

# Transcript for

## Love, Liverpool: an A-Z of Hope - Letter 6:

### Liverpool Family

---

This audio recording features the voices of eight people. **Roy**, who reads their own work, commissioned by the Everyman & Playhouse theatres. Then **Paul McDermott**, **Kay Nicholson**, **Geoffrey Harvey**, **Tommy Dewhurst**, **Tony Gallagher** and **Bernadette Power** who read their own public submissions. We end with a message of support from actor **Darci Shaw**:

---

- our first story begins -

**Roy:** Dynamite and Feathers.

Here, life's not a preparation for death. Nor is it about a dig thrown at a wake or a selfie taken at a funeral. We're only just figuring out that our relationship with the place we grew up, has set the tone for every other relationship we'll ever have. Meet me outside Threshers, at the top of Kearsley Street. That girl is coming. The one who learned Indian head massage at The Rotunda. Her Da knew your Da. They had a straightener In The Halfway House. It was about whether Luther Vandross was better than Paul Weller. Style Council era. No one was hurt, more entertained.

There's your mates sister departing Kellys Wines. She's clutching a bottle of rose and a heavy sense of cataclysm. Her neighbour has put his Union Jack flag up. The flag pole will get snapped next time Liverpool are at home, when those lads from The Easby go for a pint in the St Hilda. The Hilda once used the phrase 'A refreshing alternative to grim reality' as a slogan to entice people in. We like a slogan round here. The Iron Lung sold us their dream with a 'First Class Ale At Third World Prices' banner.

Someone whistles you from Wetherspoons doorway. \*That whistle\* It was Frosts prior to a pub. Your kid got pushed round there in a pram, as Wayne Clarke lobbed John Lukic and practically clinched Evertons second title in three years. Pretend ghosts prowl the pavements of L4. But these are ghosts with the voices of 1980s radio commentators and the sartorial elegance of your 23 year old Ma who starts all her Friday nights out off in The Royal Oak. Here, she discovered that the most basic form of human absurdity is failing to remember what you originally set out to achieve.

Did you get your school trabs from Bernie Shields? Black reebok classic. Ever had your bommy wood robbed by The Deli Mob? Fell asleep standing up in The Elm Tree? Why haven't you ever traipsed down the Barlows Lane garage at 03:24 am for two scotch eggs and a jar of marmite, when you've only come down for a tube of pringles. Sour cream n chive? The returning smell of the empty streets is spellbindingly resonant, the last remnants of sanity are fascinatingly unbalanced...yet the only valuable truth is Home.

Stanley Road has a very particular life rhythm. It's a blatant force, firing it's way between The Gordon and The Rydal. Boxing at The Rydal taught me that charm is more valuable than beauty. After observing every afternoon feign to get measured out in discarded Mcdonalds spoons, it was decided that there are no lines to read inbetween. There are over there... but not here. Here is where we are.

Here's where I stopped looking. At the Junction of Lambeth and Wezzy Rd. Before inspirational quotes ever existed, we found out that happiness is just a by product of authenticity. Sitting off at The Kwicky car park, adorned in garishly coloured Lacoste tracksuits, meant we were well armoured with the worlds rewards. Sipping from cans that had us drifting off into realms that our future selves may not fully appreciate. No one wants to be a meff forever, do they?

There's that fella from The Brick. He asks if you're still into 'that indie music' because you once put The Farm on The Netley Jukebox. His reality is an illusion that we can agree to agree on. Walking towards the station, I can hear the soundtrack of a bittersweet western that nobody has ever seen. We are top of the pops and the song remains the same. Our mess, with age, becomes our message. You can unwittingly love or begrudgingly hate. Just know that the most personal is also universal. I read it in the Scottie Press. There will be no stay behind. Instead, we leave ahead...armed with the confidence of innocence.

The stories this place tells, are only good if you're listening at the right moment.

- end of story -

- a new story starts -

**Paul McDermott:** Nobody seems to know where the folding tables lived between street parties where I was growing up in Old Swan.

They appeared at regular intervals. Half the time, us kids didn't even know why we were having a party. We just enjoyed them. It might have been Mrs ---- in number 27 had bought a new hat.

That was all the excuse that was needed. My nan's regular contribution would be to bat her eyelids at the greengrocer on Saturday afternoons, buy all the fades he couldn't sell. They didn't open on Sundays in them days. These became fruit pies for the whole of Ulster road. Someone's piano had been maneuvered out onto the pavement and the party started. And it lasted until there was nothing left to eat or drink or until sunset, whichever came first.

- end of story -

- a new story starts -

**Kay Nicholson:** By Me Nans. The streets of Norris Green were much more like their name then, trees and small fields of grass with the bars round the edges courtesy of the council, if you practiced, you could flip over them.

--- crescent, just off Lewisham Drive by me nans. Full of people who had lived a thousand stories. The man in the end house, for what he lacked in teeth, made up for in generosity in the nature of milky buttons, which he would give to me every time I passed. The lady across the road whose granddaughter plays with me.

We never ventured into each other's houses because what did we need inside?  
When we have created schools, houses, and stages outside in the road, by me nans.

We would walk up to --- Avenue, alongside my granddad gorging at his friends who would say hi and fill my nostrils with the smell of stale smoke. The walk to the chippy seemed to take hours. My granddad would let me eat chips on the way home. The newspaperman sold penny sweets and fizzy dummies. My granddad never took his change. I will go dancing in the church hall. I'd run back in my dance shoes. My nan would shout because I'd scuff the soles, by me nans.

The story I told about my first kiss with a boy, noone had heard of, because of course he lived by me nans.

The crescent got knocked down over a decade ago. New houses, new families, kids playing on iPads and Apple watches rather than make-shift football pitches and goals made from jumpers. The Crescent is now a road and the patches of grass built upon the streets are still full, but with different faces, by me nans.

- end of story -

- a new story starts -

**Geoffrey Harvey:** The lost gesture. This is Geoff Harvey.

I was born in 1948 and lived until 21 in Normandale Road – one of the streets in a triangle of housing bounded by Utting Avenue, Townsend Avenue, and Queens Drive.

When you walked to Broadway Shops, across the road from that triangle, at the junction of Broad Lane and Townsend Avenue, if you looked up, there was a large V visible in the tiles of the roof of a house.

My Mum explained that when a stray bomb blew up the “Doctors House” on our side of that junction during the air raids of 1941, the roof of that house had been damaged. When the roof was repaired some of the roof tiles were installed reversed so that the suede effect produced an image of a large V. To me it appeared typically Liverpudlian at no cost, except thought, imagination, intelligence, and humour, to have created a V [for Victory?] sign pointing at the sky for any passing aeroplane to see.

When my son went to Liverpool University, in 2002, I drove him around the area stopping to show him “our house” and the V. It was less easy to see as the tiles were dirty but it was still visible. I said to him that someone should clean the tiles to restore the monument to its original visibility.

When the *Love Liverpool* project was announced I thought that this V sign would be of interest. I looked on Google Earth and was disappointed to find that the roof of that house had been retiled and the V had disappeared – a small but significant loss to Liverpool's history – and mine.

- end of story -

- a new story starts -

**Tommy Dewhurst:** My Liverpool Home.

I was born in Lemon Street down by the dock. ---

Took some hard knocks

I didn't steal from --- cause I was only a kid, but there was plenty of families in our street who did. From there up to --- street, we did relocate. A two up two down, a coal fire in the grate, a cold outside toilet. I thought it was nice, but we did have to share it with a family of mice. And that's where I spent all me best childhood days. We used up the hours in hundreds of ways.

We played British bulldog. We played games of war and played football for hours till we forgot the score. It's true what they say. When you start looking back, you don't recall all the things that you lacked.

You just hear the laughter. You see the sun. You don't recall hardship. You just recall fun.

In my Liverpool home, in my Liverpool home, we spoke with an accent. We thought it was cool. We all went to work and we all went to school. And if somebody mugged ye, well, that used to be good. I can never go back there, but I wish that could

- end of story -

- a new story starts -

**Tony Gallagher:** Champion. A poem by Anthony Gallagher.

Red brick slum, hive of numbers, classes, forms, elders, youngers, word smith's number crunches, screamers, shouters, drawers, painters, inners, outers, bringers, takers, drinkers, smokers, dissectors, objectors, dancers, jokers. Metal workers, wood workers, feeders, leaders, organisers, tuck shop buyers, runners, bleeders. Kopites, gob shites, townies, Woolies, blue noses, Annie roaders, wankers, bullies.

Bishop, Hall and Hanson, ---, O'Hanlon, O'Shea, Oakley, Naylor, Hampson, Rigby, Graham, Turner. Kuzak, Jensen, Morris, Nicholson, liversidge, Williams. Here, sir. Name boy

Me sir, you sir. --- Poly brown sexual exciter, Stephen Prendergast, playground fighter --- custard prunes, and spotted stigma. A hive of lifelong learning, which Champion Boy's School, on Salisbury and Shore streets, Everton, L3, Liverpool.

- end of story -

- a new story starts -

**Bernadette Power:** The ragged 'rec' – access gained over a low stone wall, its railings having been taken years ago for the war effort. Paths criss-crossed the scruffy grass and led to a shelter in the middle of the park, occupied by old people during the day sheltering from sun or wind or rain, but in the dark, seductive night, courting couples hid from prying eyes and made babies.

Swings where gaggles of girls screeched with glee, and sometimes fear, and lumbering lads loitered before succumbing to the better offer of a game of football, flinging coats on the floor for goalposts and releasing pent up testosterone in their passion for a game they understood – not like girls, who were a mystery.

We ran in gangs playing games with rules made up as we went along, the main rules usually being that the lads chased the girls and we all screamed as much as possible, exhausting the patience of neighbours who would dash out and tell us to “bloody pipe down”.... We didn’t care, and we didn’t pipe down.... Making noise was the whole point wasn’t it!

Hogarth, Langtry, Suffield and Rumney – the four roads that made up my boundaries and beyond which I couldn’t stray, except for visits to the local shop where I received a weekly treat of two ounces of Jelly Babies, served in a white, cone shaped paper bag, and which had to last me at least two days. With older brothers around, they didn’t last long.

One best friend from the next road, an only child with young parents and solid Yorkshire grandparents who doted on her. We were an odd coupling, she with her lovely brown, curling hair and clean clothes every day, me with ragged plaits and the same dress on day after day. I was allowed piano lessons, like her, but even here she bettered me – serious and concentrated while I stared dreamily out of the window and played by ear, instead of reading the music.

Across the park to school and church – Confession on Saturday night, Mass and Holy Communion on Sunday morning, and God help you if Father Hopkins was saying the last Mass at twelve o’clock.... You weren’t going to get out before half one and with Sunday opening hours at the pub, that didn’t leave much time for a few scoops before the Sunday roast – if you were lucky enough to get one.

I don’t look back through a golden haze to some rosy image of a homely childhood. Life, if not exactly hard, wasn’t really easy either. We didn’t have a lot, but neither did anyone else. So no, I don’t look back through rose coloured glasses, rather I gaze back through a grey mist which reveals a childhood of enough rather than plenty; accepting rather than idyllic; of making do with what we had because we didn’t know there was anything else to get. I was fed, clothed and looked after, but I was smacked for giving cheek. I endured a Catholic upbringing with all the glory and guilt embedded in that religion. I married and left it behind, had children, got divorced and never went back. The place I knew is no longer there and I’m no longer the person who grew up there

- end of story -

**Darci Shaw:** Hi, my name is Darcy Shaw and I'm an actor. I was part of the Liverpool Everyman (& Playhouse Youth theatre, YEP) , since I was 14. And I was actually lucky enough to be a part of the REP Company in 2017. I was in Fiddler on the Roof and I played Shprintze. And that was just the most incredible experience, and I was also part of Romeo and Juliet as well with other YEP members.

And I just wanted to say a big thank you to Matt, Tommo, Gemma and Nick for all the support and help. And I really think without the Everyman I don't think I of would have had half the opportunities I've had to this day. So I really owe a lot to them. And if you are in the position to do so, please consider giving a donation to the theaters that make this project possible, Liverpool Everyman & Playhouse, your donation, however small will help theatres carry on doing what they do best. Entertaining us, inspiring us and helping our communities and young people. You can visit their website at [everymanplayhouse.com](http://everymanplayhouse.com).

Thank you.

—

We hope this transcript was useful. If you do have any feedback we'd more than welcome it. Please email [communications@everymanplayhouse.com](mailto:communications@everymanplayhouse.com).

Thank you.