**7 Alleys**

**Pg1 (24)**

Scary Mary was her name,  
‘Knock ‘n’ 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 kicks, just for the scare;

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

Then one day, when they were skiving,   
‘Something different’ was arriving...

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

Horse hooves, bells and violins,

Announced their visit with a din,

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 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 ‘n’ 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 guessed 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 beat of hooves.

A whinny, bells, the violin;

Smoke and sparks and it begins.

The cart comes down to guide them there,

7 Alleys, 7 dares,

Bombs are dropping, sirens wail,

A balloon floats upwards, round and pale.

Billowing sails cut through the night,

A harpy spinning, dressed in white,

And reams of paper fill the air,

As Richard takes the final dare…

**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 past played out in firelight.

‘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, side by side,

While Richard talks and rubs his eyes.

He tells of people, legends, hope:

‘It sounds amazing’, Mary croaks.

He nods. ‘Then pages fluttered free,

I found a few for you to see.

They’re all the same – you see the boar?

I think that’s trying to tell us more.’

She takes the paper, strokes her chin,

Reads the riddle writ within.

‘It might be Bransholme’, she declares,

‘The wild boar used to roam out there.’

**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.

A week ago had been a different matter,

The hubble and bubble of gentle chit-chatter –

Chelsea had endless feet pounding her shop,

From morning to evening, she just didn’t stop.

Then suddenly – nothing. The shop door stopped swinging.

And 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.

It started one Saturday, out in the centre,

Some kind of procession was starting to enter.

She stuck out her head to see trumpets and pleats,

A riot of colour disrupting the streets.

It looked ceremonial; a celebration,

With all kinds of characters of all persuasions,

Bemused, yet in awe, shoppers started to linger,

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

No-one quite knew what this thing was about;

Some talked of a treasure, others of doubt.

Chelsea, for certain, just hadn’t a clue,

About these strange people, 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 really was loathed to admit -

Perhaps it was more than an old counterfeit?

Perhaps it held more than she had first reckoned,

But 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 – was she going crazy? -

They were serving up tea and playing with babies!

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 just pop up to say;

‘We’re pleased to announce that World Peace has been signed’

Because of a lucky Nose with a gold shine.”

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

Was a creeping suspicion she tried hard to hide.

It started to bubble as every day passed;

And Chelsea had even more questions to ask.

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

But luck from a Nose? How on earth can that be?

You couldn’t deny it brought laughter and fun,

She thought as she watched people dancing with 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,

Could this silly talisman 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 entered into her mind,

And urgently whispered of what she might 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.

Was this really it? She let her gaze linger,

Not quite like a nose, but more like…root ginger?

Was this really what 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 barely-there sound of regular breathing.

She rubbed at her eyes in case she was dreaming.

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 folding and posting, her hope now increased…

What did she wish for? Would it be Unleashed…?

**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 to weave and dive,

Running round the playing fields

Wind-burnt cheeks, knees scuffed and peeled.

He picks up odd jobs now and then,

Digs and weeds the allotments,

And Janet says he’s a godsend,

while her poor 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 -

But then, he always had some friends,

To knock about with at weekends.

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,

Of running wild and climbing trees,

Building dens and flying free.

He’s lost deep in his reverie,

When someone asks if he wants tea.

He shakes himself, then quickly spies,

A copper tea urn, burning bright.

‘Have you heard?’, the voice chirps up,

behind a steaming tea-filled mug.

‘They’re getting water, and some wood -,

The Firesmiths, I think they’re called.’

‘They say they’re going to build a fire,

a huge and beautiful Longhill pyre,

And all the wood that they collect,

Will help to make it more perfect.’

Jimmy takes a mug and sips,

The tea’s like nectar on his lips,

He listens to the voices churn,

About the Firesmiths and their Burn.

**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 The Firesmiths 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.

They’re stopped then by a Longhill Host,

Who smiles and asks, ‘What gives you hope?’

Jimmy takes the piece of paper,

Holds it tight, tries to remember,

And somewhere deep within his heart,

He feels a 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 (24)**

The bonfire slowly cracks apart

And Jimmy’s transfixed by the heart,

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 hoist it up to reach the heart,

And drop it where the fire parts.

Jimmy 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!’

In his heart, a fire’s alight,

As Laura’s smile beams through the night.

He doesn’t know if it’s for good

But something’s lifted in his mood.

Their arms entwined, flames 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 risible –

It was a habit she’d come to adopt,

Which ensured 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 wandering round 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 faced the machine and let out a squeak.

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

And thank you for being part of our 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,

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.

Then all of a sudden, to her great surprise,

She feels like her body’s been magnetised;

The pull is insistent, and she’s not alone,

As people converge to seek out the groans.

They follow the flickering lights through the dark,

Could this be the mysterious new ‘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;

What look like plant-pods 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 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 playing and experimenting,

That Voice Park becomes rather 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 tiny drop would shake the world in it’s boots.’

‘Just uncork the bottle and waft it towards

The place in your throat where you have vocal chords.

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

Unless you desire a huge, booming voice.’

Well after that Agnes could hardly object

(Whilst doubting its highly inflated effect),

She leaves in a rush with no more to discuss,

Exiting Voice Park to catch the 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 realisation,

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

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

Instead she sat quiet, not a word from her mouth.

So, without hesitation she popped out 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, and you’ll know 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 next-door’s Labrador wasn’t so frightened,

Agnes felt something shift deep down inside,

Her confidence slowly beginning to rise.

Now she stands tall in her blue uniform,

And being heard by others holds no fear at all.

She helps at events, from museums to concerts,

In fact, you might say, she’s a real extrovert.

**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 bugs him on the hour:

A flashing light up in the tower.

He reports it, though it really seems,

That no one cares apart from him.

**Pg 2 (28) 4 lines too long**

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’s on on its side.

His eyes adjust around the room

As something shifts within the gloom…

Cardboard towers, ceiling-height,

Fill the room as far as sight.

And then he notices something,

Which really gets his blood rushing.

Tiny footprints on the floor,

Leading off into next door!

He rubs his eyes and gingerly,

Decides to follow where they lead.

A tiny lamppost – smaller than,

Half the span of Dave’s huge hand –

Flickers gently as he tracks,

The footprints through the cardboard stacks.

And there - a city’s bustling,

Huge and all-encompassing.

Built from all corners of ours,

From pavements to the toppling towers.

**Pg3 (24)**

Dave nips his arm and rubs his eyes –

gives some other things a try –

But when he opens them again,

What he sees is just the same.

It must be near an hour or more,

Before he 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?”

His head inside a Baker’s shop,

Marveling at fresh-baked bread,

No bigger than a matchstick head.

Hours pass, the new day’s dawning,

The freezing station tower’s warming;

Dave’s 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 cannot 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,

There’s much more that he hears besides,

To finally make him realise;

About a cousin he once knew,

Pals he played with back 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 pulsing

It’s almost indescribable;

Like anything is possible.

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.

Down on pavements, up on roofs,

Magic has been on the move -

Crates have started to appear,

Adding to the atmosphere,

A stack appears up on Lowgate

For people to negotiate,

And tucked in doorways, shop windows,

Their numbers seem to grow and grow.

Marks appear on cobbled streets,

Leaving signs for folk to seek.

‘Land of Green Ginger’; they declare,

As whispers gather in the air.

But all is quiet on the square,

With Queen Victoria standing there.

Shoppers swap uneasy glances

At these strange new circumstances.

**Pg2 (24)**

The noises are more often now,

And growing louder by the hour;

A bubbling, 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.

The thickness in the air is 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.

Suddenly, a shout goes up,

From crates up at the very front:

‘They’re really going for it now!’

The crowd surge forward, anyhow.

**Pg3 (24)**

Then all at once the crates burst open,

In a booming, bright explosion,

Flames and sparks go flying high,

Illuminating the whole sky.

People start to point and gape,

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

Scattered all around their feet,

Tiny footprints in the street,

A huge winged horse, as dark as night,

Pulls a carriage filled with light.

Stags and wolves are running fast,

A woman with a grinning mask,

Giant toadstools, hares leap free,

As red smoke fills the whole city.

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;

Richard, Jimmy, Chelsea, Mary,

Dave and Agnes dance like crazy.

The wolves rear up and bay a tune

Against the shining silver moon.

And all around confetti floats,

Covering a Mystic’s boat.

Hand in hand and arm in arm,

Hull’s an effervescent storm

Of love and wonder, life and joy,

For men and women, girls and boys.

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…