read a bit but not with confidence. If I'm not sure I'll hide it in a way that it can be found again and say I can't find it. They say, "Are you blind?" But at least you're not discovered. I was nearly found out at work. The head lad was coming home and he passed this piece of paper and a pen and asked me to write "tennis net". I immediately sank into a chair. It's like waiting to have your tooth pulled. I scribbled something, threw it into the dash beside me and later grabbed it. Back at work I stuck my hands in the lime, went to the foreman with the piece of paper and said: "Can you just put tennis net there,"

You live with a constant fear of being found out and having to explain.

## Meetings

MONDAYS 7.30pm. Commonword Workshop meetings. Everyone is welcome. (See back cover for address)

TUESDAYS 7.15pm. HOME TRUTHS, a women's writers' group meets in the childrens room of Stretford Library, on alternate Tuesdays. Phone Wendy at Commonword for more details.

TUESDAYS Hulme Writers Group meets every other Tuesday at Hulme Library. Phone Fran Kershner on 226 1005 for more information.

WEDNESDAYS 7.30pm. Balderstone Writers' Group meets at the Balderstone Community School, Queen Victoria Street, Rochdale. Contact the community tutor or steward, or Ray Mort at Commonword.



"We Conservatives have always believed in home-ownership - I personally own over a hundred and fifty."

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WRITE ON is a quarterly magazine published by the Commonword Writers' Workshop. The stories, poems and articles contained in the magazine are written by working people in Manchester. Commonword is not a commercial publisher: we make no profit and the writers are unpaid. Our aim is to encourage writing by people who have been traditionally taught to think of writing as something best left to their middle-class 'betters'.

We hold regular workshop meetings, at which writers and would-be writers get together to read and discuss their own work. We publish books and booklets of this work, and we organise live readings.

For details of writers' groups, see the inside back cover. New members are always welcome. There are people in the office during the day to talk about your writing, arrange a reading for your group, or help you start a writers' group.

COMMONWORD is a member of the Federation of Worker Writers. For details contact, Mike Kearney, E Floor, Milburn House, Dean Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 1LF Tel 0632 20719.

COMMONWORD, 61 Bloom St., Manchester 1  
Telephone 061-236 2773