A MODERN Poetic
LIVERPOOL A to Z

POEMS By
Garston Workers’ Educational Association
Creative Writing Group
A is for Another Place by Gerard Langton

The waiting actors with frayed temperaments
The setting is about another place.
Theme as old as time, settling old scores.
What are the essentials of this drama?
Movement without motion, time and tide.
Rhythm without music; whooshing and splashing.
Language without speech; silent moodiness.
Staring without sight; symbolic meaning.
Drama without intent; aesthetic allusions…
Of the men who went to sea in ships.
Parties of migrants hoping to move West.
Units of soldiers Imperially bent.
Groups of chained men, commoditised.

Thought provoking these silent metal men
Cast in the Mersey at the mercy
Of the elements locked in History

As Another Place.

B is for Bessie Braddock by Winnie Heaps

She was larger than life our Battling Bessie
Weighty, Meaty, Concrete, Solid?
Did they break the Mold when they made you?
You learned from the best at your mother’s knee.
Ma Bamber they called her.
‘The best fighting street orator in the country ‘ said
Emily Pankhurst.
She should know.
A firebrand!
Went into battle our Ma Bamber
Foot-slogging, Tramping,
Up and down the Dock Road
To catch the wary women on their wary way to work.
Disenfranchised, Disorganised,
C is for Canal  by David Lymn

The Leeds-Liverpool canal, an old artery of by-gone ages
It’s seen much history and turned many pages
A place of leisure now narrow boats ply their trade.
In bygone days it’s one of the ways people got paid.

D is for Derby Day  by Rodger Moir

For ninety minutes hate each other’s guts
Put your kids up for adoption
You love your wife’s family but
Being wrong side’s no longer an option.

E is for Eleanor Rigby  by Tim Hemmings

You have a gravestone, a hotel and a statue
Only the work of imagination
Yet you are as vivid as many a lonely person
That walks the banks of the wide brown river
To a home with nobody there
F is for Fazakerley by David Forshaw

Yes it does have an e!
Grown from the Middle Ages
As the boring neighbour of West Derby and Aintree.
Flat and straight, connected by a brook,
It sits and waits for some distinctive feature.
Till out of the mists and plain flat fields, benevolence arises.
It stands welcoming the sick, the mentally ill, and
Folds them in its embrace.

The first home of all our children
A home that spans nearly forty years.
Little could it know its personal place
In my heart and memory.
The love it spawned and the life it could give.

Yet, this joy can never last.
Last year it took one of mine away,
Unable to mend the self-inflicted damage, to
Rewind the years of abuse,
To awaken a wasted life.

Yet always you will be a place of pride and love.
Forever my Fazakerley hospital, my formative fulfilling field.

G is for Garston Station by Derek Marsden

Central Station, Brunswick, St Michaels,
Aigburth, Cressington,
Garston Station …
no wait a minute it’s gone!!!
Good riddance, nostalgia pah!
That smelly, cold rusty pile with its feral teenage gangs,
Urine dripping bridge.
It’s flattened now- just a concrete square.
But now look at its successor ….Liverpool South Parkway .
Clean, green, a triumph of steel and glass
The gateway to a wider world beyond Hunts Cross..
Manchester, Colchester, Scarborough, Middlesbrough, Nottingham,
Birmingham woo woo !!
Alight here for John Lenon airport…just imagine where you can go…
Above us only sky ……
Malaga, Marrakesh or even Oslo.
H is for Hope Street Help by Sue Ruben

Homeless on Hope Street,
He sat with his guitar,
And his dog, on a string.
He sang. ‘Help me if you can,
Help me get my feet back on the ground’
And they did.
A few at first, then more.
Young mothers with prams,
Students with hangovers,
Ex-dockers from the Casa,
The brass section of the Phil,
Barristas from coffee shops,
LIPA wannabees,
Masons with rolled up trousers
Priests from both cathedrals,
Actors from the Everyman,
Paddy from the Pen Factory,
The Zen meditation group.
Six passing traffic wardens,
And John Lennon’s ghost.
The whole street filled,
With music, song and smiles.
His polystyrene cup overflowed,
His dog ate biscuits.
He sang.
‘And I do appreciate you being round.’

I is for Irish roots
(or the Life of Brian Boru) by Derek Marsden

What did Ireland ever do for us? You mean apart from the accent?
Well I’ll give you that….
But what about our surnames…. Riley, Lennon, McCartney, O’Grady
Well apart from….
What about the music and all that poetry…..?
Oh and potatoes…….
But what else apart from the accent, surnames, music, poetry, potatoes…..
What about our oneness, our cussedness, our Scouseness-
Always different from the rest of the English pack.
You can taste the chill
And grim defiance in the air
9.15 am perched in small gym skirts
And fat gym knickers
Bare legs
On hard seats
Lacrosse sticks wedged clumsily in front.
Will we break down?
We did once.
When the new bus eventually arrived
It was so late, there was only time to take us back to school. The hearty Miss Hamm was inconsolable all the way back
While we sang Miss Dale’s expecting us for tea
(to the tune of She’ll be coming round the mountain)
About our least-favourite 150 year-old spinster teacher. Irreverent, cheerful.

Mostly though we were tumbled
A reluctant mass onto
Frost-bitten turf.
The rest is a blur of crashing heads and sticks
And wishing to God they’d keep the ball down the other end.

The best days: a forged sick note.
‘It’s a delicate time of the month.’
Sniffing, Miss Hamm hadn’t got time for skivers.
Let them malinger in the cold.
Sneaking into the pavilion, we played tag and smoked our first loosies
Turned on the showers and soaked the teachers’ coats.
It wasn’t me, Miss; blame the Knowsley girls!

****

Time soothes the edges of an old discomfort
And coils smokily round my heartstrings,
As I walk our dogs and watch the mist rise ghost-like on the old playing fields.
K is for KENSINGTON  BY Peter Galvin

Kensington, a street in decline.
The days of Capaldis have gone.
Without ‘Phillips recordings’ (all boarded up)
What would the Beatles have done?

L is for Life  by  David Lymn

The pool of Life is where we live.
Gone are the dusty, sooty streets.
Our humour here cannot be beat.
Resilience through the ages
We’ve wept many tears n’
Celebrated many a homecoming.
A short walk between two cathedrals.
Many hopes and many peoples.
Those who’re born n’ bread n’
Those who came n’ stayed,
Who never left.
Cherished in our spirit, minds n’ hearts.

M is for M62  by Sue Ruben

To travel east
from Liverpool,
across the Pennines
is easy.
Just take the M62
all the way,
although it gets confused
round Manchester,
and becomes the M 60
for some 7 miles.
N is for Northern Line by Emma White

Hunts Cross to Southport
And many loops between
Cutting through the central ring
Over the water exchange
Higher up two more limbs flail
Joined together then parting ways.

O is for the Overhead Railway by Anon

That spanned the seven miles of bustling docks
Looking down on rum, tea, coffee, spices and tobacco,
Unloaded from Gambia, Ghana, Buenos Aires and the Azores.
Taking the weary docker to work and back home,
With an orange he’s pinched for his kids,
And the taste of cardamom on his fingertips.

P is for Paddy’s Wigwam by Sue Ruben

Arising from Lutyen’s crypt
Paddy’s wigwam,
also known as,
The Mersey funnel.
At night it glows.
In sunshine,
colours fill the space.
A place to be.
Q is for Quiggins  by Simon Rice

Q is for Quiggins,
1/2 way down School Lane,
Sometime place of curios
and now never no more the same.

R is for Rushton
(Edward 1756-1814)  by Sue Ruben

As a young man
he sailed the oceans,
made friends with slaves ,
and lost his sight.
Back home he fought
the trade in human misery,
wrote poems, sold books,
and set up a school for the blind .
Now a meaty bistro.

S is for Sudley House  by Derek Marsden

In my Sudley House home…
We marvel at paintings by Gainsborough and Reynolds,
Exceedingly rare.
Meet under a Victorian statue by Benjamin Spence.
And then explore the Brotherhood of Holman Hunt, Burne-Jones, Millais
And Dante Gabriel  Rossetti….
And if you want a Turner….. they've got one to spare
In my Sudley House home.
T is for the Tate Gallery by Tim Hemmings

Take a swim with Damien Hurst’s shark
Dive into Hockey’s sparkling L A swimming pool
Join the dreary throngs on their way to work
under the grey skies of Lowry’s Salford
If you are caught short you can use Marcel’s urinal
Watched over by Warhol and Paloma Picasso
Flop like one of Dali’s drooping clocks
into Tracey Emin’s bed
And fall into a troubled sleep
To the distant sound of Yoko Ono
Screaming into a bag.

U is for Understood by Margaret Jensen

We understand the passion of unruly fans
Under pressure
Don’t underestimate their loyalty
The uncanny usual strength is felt
When hearing strong, united songs of
Their Utopia
So useful to unite all reds and blues
In powerful use
World Famous as U.B.40, undeniably and
Understandably so
United we stand
Under our unusual rivalry
We are unique and unforgettable.
V is for Vicar Road  by Derek Marsden

There in the middle of the Holy Land  
Lies Vicar Road, Anfield  
Snug between the streets of Cannon, Monastery, Rector and Curate  
Row upon row of terraced Victoriana  
Childhood memories of bombies and debris and wasteland prairies  
Of back entry jiggers and packs of loose dogs  
A modest street…  
But look, no blue plaque over number 11’s door

W is for William Brown Street  by David Lymn

In William Brown Street  
a cobbled street of olden days.  
Built many splendid buildings  
Some are with us to this day.  
Central Library of Liverpool  
with early learning to go to school.  
The Walker Art Gallery with many  
Great paintings hung there, to stroll  
around without a care.  
The World museum, relics from  
every place, culture and civilisation  
of all the human race.

X is for X’change station  by Don Weir

Emerging from their containers the tedious souls seek solace through  
the boredom of routine .  
The fortunate few speed to their lovers or their sport –shirted heroes  
Fading voices, melting odours become elevated into light.
Y is for Yes by Margaret Jensen

Yes, our pride shines through to our historic city
Yes, of course each year our heroes past and present are re-membered
Yesterday’s history is recorded for future generations
Of our great ships, the River Mersey, worldwide known dockland,
With the famous Liver Birds watching over you.

Z is for Z Cars by Sue Ruben

Z is for Z cars.
Based on Kirby
But
Set in Newtown.
Cops in cars,
Patrolling soulless streets.
Gritty sometimes witty,
The reality of poverty.
James Ellis, Brian Blessed,
Criminality, police brutality.
Finished in ’78,
Replaced by the Sweeney,
But
The theme tune lives on,
Everton’s anthem

Dum dum dum de dum de dum dum
Dum dum dum de dum de dum

The Garston WEA Creative Writing Group meets in the Garston Reading Rooms, Wellington St, Garston, Liverpool L19 2LX, on Wednesday Mornings from 10-12.

This was just one of the many writing projects the group carried out in 2016-17. If you would like to join this friendly, supportive group, and enrol for the course,

Enrol online at: www.wea.org.uk
Or by phone at: 0151 243 5340