**7 Alleys**

**Pg1 (24)**

Scary Mary was her name,
‘Knock and nash’ was the game.
The boys would egg each other on,
Ring the doorbell, then they’d run.

Chests bursting, hearts pumping,
Feet pounding, legs jumping,
Over fences, through a ditch,
Running from the scary witch.

Down Preston Road till they reached the drain
Then back to do it all again.
It was just some fun, just a dare,
Just for the kicks, just for the scare;

Just to fill the boring days,
‘Til something different came their way.

Then one day, the boys were skiving, One day when the boys were skiving
When something different was arriving. That something different was arriving

Two black horses pulled a carriage,
A street sign proclaimed “7 Alleys”. A sign on the back read ‘7 Alleys’
Fiddlers played up on the back,
Runners and riders dressed in black.

Horse hooves, bells and violins,

All making an enormous din, Announced its arrival with a din / Suggested something about to begin / An Act of Wanton Wonder about to begin / An Act of Wanton Wonder soon coming

And all the while, some parchments given,

Scrolled and tied with red silk ribbon.

**Pg2 (24)**

As the carriage pulled away,
The boys returned to usual play.
Now Richard’s turn to ring the bell;
He turned to scarper - but he fell!

With twisted ankle, knee all scraped,
He’d barely made it to the gate,
When Scary Mary caught his eye,
And beckoned him to come inside.

Something in her look that day,
Meant he dare not disobey.
She washed and patched him up with care,
And told him that she knew their dare.

“You think you’re brave” she laughed with glee,
“Young man, you’ve not a thing on me!
When I was your age, just a scally,
We used to run the 7 Alleys.

One alley, two alley, three alley, four,
We’d dare ourselves to run one more,

But number seven, no one knew,
It eluded us, as it will you.”

‘But there’s a search on!’. Richard said,

‘I saw the invites, bound in red.’

“Then go!” said Mary, on her feet,

“And bring me tales of who you meet.”

**Pg3 (24)**

He counted down the days from then,

With dreams of alleys opening;

And knock and nash lost some appeal,

Though still up Mary’s path they’d steal.

One night in May, when it was dark,

He dragged his friends up to East Park,

Where lights were strung from tree to tree

And no one knew what they would see.

‘What’s this?’, his mates scoffed, with a groan.

‘We’d have more fun by going home.

‘You really think we’ll find this alley?

They’re baby fairytales, you wally!’

But then, the ground beneath them moves,

Vibrating with the thrum of hooves.

A whinny, bells, the violin;

Smoke and sparks and it begins.

His friends move back, their faces bulge,

But Richard feels excitement surge.

A dare to find the 7th Alley?

He doesn’t hesitate or dally.

And Mary’s voice rings in his ears,

As through the crowds he disappears,

‘Bring me tales from who you meet…’

He shuts his eyes and moves his feet.

**Pg4 (24)**

The morning’s like a world away

And all the boy are out to play.

But Richard? He’s not kicking balls,

Or lobbing tin cans off the wall.

Today he has a place to go -

To Mary’s house, to let her know

About the things he saw last night,

The dreams and memories in flight. firelight / light

‘Come in!’, she says, and steps aside,

But Richard hesitates and smiles.

‘Come OUT!’, he laughs. ‘You really should.

A bit of sun will do you good.’

And so they sit there, face to face,

While Richard tells her of a place,

Alight with stories, flame and smoke.

‘It sounds amazing’, Mary croaks.

He nods. ‘A lady, made of white,

Spinning, twisting in the night.

She scattered pages all around,

Just like this torn-up one I found…’

She takes the page with trembling hands,

Reads it over while he stands.

At last she sits back with a sigh –

‘Is it Bransholme? But when? And why?’

**GNGG**

**Page 1 (24)**

A Gold Nose. A Gold Nose? What does that mean?

Chelsea stood wondering, idly.

Her wares seemed to taunt her, her doorway stood empty,

Yet over the road were people aplenty.

It seemed to be a ceremonial occasion

An assortment of characters; all sorts of persuasions

Bemused yet in awe, shoppers started/wanted to linger

A whisper began; “The Gold Nose of Green Ginger?”

A week ago/since? had been a different matter, One week before was a different matter?

The hubble and bubble of gentle chit-chatter –

Chelsea welcomed her regulars into her shop,

From morning to evening, her feet wouldn’t stop.

Then suddenly – nothing. The shop door stopped swinging.

Worse still, her till had completely stopped ringing.

And everywhere round her shone trays of gold treasure,

Waiting for people to buy at their leisure.

No-one quite knew what this Nose was about;

Some talked of a treasure, others of doubt.

One thing Chelsea knew was she hadn’t a clue Chelsea for certain hadn’t a clue

Who these strange people were, or what they would do.

**Page 2 (24)**

As days turned to weeks her shop dwindled in trade;

The Gold Nose of Green Ginger had interest swayed.

She freely admitted she was starting to hate,

This odd-shaped gold thing found inside an old crate.

And yet, though she didn’t know quite how to say it,

This Gold Nose was starting to pique her vague interest.

It seemed to her that there was more than she reckoned, There was probably more to it than she reckoned

And things were becoming more odd by the second.

The girls who would always fawn over her gold,

Were over there now, obsessed with the Nose.

Not a glance at her shop – Chelsea’s mind boggled -

They were serving up tea and playing with toddlers.

They hung off The Guardian, talked to The Nose

Jammed flutes up their nostrils, wore colourful clothes.

They whispered of wishes made true by nose magic

(which Chelsea discarded as rather dramatic).

One girl that no one had ever heard speak,

Was first to arrive and the last one to leave.

She helped the small children make noses to wear,

And tidied the shop after craft sessions there.

Yes; something unusual had surely occurred,

But no one else Chelsea met seemed to concur.

They were drawn to the Nose Shop like moths to a flame,

Going back over and over again.

**Page 3 (24)**

It got to week four and the stories got dafter,

She tried not to meet them with cynical laughter.

But really, she asked, is there no one I know,

That hasn’t had wishes made true by a Nose?

So far – and this was just all on one day –

She heard of arthritis just going away.

A new job, a pools win, an MOT pass,

A long-lost twin sister appearing at last.

“It honestly wouldn’t surprise me one day

To hear a world leader pop up just to say;

‘We’re announcing world peace, that we’ve hoped for so long,

Because of a wish on a Nose in Bransholme.’”

And yet, though she scoffed, at the back of her mind

Was a creeping suspicion she tried hard to hide.

It started to edge out as every day passed;

And Chelsea had even more questions to ask.

There is more to this life than we oft dare to dream, There is more to this life than we oft dare to dream

But what was the Gold Nose, and what did it mean? But luck from a Nose? How on earth can that be?

You couldn’t deny it brought laughter and fun,

As she watched people dancing and playing their drums.

But as the noise grew, it was like Chelsea shrank;

Could it be nothing more than a cruel prank?

She knew it was nonsense but maybe, just maybe,

This silly old talisman could grant her a baby?

**Page 4 (24)**

Another day passed with no sale still in sight,

And Chelsea was locking her shop up that night,

When curious thoughts stole into her mind,

And impetuously told her to see what she’d find.

She pulled down the shutters, stole straight to The Nose,

Creeping and balancing on her tip-toes.

Her heartbeat drummed louder than anything there,

But Chelsea was far too excited to care.

It wasn’t quite what she expected, close up;

Not quite like a nose, but more like a … cup?

Was this really the thing people revered so much?

She couldn’t see anything magic, as such.

Then suddenly, out of the silence, it came.

She listened more closely and heard it again;

The unmistakable sound of soft breathing,

Making her wonder if she should be leaving.

How long did she stay there? She just couldn’t say.

But Chelsea would always remember that day.

For standing alone, there with The Gold Nose,

The hope in her belly ignited and rose.

She put pencil to paper and took a deep breath,

Her hand scribbling furiously over the desk.

Then posting it paused, her hope now increased; Posting her wish, her hope now increased

Would The Nose hear her pleas and her deep wish unleash…?

**Longhill Burn**

**Page 1 (26)**

Jimmy Johnson feels adrift

Although he can’t quite pinpoint it.

On the surface, all is good,

Kicking ‘round the neighbourhood.

Sundays, Wednesdays, Five a Side,

Teaching kids how not to dive,

Running round the playing fields

Wind-burnt cheeks, knees scuffed and peeled.

He picks up odd jobs now and then,

Helping on the allotments.

(Margaret says he’s a godsend,

while her back is on the mend).

Life ticks on and though it’s busy,

Jimmy knows that something’s missing.

He often dreams of childhood days,

The endless, stress-free summer haze

Of running wild and climbing trees,

Building dens and grass-stained knees.

But then, he always had some friends,

To knock about with on weekends.

And since Year Ten it’s always been

Just him and Laura, love-lorn teens.

He always wanted her to have

As much as possible - that’s love -,

But right now, university

Seems very, very far away.

**Page 2 (24)**

Shouting, whooping, panting, jumping,

Rounders has their small hearts pumping,

Bats and balls strewn all around,

An evening filled with happy sound.

Jimmy watches, hand on chin,

Recalling happy times again,

When suddenly, to their surprise,

Rain starts falling from the skies.

First a spitting, then a pour,

People run for their front doors,

And as they do, then Jimmy spies

A copper tea urn, burning bright.

‘Have you heard?’, a voice chirps up,

behind a steaming tea-filled mug.

‘There’s going to be huge bonfire,

a flaming, crackling Longhill pyre.

They’ve asked if we’ll write down our hopes,

And put them in those envelopes.

Then they’ll burn them well and good,

To send the hopes out in the world.’

Jimmy pauses, thinks it through;

It seems an odd concept, too true,

But they had that beast thing two years since,

So weird things shouldn’t bother him.

**pg3 (24)**

It’s been three days since Laura called,

And Jimmy’s feeling really bored.

He twiddles both his thumbs and sighs,

Wondering where she is tonight.

‘Look here!’, his mother points and says,

‘That massive bonfire that they’ve made!’.

He doesn’t know what he expected,

Or where the hopes are they collected,

But he’s watched these people grafting,

Building, heaving, layering, crafting.

And now the neighbourhood’s alight,

excited, for the Burn tonight.

The light is fading fast and pink,

When Jimmy and his mum go in.

‘Hope you don’t mind!’ A Longhill Host.

‘Can we just ask – what gives you hope?’

Jimmy takes the piece of paper,

Holds it tight, tries to remember,

And somewhere deep within his heart,

He feels tiny flicker start.

He writes of people brought together,

Longhill memories in all weathers,

Then hands it back in heat-edged dark,

To watch the bonfire-lighting start.

**Pg34 (22)**

Jimmy doesn’t check his phone;

He’s transfixed by the heart-shaped hole

Right at the top of the huge pyre,

Now burning brightly, kissed by fire.

Suddenly, some people make

Their way beside him with a crate.

They lift it up – the heart-shape glows –

And place it gently in the hole.

And then he starts to realise

That all their hopes are crammed inside,

And burning them, ‘til black and curled,

Will send them out into the world.

The crowd is whooping, full of cheer,

And songs of Longhill reach his ears.

When the fireworks hiss and crack,

A hand is placed on Jimmy’s back.

He turns. She meets his eyes and smiles,

‘I wanted to come home – surprise!’

He doesn’t know if it’s for good

But something’s lifted in his mood;

Their arms entwined, fire dancing high,

They watch the colours in the sky.

**RRD’s Voice Park**

**Pg 1 (24)**

Agnes could make herself invisible -

Not literally, that would be really quite risible –

But it was a habit she’d come to adopt,

Which ensued her social life floundered and flopped.

It wasn’t because she was rude, we must stress;

No; really it was quite the opposite.

But sometimes she’d make herself just so, so small,

That people who saw her saw nothing at all.

One day, she was lingering on Walton Street,

Perusing the market for new books to read,

When suddenly up popped a man in her path,

A strange apparatus attached to his back.

‘We’re collecting Hull’s voices!’, he said, ‘I beseech!’

‘It won’t take a minute to extract your speech.’

‘I’ve nothing to say,’ she cried. ‘Nothing important.’

‘Nonsense!’ he smiled, (being very supportive)

‘Don’t think about words – they can’t always be found -

Dig deep in your throat and have faith in your sounds.’

Agnes considered just running away,

But something about him made her want to stay.

So feeling much braver, determined to speak,

She leant into the machine and let out a squeak.

‘Perfect,’ he said, ‘Now, please take this card.

As a thank you for being part of Voice Park’.

**Page 2 (24)**

Fast forward some months since that memorable talk,

And Agnes decides to go out for a walk.

She still holds that card deep in her purse,

A reminder of somewhere, a hope to be heard.

She heads out to Pickering Park on the bus,

The sun on the verge of transforming to dusk,

And something, yes something, is thick in the air,

But she doesn’t know what it is, why, when or where.

When strolling the park, book clutched to her chest,

Looking for somewhere deserted to rest,

Suddenly come ghostly ahhhh-sounds and oooohs,

From the direction of the paddling pool.

It’s suddenly like there’s a magnet inside her,

Pulling her in the most noisy direction;

She’s gratified to see that she’s not alone,

As they seek out the source of the cooing and groans.

They follow the flickering lights through the dark,

Could this be it? Is this the ‘Voice Park’?

And there stand two people, in beige, with machines,

Greeting her warmly with ear-to-ear grins.

‘Good evening and welcome! Please play with the sounds!’.

They gesture behind them to things on the ground;

Fantastical sculptures of all different sizes

Spewing out different harmonic surprises.

**Page 3 (24)**

She doesn’t quite notice when dusk turns to night,

Hypnotised by all the noises and lights,

But gradually, watching the others at play,

She plucks up the nerve to hear what they all say.

She’s up on her tiptoes and down on her knees,

Playing around with the sounds that she hears,

Keeping an ear out for one tiny squeak,

Pinched from the market on Walton Street.

She’s so busy tinkering, experimenting,

The Voice Park becomes disorientating;

And then Agnes spots him, the man from before,

Who extracted her voice by the vintage book stall.

‘This is for you’, he says, holding a bottle.

‘This potion will make your voice work at full throttle;

It holds all of Hull’s voice, distilled to it’s roots,

A drop of this would shake the world to it’s boots.’

‘Just uncork the bottle - don’t spill a drop -

And rub a bit all over your vocal chords.

Just use a little, though it’s personal choice -

Unless you desire a huge, booming voice.’

Agnes accepted it with deep respect Agnes accepts it, she could hardly object?

(Doubting its highly inflated effect.)

Leaving the man with no more to discuss,

She exited Voice Park to catch a late bus.

**Page 4 (24)**

It’s now three months later and deep in December –

Where is the Agnes who went unremembered?

And held her head low as she walked down the street,

Watching the pavement pass under her feet?

The Voice Park provided a sharp realization,

The parts of her voice she’d - quite simply - just wasted!

The times that she’d wanted to roar, shout and cheer,

To make idle chit chat with folk in the street.

So, without hesitation, out came the cork –

Discarded in haste with the promise of talk –

She paused for a moment, the vial in her hand,

And rubbed every ounce on her throat as she’d planned.

(Suffice to say, you’ll know this if you’re wise,

You must always listen to Voice Park advice.

If Agnes had, she’d wouldn’t have faced

A voice like a fog-horn for thirty-six days.)

But nevertheless, when her vocal chords quietened,

And her neighbour’s Labrador wasn’t so frightened,

Agnes felt something shift deep down inside,

Her confidence slowly beginning to rise.

Things that she’d always been desperate to say,

Came tumbling out of her mouth from that day,

So – as you can see – she applied for a role

Where talking and listening matter the most.

**Micropolis**

**Pg 1 (24)**

For forty years Dave’s worked at night,

A watchman on the Pumping site,

Running things his usual way

Never changing day-to-day.

He spends his evenings dealing with

Things he shouldn’t on his shift;

Chasing cheeky kids away

From banging on the metal gates.

Letting dogs out when they get

Inside the grounds, those pesky pets

 (that really boils his blood, you see –

Why can’t they be kept on the lead?)

And then, of course, the building rounds,

Making sure it’s safe and sound.

Dave prides himself on his inspections,

Settling only for perfection.

His favourite time, generally,

Is when all’s done, a cup of tea,

He settles down and writes his findings,

Never really that exciting.

But one thing’s been repeated now: But one thing bugging him on the hour:

A flashing light up in the tower.

He keeps reporting and it seems

That no one cares apart from him. / he?

**Pg 2 (28)**

One night, when Dave is making rounds

He hears a sudden crashing sound;

He cannot tell exactly where,

But thinks it comes from high up there.

The tower’s meant to be off-bounds,

But something strange is in that sound –

He pushes through the tight-locked door,

And trips on something on the floor.

Dave quickly flicks on his torchlight,

A tiny lorry lies on its side.

His eyes adjust around the room

As something shifts within the gloom…

Piles of rubbish, ceiling-height,

Fill the room as far as sight.

He scratches at his head, then sees,

Something else which interest piques.

Tiny footprints on the floor,

Leading off into next door!

He rubs his eyes and gingerly

Decides to follow their journey. Decides to follow where they lead?

A tiny lamppost – smaller than,

Half the span of Dave’s huge hand –

Flickers gently as he goes

Through the door to – do you know?

And there - a tiny city’s bustling,

Filled with life and all-encompassing.

It stretches right across the place;

Dave shakes his head and slaps his face.

**Pg3 (24)**

He gives some other things a try –

Nips his arm and rubs his eyes –

But when he opens them again

It carries on and nothing’s changed. / What he sees is just the same?

It must have been an hour or more

Before Dave kneels down on the floor

And feeling brave, presses his face,

Against the tiny wrought-iron gates.

And there he is, the tiny Dave,

Cleaning spiders off the gate.

He notices, as streetlamps shine,

The deep-set groove of his frown lines.

‘Do I always look that cross?’ He wonders,

Now looking in a Baker’s window,

Marveling at fresh-baked bread

No bigger than a matchstick head.

Hours pass, the new day’s dawning,

The freezing station’s tower is warming,

Dave is still there, mesmerised,

By how their world is synchronised.

He notices that every part

Holds all the others at its heart;

They work together, not alone,

And that’s just how their world has grown.

**Pg4 (24)**

He can’t wait to tell the team

So they can witness what he’s seen.

But things don’t go the way he’d hoped –

Before he knows it, he’s provoked

Excitement round the whole city

And EVERYBODY wants to see.

Now he finds himself besieged

By all the horrors that he fears:

Walking, playing, laughing, touching

Dave is stressed, he can’t help fussing;

Then one day, he starts to suss,

The public LOVE Micropolis.

And more than that, they take good care,

Of everything that he has there.

He starts to chat and likes to listen

To stories from the folk that visit -

The tales of tiny footprint sightings

Spread around the place like lightening -

And Dave hears many other tales

That make him realise things must change;

About a cousin he once knew,

Some pals he grew up with in school,

Perhaps, he thinks, the time has come

To be a happier night watchman.

**Land of Green Ginger Unleashed**

**Pg 1 (24)**

Hull is silent, something’s coming,

People feel the cold air thrumming,

It’s almost indescribable;

Like anything is possible.

Crates have started to appear,

Adding to the atmosphere,

Down on pavements, up on roofs,

This something has been on the move.

It builds a stack up on Lowgate

For people to negotiate,

And tucked in doorways, shop windows,

Their numbers seem to grow and grow.

It creeps along the cobbled streets,

And leaves its mark for folk to seek –

‘Land of Green Ginger’; people wonder,

horse hooves sounding out like thunder.

Occasionally, a bell chimes out,

And everybody looks about,

To find the source of these strange sounds,

That seem to shake out of the ground.

Now all is quiet on the square,

With Queen Victoria standing there.

Shoppers swap uneasy glances

At the strange new circumstances.

**Pg2 (24)**

The noises are more often now,

And growing louder by the hour;

A thrumming, boiling, buzzing air,

Builds up in the cold sun’s glare.

And as the afternoon turns late,

People gather by the crates.

No-one can explain quite why

Except they feel it deep inside;

It’s like a magnet, pulling them,

And they keep coming, one by one,

Until a few becomes a lot

Gathered round in various spots.

Suddenly, a shout goes up,

From somewhere near the very front,

‘They’re really going for it now!’

They all surge forward, anyhow.

The noises are so loud and growing,

And the crates have started glowing,

Occasionally, they shake and rock

And people next to them back off.

Whatever’s going on, it seems,

That everyone’s in the same dream,

Where wooden crates just can’t contain,

What lies within their wooden frame.

**Pg3 (24)**

Then all at once the crates burst open,

In a booming, bright explosion,

Flames and sparks go flying high,

Illuminating up the sky.

People start to point and gape,

As what’s inside makes its escape; As things inside make their escape?

Birds twirl free alongside pages,

Confetti lands on upturned faces,

Then, the fanfare, as they come,

Accompanied by beating drums;

Giants, huge as Hull cathedral,

Negotiate the tiny people

Marching all around their feet,

Tiny footprints in the street.

A huge winged horse, as dark as night,

Pulls a carriage filled with light,

Where up inside a fiddler plays,

Accompanying them on their way.

Wolves prance round and bay for blood,

Sizing up the streets for food,

A Gold Nose sniffs its way around,

As people stand and watch, spellbound;

Fire, wonder, magic, song,

Drives the rabbling, manic throng,

**Pg4 (24)**

And then, there comes the strangest thing -

Everybody starts to sing -

They look and see and find each other,

Struck by urgent, sudden wonder.

Grabbing hands and spinning round,

The street’s a blur of joyful sounds,

Laughing, whooping, cheering, twirling,

Round and round they all go whirling,

Older folk with younger ones,

Giddy toddlers with their mums,

Tiny people jig and jive,

In the sun of Gold Nose shine.

Richard, Jimmy, Dave and Mary,

And Agnes dance, and stomp like crazy,

While all around confetti floats,

Covering a Mystic’s boat.

Hand in hand and arm in arm,

Hull’s an effervescent storm

Of life and love, magic and joy,

For everybody to enjoy.

And when, at last, the crowds grow thinner,

Leaving just Land of Green Ginger,

Part of it would stay with them -

Until they meet it once again…