

Forgotten

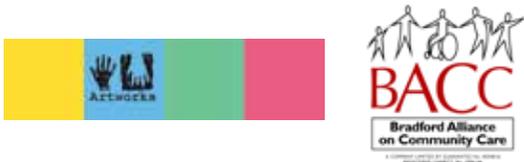
A Collection of Creative Writing and Photography from the Hidden Homeless

"Forgotten" is a collection of work by people who have been affected by homelessness.

"Some of the pieces in this book are very sad. Some highlight the rock bottom of homelessness. In most there is hope. In others still there is an alternative, a future to strive towards. In all there is a certain strength. It is the strength of the creative individuals who, in speaking of their experiences, show that they have come through these experiences and that they are survivors. I hope you find them as inspiring as I do."

B. Cherriman (Creative Writer)

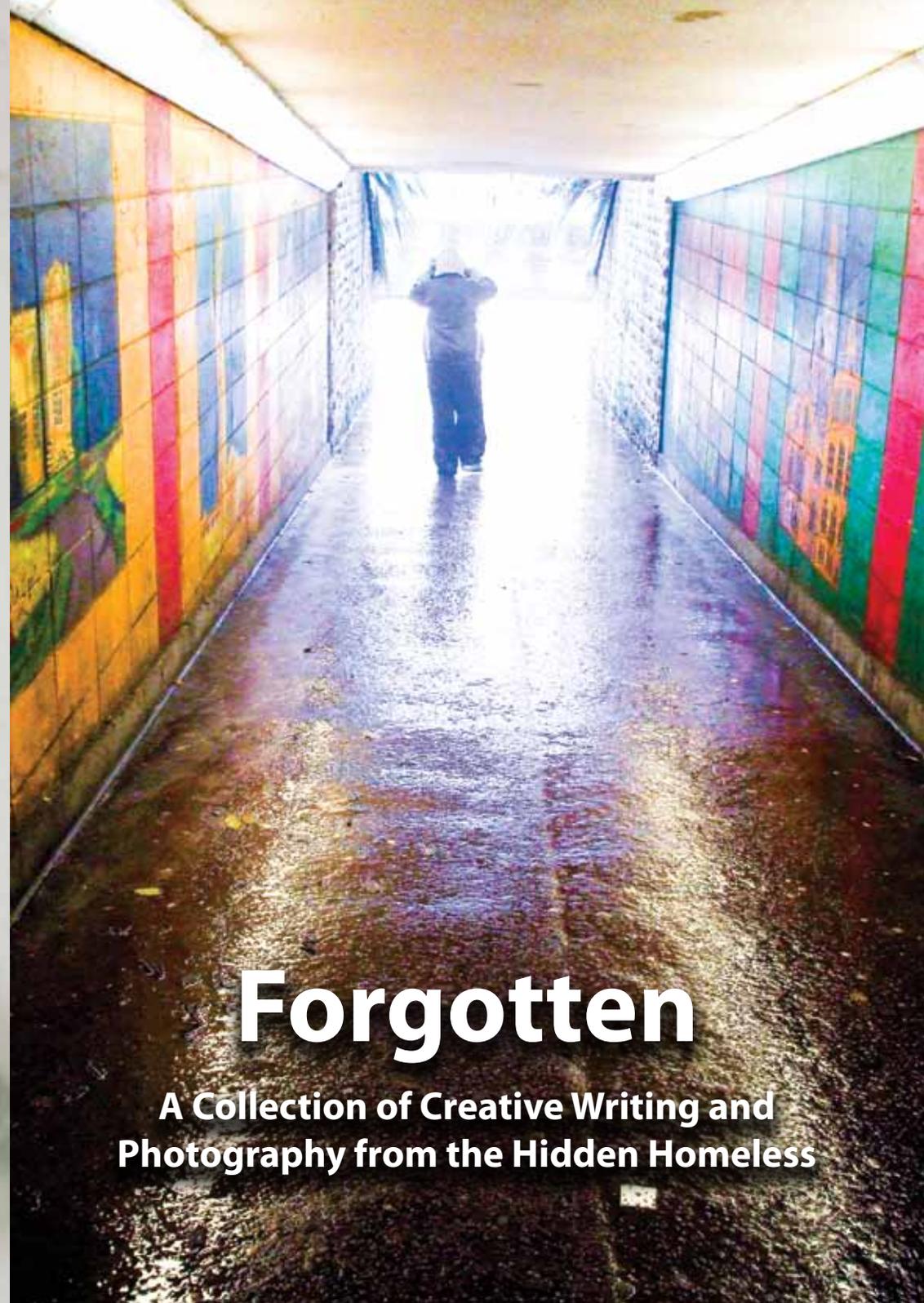
An Artworks project in partnership with BACC:



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Forgotten

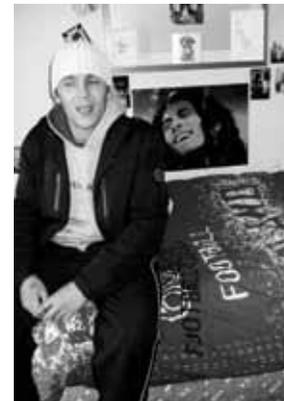
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Introduction

I remember wandering round the town centre on New Year's Eve feeling isolated, alone, desperate and like life was over for me. The pain of being separated from my kids was unbearable at times. I was angry and frustrated but tired and weak with it all, ready to just give up with nowhere and nobody to turn to.

Out of this came this publication and this introduction goes some way towards explaining how.

My petition and my protest to the council started the day I arrived in the Salvation Army Hostel for single men. I began writing about the people I met in there, and my situation, but the more I listened to the others' stories, the more I realised I could be stuck here for months and months as their stories were the same as mine, a relationship breakdown and loss of job. It all ended the same, with us hidden away in silence waiting to be re-housed. Some of them had been waiting 18 months, but I had kids I loved and missed, I was not going to sit in silence and wait a year or two before I regained a relationship with my kids again. So I got myself some cardboard, wrote out some slogans and stood on the city hall steps in quiet protest in the rain, snow and sleet on my own for two days, and then a couple more from the hostel joined me, and for three weeks every day we sat on the city hall steps collecting signatures and talking to people. We handed the petition in and I set about writing a speech for the day I put the petition to the council. Some of what follows comes from my speech. I'm based in Bradford but the more I find out the more I realise this is a national problem. Having said that things have changed since I wrote and delivered it and I do feel a lot more positive. One of the things that has happened is the production of this book which has some amazing pieces of writing in it from a wide range of people all of whom have experienced homelessness. I hope it adds to the growing group of people who understand and are campaigning on homeless issues.

I am the founder of a group called the Hidden Homeless Foundation which campaigns for the homeless people who are 'non-priority' and are not sleeping rough but nevertheless have real needs and face real dangers to their physical and mental health and are at risk of developing alcohol and drug problems.

The name 'Hidden Homeless' is not one we chose for ourselves. As I'm sure you are aware, this is a name given to us by the media, the government and institutional structures. This name alone describes the way we feel about our situation, and the way we are hidden as homeless, in privately run, or church run hostels and then labelled as 'non-priority' homeless because we are in a safe and secure environment. But if we were in a bail hostel or any other government run hostel we would be classified as priority homeless automatically.

I would like to tell you something of my experience as just one example of the problems the hidden homeless face. Not only did I find myself homeless due to a relationship breakdown, where as a father of three children aged 19, 17, and 4, I had to leave my partner and children in the stable family home as this felt the right thing to do; I was also coping with the heartbreak of leaving my children, and then relying on the housing system to help me rebuild my life and find a new home.

I first became homeless 3 years ago. I applied for housing on the Home Hunter system and have been trying to secure a home ever since. I have spent a couple of years staying with friends, family and a girlfriend for short periods of time. During this time I had a well-paid job, but lost this mainly due to the pressures I was facing of not having permanent, secure accommodation. It has also been difficult to maintain a relationship with my children, particularly my 4 yr old son, although I have struggled to do this. I feel lost and forgotten about in a system I find to be biased, unfair and discriminatory, and my reasons for these findings are this.

Having spent time in the Salvation Army hostel I was offered a flat through Home Hunter and things got better. But at the hostel I came into contact with numerous men in similar situations to my own, I have met people who were in despair, whose mental health had deteriorated over a few weeks and others who were turning to drink or drugs. There are a number of problems with living in a hostel.

The difficulty in visitation for children as it's not a child friendly environment is just one. Added to this, the priority status housing system gives priority to people in temporary housing, or people classified as vulnerable. Foundation, a government run institution, are allotted a number of allocations for houses and flats by the council, based on criteria biased towards these vulnerable people who include those on drug rehabilitation programmes, ex prisoners and immigrants being resettled. These people obviously need help and a chance to put their lives in order, but, I question why they should get priority over and above me or anyone else. It should be equal.

We find that unless we are in a government run institution or hostel, or on a rehabilitation program we are unclassified, hidden and receive no help or priority for housing. Also, if we are in need of help with a bond or to help to buy furniture once we are housed, unlike those in government run hostels we do not qualify for an automatic community care grant and are only entitled to a crisis or budget loan that we have to repay. The amount of housing is limited, but it is limited even further by setting age restrictions of 55 yrs on what seems to be hundreds of empty flats and houses, so once again leaves a 40 yr old father of three like myself no choices and no chance of being rehoused. We have also realized that if we gain employment while living in these hostels our housing benefit is stopped, unless we have been on state benefits for a minimum of 26 weeks. This leaves people like us unable to sustain the £177 a week it costs to stay here. Therefore if we find employment we are asked to leave with no place to live.

The official headcount for homeless in Bradford is only 3, I think we all know how wrong this figure is and why. It again is based on a criteria set by the government, and in our opinion is hiding the true homeless figures. If people in hostels and shelters were counted it would be in the hundreds in Bradford.

We want equal rights for housing for everyone in our situation, we want a new headcount to include all hostels, we want anyone in a hostel to be classified as homeless and given priority, as a hostel or a shelter is not a home. All the issues I have talked about result from homeless legislation we believe is flawed and must be changed to support everyone.

The people I speak for feel desperate and lost. These people are giving up and will soon become future alcoholics and drug addicts. This system is creating the people that belong to the government schemes and costing a fortune in rehabilitation costs.

With the impetus created by the petition I became involved in the service user involvement group and since then, my life and my state of mind have changed. The group has given me a place to air frustrations, put forward my ideas for change, and given me back a feeling of belonging. My self esteem has returned, my confidence is up and I feel I have a place in life again. Just by being involved I have learned so much, I'm not as angry or frustrated, I've learned to be more sympathetic to others' troubles, and I'm making a difference for others who find themselves in the same situation.

There are so many different levels you can get involved on; I'm on the Bradford Service Provider's Forum and Supporting People's Service User Governing Body and am involved in a workshop developing Move On strategies with the Move On co-ordinator. I also attend the Strategic Core Group and Commissioning body. I give presentations and attend lots of meetings with Supporting People, and also inspect

services as a peer reviewer. I have even sat on an interview panel for a service user development officer for the council.

Finally, and most importantly in the context of this publication, I wanted to set up a poetry competition for people who were homeless or had experienced homelessness. My own experience had shown me how powerful a tool the written word can be both as a means of communication with others and as a way of expressing feelings. Artworks and Bradford Alliance on Community Care agreed to support and manage the project and Artworks ran a number of creative writing, rap and photography workshops with service users across the city. The competition ran over the summer of 2009 and the winners were chosen in October. Further submissions were then collected and this book is the resulting publication.

The pieces in this book are all written by people who have experienced homelessness first hand. We hope they give you a glimpse of what it is to be homeless, and above all that they show us for who we are, real people, just like you, who through bad luck have ended up on the streets. As I have said and will say again, for me homelessness has not been the end of the road, but the beginning of one and I hope this publication inspires all those who read it to get involved and support homeless people in moving on in their lives. It can and does happen to anybody and it is only through giving us a voice and listening to that voice that we can solve homelessness...

Gary Staniforth

Artworks Creative Communities

Artworks is a Bradford based charity and social enterprise. Since 1998 we have been delivering innovative projects that use creativity as a force for change. Working with professional artists and in partnership with all organisations across all sectors, we develop and deliver highly successful projects utilising participatory arts as a tool to inspire, connect and engage.

Artworks' work crosses all artforms from dance, drama to DJing and design - with people of all ages, abilities and cultures. In the last 12 years thousands of individuals and hundreds of groups have taken part in our projects, creating a sense of ownership and pride, and using the arts to help people connect with and participate in their communities.

The 'Get Your Pen Out' Project has been a partnership project with Bradford Alliance on Community Care, funded by NHS Bradford & Airedale and the West Yorkshire Learning Consortium. It has been especially rewarding for us to work with homeless and ex-homeless people, providing them with the chance for self expression through creativity.

The project originally came out of a request from Gary Staniforth to run a poetry competition. We ran a series of creative writing and rap workshops, initially at the Together Women Project, The Salvation Army and Bradford Foyer. These were facilitated by Becky Cherriman (Creative Writer), Marcus Lee and Philip Charles (Rap Artists). The aim of these workshops was to explore the topic of health through creative writing and rap, and to encourage people to enter the poetry competition organised by Gary Staniforth around the theme of homelessness.

The competition ran throughout the summer of 2009, and was judged in September. The winning entry came through as "Forgotten" by Martin Sasbry. Due to the success of the project, we decided to run

a further submission invitation, and facilitated this with a number of additional workshops at the Assisi House Project - including a second rap workshop; and a workshop facilitated by Mick Sugden (Photographer), David Nixon (Occupational Therapist) and Gary Staniforth (Homeless Consultant).

This book, containing the best entries, was launched in January 2010.

Becky Cherriman summed up well our collective thoughts and experiences of running the project when she said: "Everyone I worked with had suffered through their homelessness, they all had stories to tell and they all had aspirations. Some of the pieces in this book are very sad. Some highlight the rock bottom of homelessness. In most there is hope. In others still there is an alternative, a future to strive towards."

We hope that as a result of the project we have helped a community in need to develop their creative talents and express themselves through creative media. We very much look forward to working with a similar group again in the future.

Ed Hall (CEO)

Artworks Creative Communities



Bradford Alliance on Community Care (BACC)

Bradford Alliance on Community Care (BACC) is an inclusion support and community development project working with groups and communities to involve them in the planning and development of services, particularly around social care, housing and health. We have worked with people with experience of homelessness over many years, working to the principles of the national Groundswell Project that homeless people:

- Are not the 'problem' – they must be part of the solution.
- Hold the key to solutions, from their experience and knowledge.
- Have a right to the information they need to make informed choices about their lives.
- Can build communities and create positive change by acting together.

The 'Get Your Pen Out' Project has been an opportunity for people living in homelessness projects to develop their creative talents. Not only are projects offering a better service by supporting people to take part in creative writing but BACC believes that the work produced contains information and ideas that with imagination can be used to improve services.

Neal Heard (Projects Manager)

Bradford Alliance on Community Care



Forgotten

Cast out by the affluent, into the city streets.
The poor and the hurting, the broken and the beat.
Left to roam the dark alleys dying in their shame,
With nowhere left to go to escape their pain.
The food is so scarce, they're malnourished and they're cold.
The drugs rob their minds, while their broken bodies grow old.
Tears run down their cheeks as the days do slowly pass.
The day they drop down dead, will be the day they're free at last.
They know a life of poverty, they know nothing but fear and death.
They know a life of drugs, Heroin, Crack and Meth.
You can sometimes hear them crying, crying out to God above.
While they're begging for your spare change, they're longing just for love.
These are the FORGOTTEN people whose lives are governed by dope.
These are the FORGOTTEN people who've given up all hope.

Martin Sasbry



Untitled

Walking streets with no shoes
Head or tails, win or lose
Homelessness takes its toll
Lace-less shoes with no soles
Can't catch my dreams
With pocket-less jeans
Finger-less gloves
Blaggers and bluffs
A roof over my head
With a pillow and a bed
Not whole, just a shell
Let me sleep where I fell
Cold and damp
Muscle cramp
Clouds I have blown
Longing for a home
One secure room
An Egyptian tomb
Sand on the floor
A lock on the door
No windows for me
Pure privacy
I will confess, it's a real mess
Nothing worse than homelessness
I walk this road, with no fixed abode
So illness and poverty walk hand in hand
The water is ours and so IS THE LAND

Roger Laycock

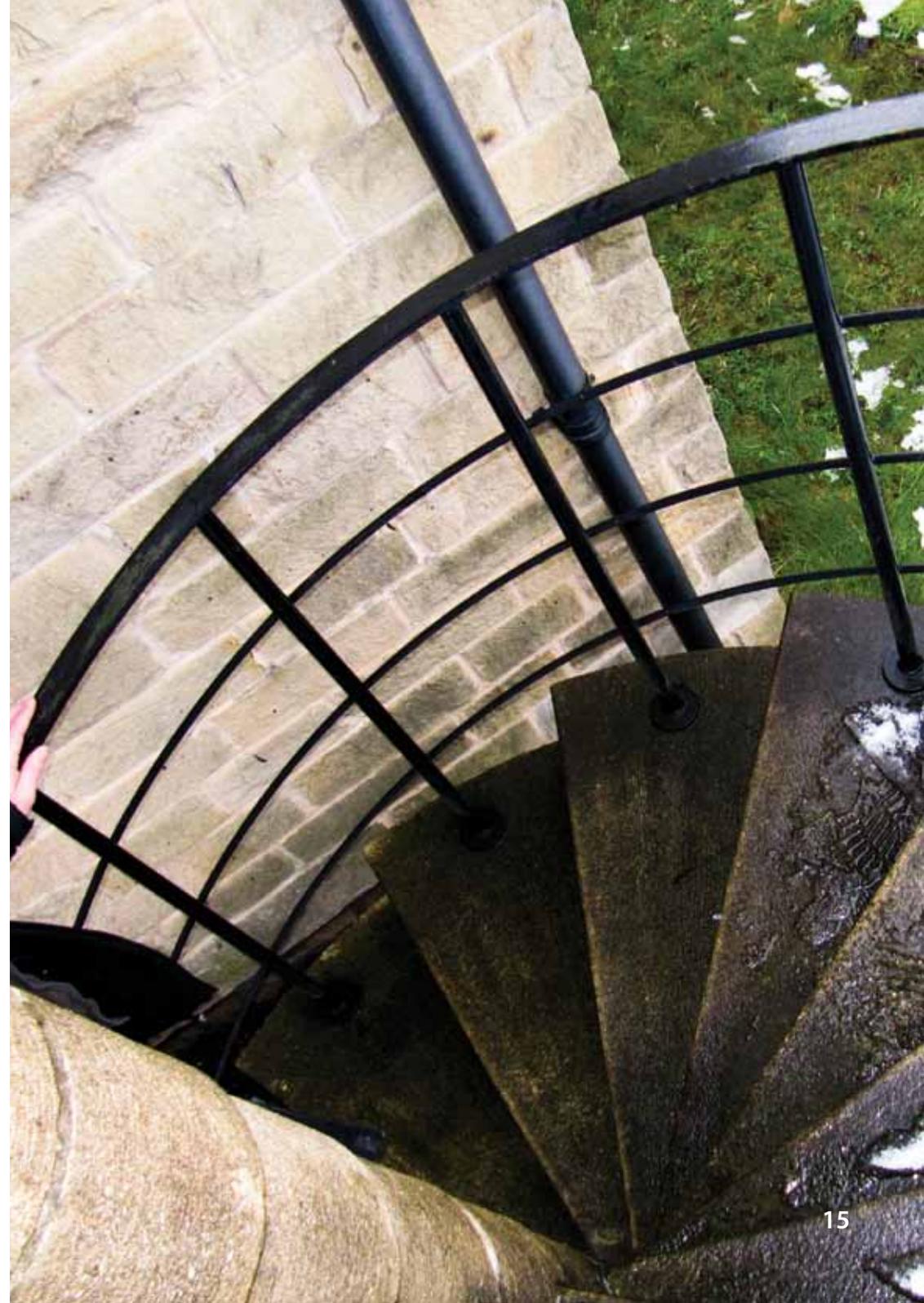


3rd Prize

Shibden Valley

As the shadows of the night embrace me
And my fire begins to fade
I hear their taunts within the wind
I'm reminded of their coldness as the rain begins to fall
But as I lie amongst the trees I look up to see the stars
And I pray they guide me to a better existence.

Adam Broadbent



Homeless

Feeling the day go by sleeping on a lonely street
Waking up to a dirty pavement

Feeling my clothes smell and waking up to the sunshine of a lonely street

Many days I have wondered how to feed my hunger for a peaceful bed
of my own

Chasing those dreams where I could sit at a coffee table having a
decent coffee

A hunger for a family life of my own in the streets

They say dogs bark in a lonely dark passageway
but that is my homelessness

The streets alone are barking to dream of a home of my own

And time keeps ticking of my loneliness

Just a heart's cries

Daniel Connell



Another Life

I used to have another life,
A job a cat a house a wife,
17 years of living the dream,
Not all smooth sailing,
You know what I mean.
The mountains and valleys,
They come and they go,
The pressures of work and kids,
As they grow.
Living on credit and struggling for cash,
Then it all happened,
The credit crunch, crash.
Now on hard times and God what a struggle.

No more living in my own little bubble.
A few wrong decisions and silly mistakes,
As we try to survive, whatever it takes.
The drink and drugs they play a part,
As I was now watching my life fall apart.
Escape and distraction,
To bury my head,
But then look what happens, just look where it led.
Now I am homeless,
With no wife, kids or bed.
Don't look down at the homeless you see,
It can happen to you,
Like it happened to me!

Gary Staniforth

Blenheim

So many reasons for homelessness.
Drugs. Alcohol. Domestic violence. Sometimes even loneliness.
Maybe circumstances beyond anyone's control,
Lives thrown into total turmoil.

No friends or family, where do you turn?
Finding housing advice, bidding on houses you soon learn.
Number two on the list for two houses,
Rejected and no reply, not like you're after penthouses.

Offer you a hostel but you'd rather not,
Heard bad news and events about a lot,
Mainly drugs and prostitution, what more can you say,
No thank you, I'll keep my kids away.

While in the office a young lass stopped me and said,
The Blenheim Project, in Manningham but a roof over your head.
Crèche for the children so you have time to de-stress,
Resettled, me and mine, I'd say it's the best.

I gave them a ring, a family room was free.
Swallowed my pride and asked them to help me.
Childcare was amazing, also support from the staff,
Rebuilt our confidence, nice to see my children laugh.

Few weeks later we was offered a flat,
Resettlement worker understood why I didn't accept that.
Emotional support after feeling quite low,
Realised I wasn't quite alone.

Eventually we got the house we deserve and need,
A bit of support and patience to succeed.
Referred to Floating Support when you leave,
For two years or more if you need.

Every Tuesday, ex-residents day,
Use the washer, the phone and kids under four go to crèche to play.
It's been five years since I left,
I still say their support is the best.

Unforeseen circumstances I've had to return,
Many lessons have been learnt.
You don't have to live alone and in despair,
There are people who care and always there!!

Donna White



Me A Homeless Person

In one singular moment my world fell apart,
As my footsteps trod a well familiar path,
All that I knew and loved were lost,
As the empty streets became my new home,
My eyes looked heavenward to see the grey sky,
This was my life my way now,
It was a moment of great transition,
From one state to the next,
I was homeless.

From comfort and warmth,
Then coldness and desire now was my lot,
I instantly became invisible to eyes,
I was no-one, a nobody unseen,
For me it was harsh reality,
The end of all my dreams.

For on this night would I sleep?
Would I feel fear in my soul?
As the coldness of darkness would creep,
To fill me with fears and doubts,
Then the cold night air would chill me to the bone.

As the illusion of sleep would ensue,
Then I would feel hunger and warmth,
As I wrapped the only thing I could have around me,
This is what my life would be now,
As I cannot contemplate nothing more than food,
And shelter that is a luxury I can ill maintain.

For I am no longer of the world,
No I am just as you say a homeless person,
A forgotten member, that was a part of society once,
But now my voice has been lost.

Into the streets where many voices are still,
And many more will follow,
And in the end this is where we call home,
This is our final resting place,
Of being a homeless person living on the streets,
Of being me.

Heather J. Carrington



Voice Of The Night

As I sit here tonight
I look up at the moon so yellow and bright
I'm all alone with just the cold as a friend
Why can't God just show me the end?
I imagine a fire in a warm cosy house
But am soon interrupted by a scuttling mouse
"Why can't I have a family to love?" I ask the heavens above.
The town clock gives a steady tick-tock
But the sound interfering is a scavenger fox
So I will curl up again
My humble young friend
And to my bottle of cider I shall tend.

Sarah McTasney



Moving On

Fourteen months ago my life was such a drag
Everything I owned fit in a carrier bag
Homeless, suicidal, alcohol helped me cope
Then Rob from the Elmfield gave me some hope.

He told me of DISC and how they help people like me
I couldn't believe it, this I had to see
I went and met Rachel, she offered me a place
She said she'd be my Key Worker and handle my case.

Within a week I had a roof over my head
A flat fully furnished and a brand new bed
Things should have been perfect, but the drink still had hold
And I'd fall off the wagon quite regularly I'm told.

But my Key Worker was there and she helped me to see
That the only one able to beat the booze was me
So I stopped drinking, decided enough was enough
I won't pretend it was easy, it was really bloody tough!

I'm in a council house now, dry and drink free
It's all down to DISC who are always there for me
It's all furnished nicely and everything I own
It won't fit in that carrier bag now
DISC helped me make a home.

Tony Kemp

Tell Me It's Not That Hard To Find

Terrorised, Confused, Blagged mind
Tell me it's not that hard to find

Hiya again, back on the ball
Am setting off with naff all
Dim Lights, frightened nights equal what?
Yes I'm back on the hot spot with not a lot

But let's see what's going on
Is there a place that I belong?
Is there someone I can call a friend
That will stand with me till the very end

It's like this again
But I found it in the end
Out there
Strength from somewhere

It takes me back,
When I was a little boy
Before my life became destroyed

It was an ultimatum, in the conversation
That said I had to show demonstration
Of me inside and out
Big shout full of doubt

But no one cares, personal blame
Suffering shame
It was a roll of the dice
I was making my own device

I was only four
When I hit the floor
In tears
After twenty years
Here goes
Who knows?

I have treasureable memories of my mum
And how my life begun
But she passed away
Just wish I could see her every day

Robert Davison





Back Again

Back again with my head screwed on
All f***** up but I'm feeling strong
Balled, beaten but no bruises
Well confused

Recent night was shite
Much better than previous night
With no light
Or embarrassing sights

Wow I must be some Guy
No bother don't give a ...
One day we all die
But I am a nice guy deep down

Night falls
I can hear the bats call
Dim lights, muddy paths
Swampy tracks

But there is no bed of roses
Wet bushes, hard to find cushions
Ship Wrecked, not nothing in mind
In my head say that I might as well be dead

Can't believe it's come to this again
It's like being on You've Been Framed

Robert Davison

A Place To Call Home

Abandoned unloved
Where is God above
Scared and alone
I want a place to call home

Innocent and vulnerable
Why isn't there a magic pill?
Cold and alone
I want a place to call home

Went into care
Ending up nowhere
Scared and alone
I want a place to call home

Made to feel I can't do anything right
Life feels like such a fight
Scared and alone
I want a place to call home

Who knows where I'll sleep tonight
Cities at night time are not a delight
Cold and alone
I want a place to call home

People ignore me
Don't want to be like me
Scared and alone
I want a place to call home

Hostels and temporary accommodation
Help me escape this frustration
Cold and alone
I want a place to call home

With help now I've found it
My own place, my own 'tip'
Still scared but not alone
My place I call home

Anonymous



Doing It For Yourself

"I'll do what I want, when I want"

More "what I can when I can"

"I'll do it my way"

"I don't care what you say"

Yet what you said to me was what I needed to hear.

So I walked out.

I went my own way.

I moved out,

Finding places to stay.

Lost my Mum, lost my Dad

Lost everything I had.

Why didn't I listen?

Time went by until I found my feet.

I had direction.

I had help.

I had hope.

She helped me to cope.

I was doing it for myself.

Bethan Thompson

Untitled

Clear blue sky stands above feisty water
splashing against the rocks.

Along the path long tall shadows display
happy content faces.

Their rose petal perfumes travel with
loud deep laughter across the clean air.

On the other side children play in the park
amongst freshly mowed grass.

Packed lunches with round green apples and
fresh baked bread.

The tick tock of the clock changes the
breezy wind into a slow formation
of tasteful snow.

Tracey Duffy



A Lifetime In Darkness

A life without hope,
Focus or vision.
A life without dreams,
Thoughts or ambition.
A life of despair,
Heartache and pain.
A lifetime of anger,
Thunder and rain.
A lifetime of darkness,
& negative clouds,
Suffocating life
With its consuming shrouds.

Gary Staniforth

Let In The Light

A life with direction
Focus & vision,
Chasing my dreams
With wilful ambition,
A life I love
Content & Serene
A life I can breathe,
The light I have seen.
A positive light
That brings vigour & passion
Brand new thoughts
I wear like a fashion.

Gary Staniforth



Do Or Die

I sat and I cried in the centre of town, on that cold New Years Eve,
My head in my hands unable to breath,
I remember that night, my lowest ebb.
I picked myself up, and lifted my head.
No time to be weak, it was time to be strong,
I knew what to do, I knew what was wrong
I needed myself a positive song.
Lie down and die, or stand up and fight,
These were my choices that cold dark night
I chose life, and a new way of thinking.
I won't hide my pain, with the drugs and the drinking.
I have a message, for those that are lost,
Stand up and fight, don't give up the ghost.
I've faced all my fears, and I understand,
Here is my heart and here is my hand!
Here's my heart and here is my hand!

Gary Staniforth

My Garden On A Fine Day

Clean and smelling of silky roses
on a sunny day.
People sing, whistle happily
in a beautiful garden with flowers that smell sweet.
Taste the fresh air,
the clean fresh water
and the feel of clean clothes
when I take them off the washing-line
and touch the silky roses.

Andrea Mulheron

Out On The Streets

Out on the streets
Now that's my home
With alcohol taking away the pain
Looking for some shelter to lean on
Listening to the peaceful rain
Taking away the pain
With tears of joy in the rain
I love sleeping out in the rain
Here comes the thunder
Here comes the lightening
Here comes the rain
Taking away the pain
Who wants to be a millionaire
All I want is the air
We breathe and are born to be free
Ant society anti chemical free
Fun boy three
Born to be free
Born to be me

Karl Johnson



Things Lead To Another

Lager lager pink champagne
Lager lager pink champagne
Hey there little lonely soul
They're chasing the dragon
Be aware of the dragon
It's out for you
It's coming for you
Then you're digging down the Dragon
Then you're spinning you're spinning
Flip your head goes
Then you feel like the last sad dawn
With the empty soul
Drip drop tears are falling
You should listen to the warning
But you're caught in the spider web
With the fear of death death death
Hold on be strong
I know this world is wrong
Up down turn around
Up down turn around
Keep your feet on solid ground
A hypocrite's hypercrite
We are all a set of
F***** hypercrites
Lager lager pink champagne.

Karl Johnson

The Darkest Night

I shall lie down
And let my body rest
Leaving my life of unhappiness
Fearing no more fear
I shall lead you to the
Highest most peaceful deer
But here in the heart of the darkest night
Blood stained pavements
And broken bars
Go with darkest night
I'm looking out of the hotel room window
Screams of trains go flashing by
A junkie's smile passes by
I can see hell inside her eyes
She notices a mysterious compassion
Flowing through some bloke's eyes
Reflection of life flows
Through the night
Tender is the darkest night.

Karl Johnson

Newhall Prison 2009

I never thought it would end like this,
Sat here all alone.
Why do I do such embarrassing things,
Just wish I could come home.

Doors Banging, Keys clanging,
Is this the life I lead?
Locked behind metal doors
I'm gonna take all the help I need.

Drunken fights & reckless nights.
How did I end up here??
Newhall Prison 2009...
All because of crime, drugs & beer!

2010, I'm gonna start again!
A chance, a new clean slate
No more disgrace, a smile on my face
As I walk out the prison gate!

Jodie Conlan

I Love You Mum!

Missions: A Good Nights Sleep

I'm Here, there on a mission to nowhere
A tortured soul somewhere to call home a goal
Tough city streets my dear friend
A concrete man made jungle
Each day a new quest
Then at night amidst the darkness I'll make a nest
As day becomes night then begins my plight
The hidden homeless kept from sight
On a cold bed of concrete I lay my head
Will the reaper come calling it's this I dread
Alone and abandoned in constant pain
Am I cursed is it fair to suffer such shame
To feel such loss will I ever be found
Spare change sir
How kind he gave me a pound
What doesn't kill makes one stronger
Dear lord must I suffer much longer
A house, flat even a room
Would free my spirit from this doom
Tonight in your warm bed spare me a thought
Pray I survive one more day in this hell my souls caught

Ray Thompson

Wandering Nomad Blues

Hidden and forgotten,
away from prying eyes,
a nameless soul begotten,
and no-one hears his cries.
Now a social outcast,
a wandering nomad ghost,
surplus to requirements,
as he roams from coast to coast.
Just one of the hidden homeless,
in search of a place called home,
somewhere he can rest and
no longer have to roam.
He's hungry now and tired,
and really needs to feed.
So when this wandering nomad,
turns up at your door,
looking lost and lonely,
barely knowing how to read,
listen to his story,
put yourself inside his shoes,
and then you'll understand,
the wandering nomad blues

Anonymous

Homelessness

Homelessness is a mean assessment for people who are living on the street. I think that a lot more could be done for them by every body. It is not fair that they have to suffer in the cold weather that is coming. It should be everybody putting their hands in their pockets and give a bit more would help people who are on the street.

I mean there are no night-shelters in some towns I know of. I think that is a bit sad. How are people to keep clean when there is nowhere for them to go and have a bath or a shower to clean them up? I know it is hard living on the streets. I have been their myself and I found it very hard trying to get something to eat. It is very hard for the homeless people to get any where to sleep at night.

Some down-outs do drink a lot of the time and fights break out as well. Some are very rude to passers-by. Some of them play their tin-whistles to try and earn a bit of extra money. Some people should realise it is not their fault that they're homeless because it could run in the family.

I myself have been homeless since I was 16 years old and I found it very hard indeed trying to get a little money to get a meal or a hot drink inside of me. I was robbed quite a few times when other down-outs knew I had money. They would steal it off me when I was asleep. I told the police I knew who was doing it but trying to prove it was very difficult indeed.

Soup runs are very important to down-outs. It gives them some thing hot to drink and sandwiches as well, and they also do bring clothes sometimes but you have to get the best cloths first. It is nice to have soup rum where you can have a good chat to the people who work there as well.

But when it rains we are put under a cover so we do not get any wetter at the time, but I have not been back to a soup run since because there was a lot of fighting with down-outs and I just walked away from it, I did not want to get involved in any of the brawls at all.

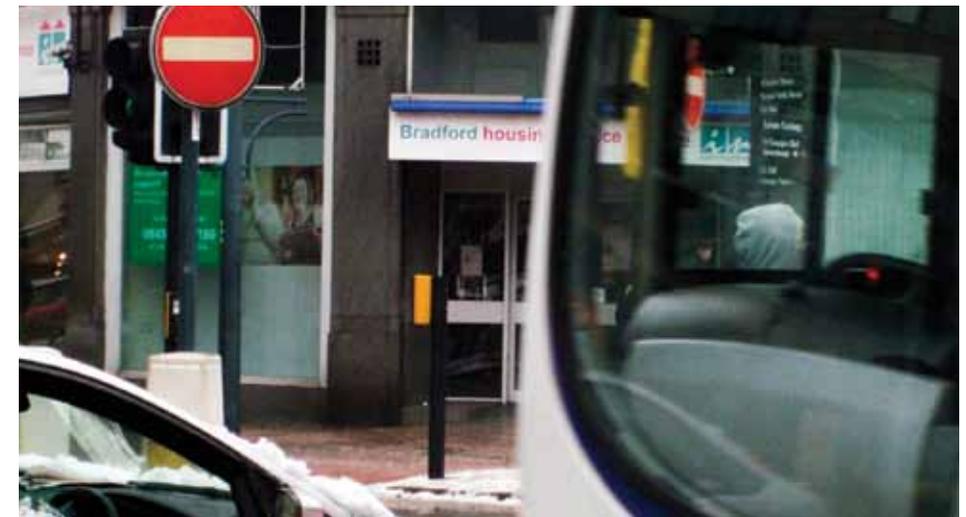
It was sad to hear that one of the men died because of the fight and we can also get blame for not stopping the fight before it started. It is very hard to prove who started the fight first we are not mind readers are we. They are there serving the food and do not want to get involved at all.

I think they should have a special place for down-outs to go during the day time so there are no more fights and no more deaths as well. It would be better if they had something to occupy their needs and to help them to fill in forms and do some reading as well.

It is very hard for down-outs if they cannot read or write so when people give them their letters in the post don't you think it would be a good idea to read the letter for them?

It is very sad when somebody dies that you don't know but you go to the funeral as arranged. It was a sad moment when the coffin was brought from the back of the hearse.

Caroline Prosser



Alone

Mike didn't like being homeless, his family had thrown him out due to his bad temper, drinking and finally stealing. He really found it hard to adjust to living rough, he'd asked the neighbours for help, all turned him down. He was sat on a park bench, he'd not eaten for three days, hadn't had any money for weeks, having had it stopped to repay the money stolen weeks before. Now he was watching the people walking and cycling. He used to do that but things had gone from bad to worse since earlier in the year, when all his problems had started. Now he was about to spend another cold night in the town centre, things were quiet around there at this time but soon the Christmas season would be starting. Things were in the shops already but that evening it had started to rain, that was all he needed. He could see others in the same situation as he was now, sheltering in a cardboard box wasn't his idea of home but it had to do.

The next day he'd found a pound coin, he went to the chip shop at lunchtime, got a small portion of chips with scraps for a pound, the first meal in almost 4 days. He'd finished them and put the empty wrapper in the waste bin ...a long time before the next meal, I can't use the shelter, a pound a night, nothing left, looks like another night on the street again. Still he'd brought it all on himself. He couldn't ask any of his relatives for help, he'd tried but to no ...he had to make it out on his own. He was sat on the bench in the town centre, the people were just beginning to do their Christmas shopping, walking past him not taking any notice of him, or any of the others, some sat on the market hall steps, moving to let the shoppers in. Now it seemed like no-one cared for any of the homeless people in the town, nothing seemed to make them change their minds either later that day.

No-one was about except the street cleaners and Mike had got up and was walking towards the market hall steps. 10 minutes later he was sat inside the market hall, they didn't mind him using the empty stall to spend the night in, the following morning he woke up after tidying

himself up he walked towards the park, to find it closed for the winter. He walked over to the library and went inside and up to the reference section, he started to read all about different things, by 4:00 he left and at 7:30 that evening he'd found an old entrance to the park. He uncovered the weeds and twigs and opened it, he went in and closed it behind him, now he had a place to stay for a while. He went inside, sat on the floor on his own, felt so down, couldn't get on with any of the others like him, homeless, couldn't understand, still going home wasn't the answer, not after what he'd done. The next day he was thrown out of the park and told not to come back again. He wasn't able to find anywhere to live and to cap it all it had started to rain, he ran into the bus shelter at last but it was only a temporary measure, by 4:00 he was also told to leave, at last it had stopped raining, he walked over to a bench, dried it a bit then sat down.

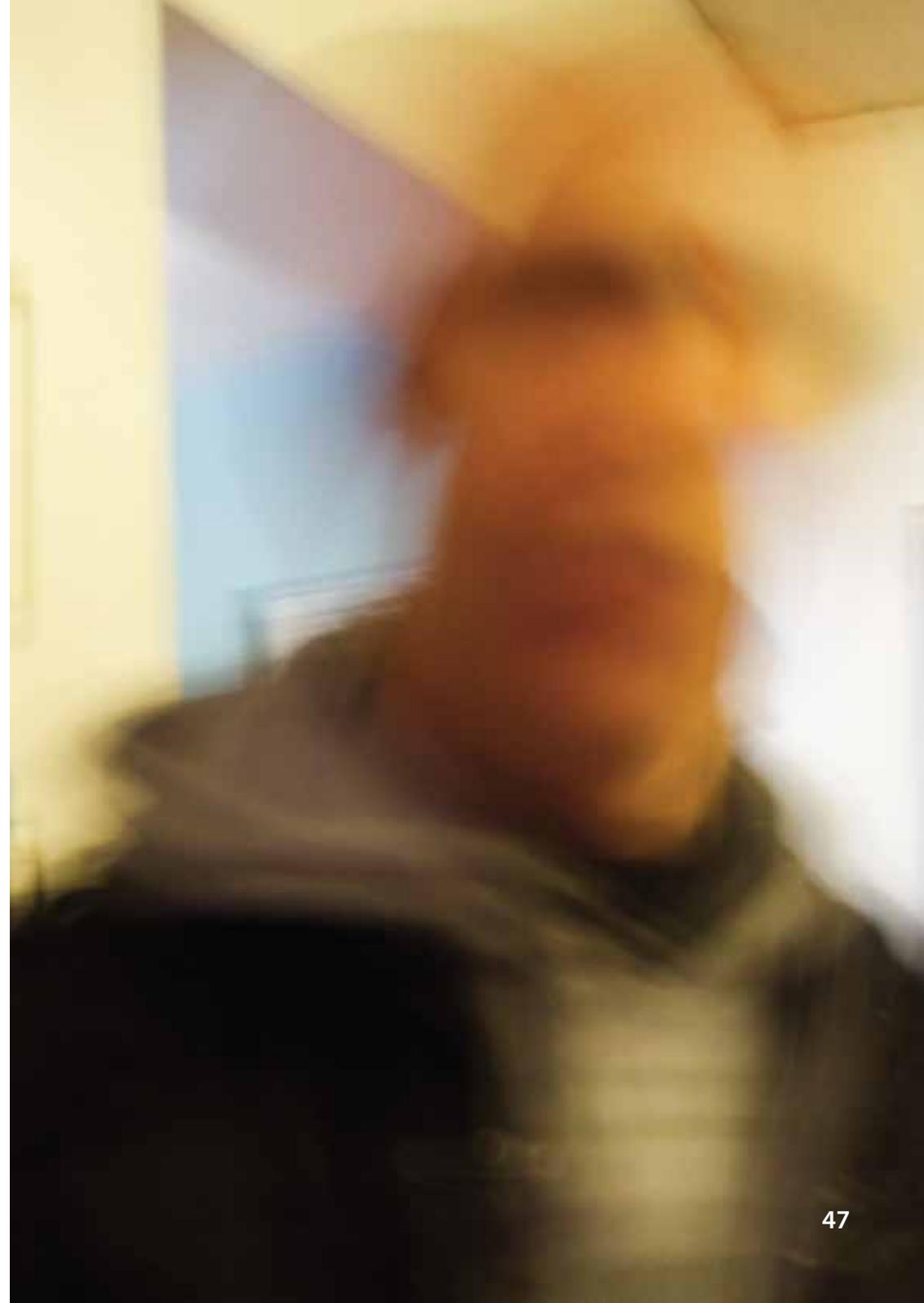
It's hopeless, I can't keep on like this he looked down picked up an old umbrella, he could see it was full of holes, he put it back then picked up a wallet, looked in it, empty, he threw it in the waste bin. All his week had been good but now it had all gone bad, this was the last straw, he just knew it had to change but couldn't apologise to his family, he looked across and saw his sister in the green grocers. I should but wont, he stayed put but his sister had seen him and walked over "Mike don't send me away", I wont sis but I cant take the blame for being a thief when I am not, "I know your hungry", yes, come on, they walked over to the café there. Sausage and chips and beans please, cup of tea just tea, 20 minutes later... thanks. By 5:00 he'd left the café. His sister had given him a fiver, that meal was £3, still I'm full until the next time.

He walked back over to the bench, he sat down. Couldn't go to the shelter, it was full at this time of the year, and so the five too many homeless people like Mike were still out on the streets and in bus shelters, it was the worse night on record. Pity I can't go to the hostel,

but unless you've got a clean record they won't let you in, me not ever. He got up and walked towards the pavement and continued on his way, he felt so miserable, couldn't stay around here, anyways, it just seemed that way.

He looked up and saw an empty house, he looked through the windows it was empty, he went behind the house and found it locked, he left and found an empty cottage, he climbed through the window, looked around, closed the window, sat on the floor. He could hear the rain. This is the driest part of the house; anyway it's a roof over my head to say the least.

Miss C. Brough



Rap 1

I left home when I was 15 years young
Drinking and taking drugs thought I was the big one
I'm homeless now got ma self in trouble I'll tell you how
Dint get on with the step mum she's a stupid cow
So I start o think what I'm gunna do now
What where yet when and how
Get a job get a life have kids get a wife
Looking forward to the future no more strife!!!!

Rap 2

Society differs all over our nation
What will come of the next generation
There's those with knives that cause us scars
And the academic type getting A Stars
In human dreams we think of world peace
But will the violence we see ever come to a cease
If only we could change what's already been done
We would influence what people become
Society can come to seem strange
But there's room for us all too some way change
People say that it's a free country
Opening doors to every refugee
England as an island holds so many cultures
Scavenging around like little flocks of vultures
So we need to tell our next generation
How to save our world our nation

Rap 3

I live in Bradford it's a mixed race city
Living here can be a bit shitty
Now lets get down to the nitty gritty
Cause the next thing I did really wasn't very witty
I bought ma sen a gun one day
Ma bruv found out he say throw it away
I knew what I was doing was wrong
That's why I'm writing this song
Now's the time to sort myself out
Get off the beer yeah, stop being a lout
I'm sure the end is near
Pick ma self up and get a career



Rap 4

Down where I live kids all seem to be smack rats
Sitting in their rooms listening to black raps
Politicians don't care they're a bunch of fat cats
Old folks down the pub with their dogs and their flat caps
No point in looking down its not all doom and gloom
Sitting all alone in a dim dark room
We can all make it better if we work a little harder
Then we can all look forward to a Bentley not a Lada

Rap 5

Back to the times when I was at school
Messing around always acting a fool
Alone in my lessons no-one to turn to
At the end of the day go home feeling blue
Try to understand what this life's all about
Just need a bit of time to figure it out
Loads of thoughts running loose around my head
Running wild while I'm laying in my bed
Finally I get myself to sleep
Start to dream about the girls I could meet
Wake up in the morning feeling fresh
To find another day's challenging tests
Battling on got to face the day
Living my life in my very own way
Taking things for granted and wanting more
Thinking my life can be a bit of a bore



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