

A Grimsby Poem
by Andrew Leake

I sit on the bench

Guess where?

Because you can't

It's in a secluded place

Somewhere in Grimsby.

The pigeons coo

The people chat

The pubs are opening

There's a real atmosphere here.

All kinds of people on the street,

Greebos, Goths, Chavs,

Elders, Children, Students and

the regeneration of the town centre.

Grimsby isn't everyone's cup of tea

But for me it's home.

A Million Bricks (*Great Grimsby*)
by Maria Garner

Our town doesn't try to be anything it isn't

unlike some with their fancy shopping malls

all designer outlets and endless escalators;

where you need a map

to guide you in

and out.

You won't get lost in Grimsby.

Not for long anyway.

And if you do, we're a friendly lot

we'll help you find what you're looking for.

You never know

you may just find it here.

Our town never makes too much of itself.

It says **this is me take me as I am.**

I'm not hiding anything.

Come up and see me

you might just be surprised.

Our town is not loud.
doesn't blow its own trumpet.
We don't have a Cathedral
and we'll never be a city.
 We're a town with a tower.

The Dock Tower.
Now a monument to bygone days
of brave men who trawled the seas
kept food on the table
in times of peace and in times of war.

To the same brave men, who gave their boats
and many their lives, saving lives
in the dangerous and vital
minesweeping operations
based in our town
during both World Wars.

To stoic men and women
who braced each day
clad in steel capped wooden clogs,
with newspaper stuffed in woollen socks,
on the finger numbing "Pneumonia" jetty.

The Dock Tower. A million bricks
reaching out to welcome us home
and remind us to be proud
of this unpretentious Lincolnshire town,
and not let anyone bring it down.

Just so you know
 the name's **Grimsby** **Great Grimsby**.

ELSIE TANNER KNEW MY NANNA

By Caroline Beeson Spence

Rose was my Great Nanna.

I loved visiting my Nanna, she was unlike any other Nanna or Grandma I knew. My friends' elderly female relatives were gentle and warm.

My nanna Rose gambled on horses, swore and she was forthright. 'Put the kettle on', 'Get a biscuit'. 'Take this to the bookies'. Her mottled shins indicated the weather outside and demonstrated how close she'd been to the electric fire.

I was put to work buying cigarettes, putting the bets on and getting anything else that was needed. Victor Street was not without its challenges. White dog poo punctuated the pavement and broken glass bottles punctuated the hopscotch grids. Elderly adults in pinnies stood outside drinking tea and smoking, passing the time of day, always eager to give a small child a nudge in the right direction with well chosen advice 'the corner shop shuts at 5', 'stop doing that on your bike, you'll kill yourself', 'mind that shit'.

'Where you going?', '**Does your mam know you're out?**', 'I know who your Dad is' – other well used phrases could be heard up and down the street in an effort to keep the kids in line.

Nanna braided nets in her garden and made lots of friends with the girls who moved with the herring. Everyone had a nickname – makes you wince now when you read them – Polish Maria, Scotch Dolly, Trousers Nell, Creamylegs. They were the Dominoes girls and drinking partners.

The Humber Pub, dominoes, drinking and gambling gave Nanna Goddard some relief until Coronation Street started.

Elsie Tanner aka Pat Phoenix was her favourite – her 'Queen'. She was held up with black and white reverence in the days before Ready Rentaset offered the colour television and Nanna would fixate on Pat.

Nanna started writing letters to her 'Queen'. She called herself 'Biddy'.

The letters went back and forth with Nanna talking about her family – Auntie Rosie's garden and local news. On occasion Pat couldn't write but a Granada TV Assistant was despatched to report this and a letter would still be sent with a Granada TV postmark so Biddy would still receive a response. Pat sent nanna photos and reports of holidays in Cornwall and Tony's health, none of us knew then how significant Tony would be to a future Prime Minister.

Nanna would give Pat advice on story lines and Pat would respond to Nanna's suggestions. Did Nanna believe that this was true life being filmed? Fiction or fact, the letters continued. Feedback on the graffiti by Dennis Tanner on the stone lintel at the bottom of the window of Elsie Tanner's Home was negative. Nanna did not want to see the hooligan side of Dennis Tanner (Elsie's son) immortalised in stone forever. Encouragement was given to Elsie with

her on-screen flirtation with Len Fairclough and sympathy was offered when he eventually married Rita Littlewood.

In time Nanna moved from Victor Street to a flat at 2 Belper Court.

In 1976 a Gypsy came to the door of Belper Court. Nanna always fearful of a curse, heeded the message given regarding Pat Phoenix. She was to stop writing to her as it was upsetting Pat.

Nanna duly stopped writing. Pat was confused and didn't know why. Granada TV staff were drafted to try and find out why the letters had stopped and who Bidy actually was. Affection had grown through the correspondence.

Her team contacted the Grimsby Evening Telegraph to try and track down Bidy's identity.

October 13th, 1978 Pat Phoenix was to come to Freeman Street to open Sun Valley Amusements. Coronation Street's popularity was huge and a visit from one of its main stars meant that hundreds of people would be lining the streets and hoping to get a glimpse of such a glamorous star.

Auntie Rosie wanted Nanna to have the opportunity to meet her Queen. After reading about the visit and official opening in the paper, she made contact with the shop and asked if the Manager would be able to encourage Pat to wave at her Mum in her wheelchair, nothing more.

What followed was much more than could ever have been imagined by a loving daughter arranging a surprise for her elderly Mum in her wheelchair and best coat.

The day dawned. Auntie Rosie sprung the surprise trip on her Mum.

'Get your best coat on'. Where are you taking me?' 'That's for me to know'.

From Belper Court to Freeman Street, short steps and the push of a wheelchair to the place where Elsie Tanner would meet my Nanna.

Hundreds of people lined the street (Freeman not Coronation) to get a glimpse of Elsie Tanner. A glamorous TV star coming to Grimsby caused a great stir.

Through the crowded shop, Auntie Rosie pushed Nanna towards her Queen. The wave of excitement was palpable. The people opened up a pathway to Pat for Nanna to say hello. Pat moved forward and held her hand. Auntie Rosie introduced 'Bidy' to Pat. It was their first ever meeting.

At last they were reconnected. The Gypsy curse was broken. True identities were revealed and letters could start again.

The conversation face to face, was something Nanna had yearned for and here it was. To celebrate, Pat wanted to give 'Biddy' a gift. She was eager to celebrate the occasion; it was as important to her as it was to Biddy.

Pat found a 'china' figurine – the biggest and best bingo prize available and presented it to Nanna. She's seen in the Telegraph's report of the event, sat in her wheelchair clutching the precious figurine, in her best coat.

Those were the days when stars replied to every letter they received. No email, insta posts or Facebook, just effort, paper and pen to communicate at a distance.

Was Nanna aka Biddy a special correspondent or just one of many? We'll never know. But what I do know that Elsie Tanner knew my Nanna.

East Marsh Retrospect

by Gordon Wilson

Rattle of coal cart and snorting of horse
and echoing, crackling, laughter of smoke-house women
on Eight-foot Lane.

Banners of tar and fish-tinted smoke
trailing from files of cowed chimneys;
settling of sneaking, curing draft in back-way doors,
on tables, chairs and tongues.

Dusty blue of cobbles clattered by hoof and clog.
Cold blue of sky behind ragged dregs of the storm.
Soft wet midsummer balm rolling around the corners of new streets.
Gleaming grey and lightening red of drying slates and damp walls.

Choir of babies crying, mothers singing
and happy smacks-men home on the tide.

Swell of blue-suits, brylcreem and whiskey,
waves of Old Spice and sweat.

Click-clack of dominoes, spilt notes of barley and hops and fags.
Murmur of voices of work-done filleters and lumpers, ice-men and box-lads
from open doors and windows of The Havelock and Kent Arms.

Blue tinged tail of steam. Throaty rumble and shrill whistle
of trains from the docks and the sharp scent of fish fresh caught,
draining from wagons, watering trackside crosswort and buddleia,

London, Manchester, Birmingham bound.

Let Us Be One

by Gordon Wilson

Put on the bobble hat and scarf your nanna knitted,
That your uncle wore and then passed on to you.
Let's keep the faith of all our mams and dads.
Let's share their hope, renew the trust
Of those who have filled these seats
Or owned their space on terraces of old;
In the Pontoon or the Barretts,
The Findus or the corners or the Main.

Let us be one with all who have gone before,
Who kept the dream alive
for us and those to come.

Let us remember who and what we are
And why we come here.

Let one great voice resound
Let these boys feel that noise - let it spur them on
As we stamp a Town tattoo on these old boards,
Echoing sounds of a century
of voices, hands and feet.

"We're all Town aren't we?"
Let the Harrys be inflated.
"Let the Town come steaming in."

Let us be one in heart
For we are the pulse and life-blood
Of all that's been held dear
For a hundred years and more in this place.

Let us reserve our seats for future glory and joy.
Let us be one together when that time comes again
For us to humble great sides of the day:-
Liverpool, Everton, Spurs and Villa, whoever.

Let us keep faith with the shirt.
Let us stay true to stripes that never fade.
Follow the shirt.

Believe and hope in the future of the shirt.

Let legends be born and remembered.

Let myths endure.

Let history be made.

Let us be one.

Let us be one in remembering those

Who answered their country's call;

Bestall and Betmead, Waters and Scott,

Glover, Lewis and Coyne

And those that gave their lives...

Sid Wheelhouse, Harry Springthorpe, Ralph Thompson.

Let's talk together of Jack and Ginger and Jim;

Of all of the Kevins and Clives;

Of Terry and Tony and Matt,

Harry and Nigel, Jimmy-Mac, Danny and Charlie and George,

Cockers and Fuch, Dizzer and Podge, Omar, Nathan, Jamma and Sean.

Let us be one with those that have travelled the land

To Anfield, Goodison, Wimbledon,

Coventry, Braintree, Old Trafford and Leeds Road,

Donny and Hull and Scunny and Sincil Bank,

Cardiff and Wembley over and over again - again and again.

Again and again and again - Let us be one.

The Bridges of Grimsby Town Centre

by Maria Garner – October 2013

As children we roamed the town
clinging to river banks like feral cats.

Bridges extended our playground
into neighbouring territory,
hid us from invisible enemies,
gave shelter on cold rainy days.

Together we walked into teens,
along terraces, wharfs,
and the West Haven bridges.

They became our special places
where we shared love
and made each other's dreams.

We'd wait at the edge of our world
and watch as Corporation Bridge
raised its sturdy arms welcoming each ship.
Bow to stern, they filled the dock
laden with timber from Norway;
the other end of the earth,
it seemed to us then.

You told me, you would, one day build
an even bigger bridge. Your name
engraved on a polished brass plaque
at each end of the awesome structure.
My dreams were less ambitious,
more attainable, I thought.

They sent you away in heavy boots
and a smart uniform. I read your letters
over and over whilst you
blew up bridges in far away lands.

I still wait for you to come back.
Across the years to hold my hand,
walk with me, into the other life
where bridges are built
not broken.

Grimsby- video performance Nov 2020

Grimsby tumbles through the door, home at last, hangs up his long, draping anorak of flat Lincolnshire land, and there's miles of it bundled up, wrung out, and left to dry as the rain from the North Sea has rolled over once again.

He's getting on now is Grimsby, the sleeves of his *World's Biggest Fishing Port* have mostly unravelled baring the tender arms of a community still strong, fighting, living. Brushing off the dirt and dust, the tabloid smears of "old and grey".

Down the proud Dock Tower bridge of his nose built of brick, from his sight lines of Freeman Street and A46, he watches and urges the unclenching of fists, hands setting straight the gnarl of knuckles, uncurling his rough, ready finger tips.

With scars of slip roads, bones of empty homes, he's come to rely on himself alone. But hardened palms exposed mean a future's there to be read. See, the roots of where he's come from, what he's been, inspire where he's going, and what he'll be.

Now his Humber mouth speaks the promise of opportunities, he sighs an exhale of ageing ways and *back in my days*, as a breath of change takes up its place, filling his lungs and setting his eyes on that widest expanse of open sky.

At his heart, the heart of this town, is **a humming of people uniting, murmuring**. Perhaps, one day, fishing won't be the only time they sing.

Matthew Gray

Talk to me of the tides, of shoppers, bus hoppers and St James' brides
by Carolyn Doyley

