

everyman&PLAYHOUSE

Transcript for Love, Liverpool: an A-Z of Hope - Letter 2: Home Is Where Your Hope Is

This audio recording features the voices of tean people. **Amina Atiq** who reads her own piece to open the letter. Then we hear **Trev Fleming**, **Ellen Wagstaff** and **Marcella Rick** reading their own public submissions. We are then joined by poet **Roger McGough** for a break in our stories as he shares some poetry and a few recipes with **Hilary**. We return to our public submissions with stories from **Ginni Manning**, **Harry McDonald** and **Jonathan Folb**. We end with a message from actor **Kevin Harvey**.

A Love Letter to Hope Street written and read by Amina Atiq

If you ask me about hope, I would dig my fingers in the sand and write love letters to myself.

But love was only heavy, unwanted and confused. It was a secret between my lips and my heart, and the little girl inside of me had believed there was hope, one day.

But if you asked me about my city, I'll chant *you'll never walk alone*, but no one really understood what the words meant to me.

And I spat my city out of my mouth every time someone mocked, bruised, battered her. And the silent night over the Mersey was the perfect storm, waiting to happen.

I'd come here. Drag my feet after the late one in the library, sit under the crown and find the middle steps and look down to my city's greatest street.

Not because I wanted to, because I shouldn't. It was always here, it was always Hope Street.

Hi. It's me. I didn't think we'd meet again.

I did talk to me'self sometimes sitting on these steps. It was like my salvation when I felt my life was all ripped apart.

I try speak to God when no one was looking.

You did you get the odd jogger who runs up the fucking stairs at midnight, but most days it's lonely. Haunted and quiet.

My best ideas would come to mind, revolution like Jeremy Corbyn on one side and the Egyptian King Mo Salah on the other. We plan out our football game defending ourselves to the nation.

And before us Martin Luther King I Have a Dream. Some days, Muhammad Ali and his poetic boxing fist, wouldn't know which one hurt most the punch or the words.

And still I rise or nothing seems to be floating these days.

And my mother will always be there until your teenage sloppy attitude slams the door behind. Never, never say Thatcher. Wash your mouth with soap child. That's how I was brought up. Never forget.

We'd walk down these steps together. Well, in my imagination, along the carved and moulded streets scape, of Hope Street.

There is light at the end of the street. So don't go running too quick. I will beat my tablah and try to move my hips. No one, no one would care. Anything, anything can happen here, this is Liverpool. This is Hope Street.

Salsa at the Casa. Three lessons and you can tell your ex you dance bachata. Pop your head at the underground bars, find a Groupon, we do love a discount. Grab a few tickets for a night at the Everyman, meet your friends, grab a coffee, poetry, open mic nights and stop apologising.

Just read, just read your poem, we're here, we're here to listen. We're here to listen to you.

A drink at the Philharmonic. I don't drink, so get a fresh orange juice instead. Or the glass of jelly milk tea, whatever rocks your boat. I don't care. We don't care.

Do you get lost and guide a tourist. The ones that stare at their phones spinning around on the spot. They are looking for Lime Street Station. So exchange socials, their first Scouse, friend for life. Everyone needs a Scouse friend, everyone needs one.

Zumba on Monday, embrace the Shakira in you. Everyone has got one. Everyone can dance. Well, they think they can.

Men in suits and weird looking briefcases. You wonder what's in it so you ask. Ey mate, what's in your briefcase? And he'll probably tell you what's in it.

Range Rovers. Along the road with Qatari car number plates who can afford endless parking tickets. I'm still trying to figure that one.

Student accommodation's everywhere. I mean I close me eyes for a second and they open them. Then we just blame our Joe. We blame our Joe for everything.

And we're nearly there. We're nearly there. Travelled to the top of the cathedral tower to see your city and beyond and take it in, take it all in because no one, no one wants to climb the fucking stairs again. I'm out of breath.

So you reach the end, to Toxteth. It's follow the yellow brick street kind of musical without tapping your feet together because you've reached home.

You are home. Farewell to Hope Street. I hope we meet very very soon.

-end-

-A new story begins

The Night it All Began by Trev Fleming

Hope Street at the top of the town with the cathedral on each end, that's where it began.

The epicentre, ground zero. A decade and more ago in time but yesterday in our minds and hearts. A raucous road tempered by theatres and symphonies, ghost walks and stags and hens.

Hope Street sings at night as people carouse its length and breadth and sometimes its middle, as the taxis line-up and blare into the ether.

It was the Casa where two groups of friends meet. Like two circles of a Venn diagram with overlap enough for tables and chairs to be pushed together without complaint. Conversation and beers flowed easily. And laughs were hard by all as banter and badinage are bound in the workers bar.

From there they left. The two tribes. Towards the underground bastion at the end of the street, the cellar with three rooms of magic in each. The bistro. The subterranean haunt of actors, singers, musicians, playwrights, and every other flavour of charlatan. Across a table and a half and spilling over to the other room, the groups twist and dance their way through often jokes and old routines that never die. Comedians and characters fence their wits and drink to their successes, their lost roles, the parts they almost got. Almost arguments bubble up and peacemakers turn the gas down before someone gets hurt.

Closing time. And as the bouncers bray the fall lament their faults, regret. The groups marriage and vote the night shall not defeat them, onwards to further debauchery. For there was another place on the street of hope that harboured those souls seeking to extend their rebels into the wee hours.

Another basement, this time furnished with all manner of strange decorations and weirding words. Fab cafe. If not a hive of scum and villainy, then a place where you could dance until four with a cheap pint in your hand. You stuck to the floor only if you stop moving so you didn't not move much.

Technically it was here where it all began for her and me. She and I. A bar side discussion about bourbon and a dance, to a song two and a half minutes long, a kiss ensued. Shy at first and then a bit more. Nothing X rated you understand, but as a sunflower first pops its head above the soil, tiny and green. So two did this.

A decade later, it blooms bright and tall all because of one night on Hope Street.

-end-

-A new story begins

Hope Street Café by Ellen Wagstaff

Sitting in the evening sun, in a cafe just off Hope Street, I saw him.

Sat to my right. His rough, wrinkled face, weather beaten and worn from the years that it had seen. He took out a bag of tobacco to roll a cigarette.

We sat. Alone, yet somehow together in one another's presence.

There was something about him. His beaten appearance coupled with an air of experience and sophistication.

A wise man. With a dozen or more stories to tell.

"I climbed that once" he said. I assumed the comment was not meant for me. "I'm not a liar", he continued. I glanced again in his direction. He had turned himself to address me. "Sorry?" I replied, to start the conversation afresh in the hope that I might comprehend it better this time round. "I did. Many years ago. Climbed right to the top."

My eyes followed the direction in which his bony finger was pointing, his arm waving enthusiastically in mid-air. He was pointing at the cathedral. I wondered if he'd lost his mind. If he was not wise, but blissfully deluded in his older years.

"Did you really?" I humoured him.

A proud smile began to bring life into his thin, chapped lips. "You bet I did love. And scaled back down it too".

Pride appeared to swell inside him. He lifted his head with a smug sense of achievement and held his shoulders back, bringing life into his bony, fragile chest.

I wondered if it was the truth. I assumed not. But in that moment, I can't say I cared. It was true to him.

"That's amazing. Tell me all about it." I responded. His eyes grew wide and his smile expanded. He took a deep breath in excitement. "Where do I begin...?" he began.

-end-

-A new story begins

The Ghost by Marcella Rick

So my love Liverpool story is from when I used to live on 27 Hope Street. Which is one of the big houses on Hope Street next door to the Casa. And, and I moved in there basically not

knowing anyone. I met two of the lads about two weeks before. And we went for a viewing together at that was basically how we met each other, just going to places. And then they showed us this house and it was a ten bed.

Because it was on Hope Street I was just like, yeah, we're living in here. And it was just absolutely boss. We met some of the people on our first few nights there, we went to like comedy nights together and all of that.

There's some people I never met the entire time. Like I lived with them. Couldn't have told you their names. The only reason I'm sure they existed is because one of them used to make baked goods and leave them in the kitchen. And I used to and eat the baked goods. So that's why, that's why I knew he existed, but that was literally it.

And, and it was just a boss place to live. Like, I used to like, be cooking or whatever, doing something dead normal and then you'd be like, Oh my God, I'm on Hope Street. Which is just the best.

There were so many things to do. You could just go next door and you're in the Casa. And I absolutely loved it.

One time I had a party and it was like, my friends from childhood, my friends from university, my friends from like my first couple of jobs, all in this like big, weird mashup of people and not was just amazing.

And I had the best bedroom as well. It was definitely like former servant quarters or something but it was the only room without a toilet. So I lived in like the basement. No it was the only room with a toilet in the basement and it was sick.

And one time we were walking just around the corner from Hope Street, you know just around the corner from Hope Street, you know just in front of Mackenzie's.

And basically me and my friends saw a ghost, but 100% definitely completely saw a ghost. I believe this. So we were walking along and this man like walks up behind us and he's whistling this tune I've never heard of. Probably from the olden times when he was alive. And basically he was walking and he just got that bit too close. So he, he couldn't quite work out the appropriate level of distance between us, which isn't necessarily unusual for men. But, this was unusual I swear. And so he's walking past us and then we noticed that he was dressed like a chimney sweep. So he had like an old dusty like top hat on, but not like a top hat, top hat, like a mid-length top hat. And then he had like a vest top over his shirt that was like a dirty white kind of thing. And he had a sweep over his shoulder. So he looked like a chimney sweep.

And then he just turns up this corner at the end of like the graveyard bit, and he was only a few feet in front of us but by the time we looked down the corner, when we went past, he wasn't there.

And neither of us mentioned it to each other either, we just kept walking for ages. We kind of looked and was like, thinking in our heads like, that was weird. And then we walk like for like two minutes and then one of us was like, was that dead weird? And then the other one

was like, yeah. And we've kept telling people about it since, and then people kept saying it was probably just someone in costume or whatever.

So we went to the point where we called. She was like, do you have a chimney sweep on your rota? And they don't. So it like. It was a ghost. So that's my, that's my love Liverpool experience seeing ghosts and having parties and eating baked goods on Hope Street.

-end-

-We're joined by Roger Mc Gough

Poet **Roger Mc Gough** shares his picnic.

Hello, Roger McGough here. My picnic parcel for you would include some memories, a few poems recipes, and a wedge of money.

Unfortunately, I couldn't include the latter because of health and safety instructions. Forgive me.

Now let me begin by going back a few years with a Docker's lullaby.

Old men on the edge of sleep, counting docks instead of sheep,

Albert, Alexandra, Bramley Moor, Brocklebank,

Canada, Canning, Clarence, Collingwood,

Gladstone, Garston, Harrington, Herculaneum,

Huskisson, Kings, Langton, Nelson, Old,

Pier Head, Princes, Queens, Salthouse,

Salisbury, Sandon, Stanley, Toxteth, Trafalgar,

Victoria, Wapping, Waterloo, Wellington...

My father worked on the docks all his life and would recite their names as a kind of listening.

And so for me, any journey around the city would include a walk along the Dock Road, starting at the Pier Head. This is the gateway to the Atlantic.

I am the warm hello,

And the sad farewell,

the path to glory and the road to hell.

I am the gull on the wing and the salt in the air.

A night patrol and the Morning Prayer.

I am the port register, read their names with pride,
the thickening fog and the quickening tide.

I am the pool of life, the Mersey sound

The voice of angels, the ghosts of the drowned

I am the gift of the gab and the quiet word,
the Nightwatch and the early bird

I'm the bijou apartment, the sheltered accommodation, the blitz, the wrecking ball, the restoration.

I am the ferry boat, the slaver, the man of war

The keeper of the keys, welcome ashore.

Once the gateway to the Atlantic, I remain the starstruck eternal romantic.

Now when not writing poems, I work in my famous restaurant, the Crazy Cafe, and here are just two recipes from our popular menu.

And the first is for **Toad in the Hole**.

Try and catch your toads first thing in the morning while they're fat and fresh. But if you're not an early riser, you may prefer to use frozen toads or a can of toads in tomato sauce. Simply take a large, white loaf, make a hole in the middle, stuff with mashed toads and bake in a hot oven. This nourishing and tasty dish can be eaten either hot or cold.

And so it was ideal for that special picnic lunch. And of course you want a sweet dessert after that and I'm looking at our wonderful patisserie chef Hilary, who's going to give us her recipe for **cupcakes**.

Hilary's voice: Into a large bowl, pour half a bag of flour, a glass of water and two teaspoons of sugar. Using your hands (remember to wash them first while singing three verses of *Happy Birthday*), make a lovely mush and plonk the mixture on to a cold plate. (Ideally you would use a potter's wheel, but you may not have one in the kitchen). Fashion into the shape of small cups and put into a hot oven to set.

Cupcakes come in very useful when you want to drink tea and eat cake at the same time.

Rogers's voice: Great idea. Thank you very much.

Now my favourite musical is still blood brothers pipe, Willy Russell. When I first saw the Playhouse in 1983, I loved Barbara Dickson singing Marilyn Monroe.

When not watching Gogglebox or Nothing to Declare on tele. I've been drawn to killing Eve, bewitched by Jody Comer's, smiling psycho Villanelle. Now, now the character she plays, it's also the name of a poetic form, the Villanelle, which inspired me to write this for a Liverpool lass and a staunch Evertonian.

Villanelle

An actress who is always in the news
Her name is Villanelle
(And she sticks up for the Blues)

If I had to be exterminated, I would choose
this assassin who casts a spell
An actress who is always in the news

The star of *Killing Eve*, she gets the best reviews
(Oh, Sandra Oh, it must be hell!)
Though it's a game that neither of you lose

A scouser whom no one can accuse
of being a big 'ead. She's nice, you can tell
Otherwise why stick up for the blues?

I tried to write a villanelle
(But like Everton, haven't done too well)
For an actress who is always in the news,
Jodie Comer, and she sticks up for the Blues.

Best Wishes to you all, bonapetito, enjoy the journey, bye.

- end -

- A new story begins

Hope by Ginni Manning

Hope Street. I walk past the theatre towards Mount Pleasant and the spire of the cathedral. There are steps that lead into the space and when I enter, I look up to the multi-coloured light. I walk slowly around the circle of wooden benches there for those who still pray, past the wooden door of the confessional, and wonder if God ever says 'Sorry, I made a mistake.' There is art and beauty, but I am not here to admire the sacred. I arrive at the Children's Chapel. I have been here before. Many times. There is a tree of inscribed small cards, the names of babies lost and mourned. People have found comfort here. I get a pen

out of my bag but put it back. I can't write anything today. Sometimes motherhood ends with vacant arms and a head full of images that had been built from hope. I light five candles and sit while they flicker, watching their temporary existence.

I move away from Liverpool, but come back, like many people do. I now live a short train ride away from town, in a small house that I have slowly changed into a home just for me. Grief for any loss can destroy your life but I have found ways to live. I have found counsel and friendship and purpose within the creativity and people of our city. Sometimes if I am in my kitchen and I am caught by the streaming sun, five bright lights appear reflected on the wall above my head. They are from the five tiny diamonds on the pendant I sometimes wear round my neck. There are names engraved in between the stones. Josephine. Sonny. Erin. Genevieve. Joseph. I have found a way to name my children and I say them aloud. Today I take the necklace off and put it somewhere it can stay, safe and remembered. I leave for Hope Street.

I return to the Everyman, The Writers' Room. I love it here. I read the plays that line its shelves, I write, I meet other writers and sometimes (if I am alone), hidden in the corner, I fall asleep listening to the faint sound of rehearsals through the walls. Just a power nap.

- end -

- A new story begins

Liverpool's Churches by Harry McDonald

Normally if I know my way around somewhere it's because of bookshops, pubs, or theatres. With Liverpool, I think I became familiar with the city too young to pay much attention to any of them.

I think I paid more attention to the churches. There are lots in Liverpool. Big ones, small ones, ones that were bombed during the war others that were demolished and enormous ones that were only finished forty-something years ago.

Before the cathedral was built there was a church on Church Street, opposite Williamson Square. It was demolished in the 1920s. My great grandmother and her siblings were Christened there before they were scattered to parts of the world as varied as the East End of London, Nova Scotia. And Toxteth.

My great grandparents were married at the church of St. Silas in Toxteth on Christmas day, 1915. One of three weddings that day, because it was many people's only day off. That church has gone now too.

My primary school, Church of England, took part in a singing thing at the Catholic cathedral. I'm still not sure if it was just a case of 'the space is free, use it' or a genuine attempt at bringing together Christian denominations. But the Catholic cathedral always felt a bit cold to me, a big round room with nowhere to hide.

I prefer the one at the other end of Hope Street. My Gran took me up to the top of the bell tower once. The steps that take you up the final stretch come straight out of the bell tower itself, you walk single file and you make sure not to trip. The view is worth it though. Up there. You're a long, long way above the city.

Last time I was there, about a year ago, I found a spot round a sandstone corner with a bench, and I pulled out the very gay poetry collection I was reading. I read a few pages in that space. It was about as close to an act of rebellion as I could manage. But I do love that space.

-end-

-A new story begins

Journey to Fazackerley by Jonathan Folb

Thinking back I don't know what made him start talking about Bill Shankly. Some invisible Liverpoolian thought process. I'd just climbed into his taxi at Lime Street and asked for University Hospital Aintree.

"No one calls it that" he said.

He got my story out of me pretty quickly as we drove along the unfamiliar streets too Fazackerley. It was a sunny hopeful afternoon.

It must have been spring or summer. He was moderately interested by the novelty of a South African living in London. Come to see about a job in Liverpool. "But why Liverpool?"

I explained that my girlfriend was a Scouser and all her family lived here. We had a one year old daughter and other on the way.

"God help you" He said, turning to smile at me, or words to that effect.

"Have you ever heard of Bill Shankly?" He asked me out of nowhere.

It didn't matter whether I had, or hadn't.

"There's no one in Liverpool who can't tell you where he was the day Shankly resigned.

"It was like JFK" he continued, "or the moon landing."

Shankly loved Liverpool and Liverpool loved him. He understood Liverpool. Shankly saw that football was more than a game you played for each other as a team, not as individuals he saw

as the city did that. When you played football, you served some higher principle. You don't always realize when your life is at a crossroads. Sometimes it's only clear when you look back.

When my almost adult daughters are loudly, berating me in Scouse, I marvel at the mysterious turns that life takes. And I fill with pride for my adopted city, the city where taxi drivers talk to you about Bill Shankly.

-end of stories

Kevin Harvey

Hiya, my names Kevin Harvey. You might remember me from *Yellowman* at the Everyman back in 2005 or some years later I was in *Tartuffe* at the Playhouse. Recently I was in *Miracle on 34th Street*, just this past Christmas at the Playhouse. I'm speaking to you today to say that if you're in the position to do so, please consider making a donation to the theatres at www.everymanplayhouse.com so they can continue what they do best, inspiring, entertaining and supporting artists, young people and the community. In my opinion a theatre is a really important part of a city's cultural capital and they provide an essential platform for a city's artistic and political voice. The two theatres have done immeasurable things for me, in my life, in my growth as a person, as an artist, as a professional. I can't thank them enough. And if you can, if do help, I can't thank you enough. Thanks so much.

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

Thank you