



# The Folk on the Hill

Poems and Stories from Langley

# The Folk on the Hill

## Poems and Stories from Langley

### Contributors:

Middleton Blind People's Social Group  
Bowlee Park Junior Warden Mentors  
Burnside Youth and Community Centre  
The Church Lads and Church Girls Brigade (Langley)  
Langley Children's Centre  
Langley County Primary School Parents and Children Family Learning Group  
Langley Library  
Langley Story Group  
Langley Theatre Workshop  
Langley Youth Group  
and members of the public.



Published by Tell Us Another One at Cartwheel Arts



**Workshop Facilitator:**

Helen Clare

**Tell Us Another One Co-ordinator:**

Kim Haygarth

**Editors:**

Helen Clare, Kim Haygarth and members of Langley Story Group

**Text copyright:**

© Individual authors

**Artwork:**

Hilary Judd

**Design:**

tyme design, info@tymedesign.com

**Published and distributed by :**

Tell Us Another One at Cartwheel Arts, 110 Manchester Street, Heywood, OL10 1DW, 2008

**Tell Us Another One** is a three-year adventure in storytelling and creative writing, working with diverse communities in Rochdale Borough. For more information contact Kim Haygarth on 01706 361300 or kim@cartwheelarts.org.uk

**Cartwheel Arts** promotes inclusion, cohesion, diversity and regeneration through participation in vibrant, innovative, high-quality arts projects.

Thanks to all the community group leaders and workshop participants for their enthusiasm and willingness to share their many tales of Langley.

Tell Us Another One is funded by the Big Lottery Fund.

The writing in The Folk on the Hill express the thoughts and feelings of the project participants. The views expressed are not necessarily those of Cartwheel Arts or the community groups to which participants belong.

## Introduction

When Kim at Cartwheel Arts invited me to become involved in this project in the Autumn of 2007, I knew Langley by reputation and through friends who lived there when I was growing up in Heywood in the early 1980s. Although I was aware that it was often regarded as a scary place, I had also seen that some great people lived there.

I think both things are probably still true. In the twenty years in between Langley has been through some difficult times - but there are many forces working, successfully, to make things better.

In the past few months, I've heard memories of the way it used to be, the hopes and dreams of the people who first arrived and the hardships they had left behind. I've come across parents and grandparents fighting to give their children the best possible start in difficult circumstances. I've met professionals and volunteers who are finding new and interesting ways of supporting the community, and I've worked with young people who are pitching in and doing their bit to build a better future.

I've also spent time with the disillusioned – with older people who mourn the loss of a sense of community and with people who fear for their own safety and despair at a lack of opportunity. I've listened to young people, who are trying their best and feel let down by their peers and by politicians, painfully aware that while I've been able to give them a chance to speak and be heard, I have no solutions to offer.

All these people welcomed me, all of them were interested in what the project was about, all of them had something to say, and all of them were prepared to give it a go.

These are their voices. They are important because their struggles and their triumphs are those of us all. They are important because Langley is a unique place historically, a product of the housing policy of its time, the consequences of which are still unfolding. It is a place with many stories - tragic, heroic and comic - and of many voices, some of which are presented here.

*Helen Clare*



# The Years Roll By

Changes on Langley



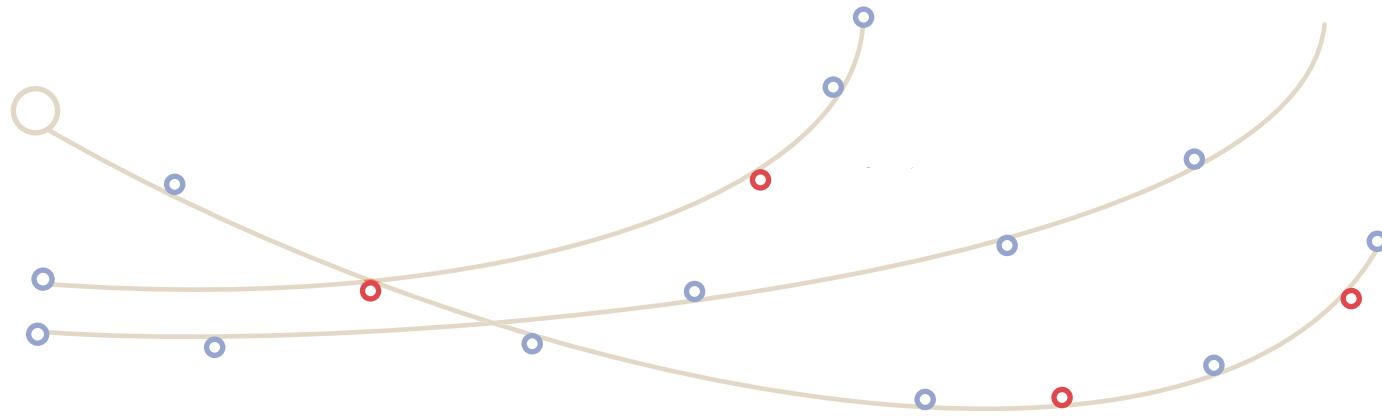
## In the Same Boat

We came in 55 from the prefabs  
What a lovely house!  
Gardens, indoor toilets and stairs for the first time -  
we ran up and down them all day long  
But winter in Langley was freezing  
No central heating  
so I'd  
warm my legs by a stove in the mornings  
drinking a cup of tea while the family was still in bed.  
We were all in the same boat.

They were just starting to build Langley and there were  
No doctors  
No priests  
No midwives  
And the buses full of smoking men going to work in Manchester  
only ran to the top of Wood Street  
where the bus driver would shout  
"Debtor's Retreat!"  
That's until Ted Briscoe, the Bus Inspector, aka 'Lord Mayor of Langley',  
walked imperiously down the middle of the road and  
organised our 121 Langley Flyer.  
We were all in the same boat.

We had some really great times over the years  
Not much money but there was always a piano and a singsong  
Entertainers in the Catholic Club  
Church activities and trips back to where you'd come from  
Lovely afternoons spent in Jubilee Park -  
free sketches on a Sunday 'til it went dark  
Dancing at the baths on the wooden floor put over the water and  
marvelling at the Langley Festival elephant kept in that field near the motorway  
With cinemas to choose from we could opt for  
freezing feet at The Palace or  
scratching at The Flea Pit.  
We were all in the same boat.

Everybody knew everybody  
And everybody got on so well  
We were all struggling to make a better life for our children  
We were all in the same boat.



## Descending on Langley

From Denton and Beswick, Moss Side and the Range,  
Collyhurst people and others even more strange,  
The Irish, the Scotch, the Geordies came too,  
All kinds of people seeking pastures new.  
They descended on Langley from Manchester suburbs too full,  
Finding a life never again to be dull.  
The heroes, the cowards, the full-of-themselves,  
The having-none-of-it, the shy and retiring, the gangsters – made up!  
They descended on Langley with the best of luck.  
Old friends and places left behind,  
The unforgiving and the mean,  
Starting again with a slate made clean.  
The mothers and daughters, post-war, pretty and proud,  
The sons and the fathers, good-looking, not loud,  
Never fat, never thin,  
Never giving in,  
They descended on Langley with families galore.  
The rich and the poor,  
All just the same,  
How refreshing, how sweet,  
But what a shame that now,  
Ne'er the twain shall meet.

*Sally Clancy*



## Sunday Strolling

Around 1938 I used to come up to what is now Langley for a Sunday evening walk. I lived in Blackley but I was courting a Middleton boy. The area was all fields, open country, fresh. We just walked and walked because we didn't have much money. Maybe we'd have a shandy in the pub. No one had much money then. People had house parties, played Postman's Knock - where you could die laughing.

*Ivy Ewings*

## The First Winter

I remember my first winter on Langley, walking out the door and sinking ankle deep in snow. I had to wait for it to thaw so I could go and buy boots. I was 18 at the time. I had to travel to Collyhurst to work. The bus only went up and down Wood Street. When it was icy it couldn't get up the hill so I had to get off at the bottom.

*Anne Kennedy*

## Ructions at Redmans

Just past the bottom of Wood Street, in the centre of Middleton, was a shop called Redmans. Every Wednesday they had bacon ribs for sale. These provided a very cheap meal with cabbage, bread and butter. Before Langley was built there were always enough ribs for all who wanted them, but after it was built you had to queue and some people were unlucky. This caused a lot of resentment amongst the housewives of Middleton.

*Ann Robinson*

1957

Unfinished houses, sand, cement, dirty roads,  
freezing winters, shovels out, shifting snow,  
snowballs, snowmen, a wonderful playground -  
can't open the front door, for 3-foot drifts.

We moved from Moston to Langley in 1957.  
I had already started school.  
Now, at five, I joined St Mary's.  
It was mainly run by nuns.  
I remember hiding behind my mother's coat,  
crying in the icy playground.  
I felt the wrath of a nun's slap,  
the cold comfort I didn't expect.  
But I loved the infant school,  
with its small wooden furniture.  
It drew me in.  
Friends galore, we skipped  
and played hopscotch and ball games.

Summer came  
and my young brother arrived at the school.  
Used to having his own way,  
he had thrown his shoes into the road that morning  
and one of the older ones had brought them back.  
I was called to his classroom to sit with him.  
I got to play with all the games!

We came from a large family, weddings aplenty,  
but with numbers shrinking the house got too big.  
Aged eleven, we had to move.  
My little world was whipped from under me.

It was a disaster, house number thirteen,  
nothing but bad luck –  
three years was enough.

My dad bought a small house in Middleton.  
At fifteen I got work in the clothing factory,  
back with familiar faces, friends old and new.  
We had a ball –  
making clothes in our lunch hour to wear Friday night.

My grandson starts at St Mary's nursery school soon.  
All that little wooden furniture –  
he'll love it!

*Susan Owen*

## Memories, mid 1960s

Grass,  
Waving and knee high,  
Is all that separated us  
From Bowlee.

The old airfield  
Lay in the distance,  
As we played hide and seek  
In the long grass.

Snow,  
Crisp and deep  
On the frozen pavement,  
Made the walk to the shops difficult.

Discos  
In the Labour club  
Brought the Beatles and Motown  
That much closer.

Cold,  
Back-loading buses  
Took you to Middleton  
And beyond.

Kids,  
Stuck at the top of a hill.  
Middleton before,  
Empty fields behind.

Kids,  
Locked in the past,  
Chasing dreams  
For a future.

Seeking escape  
From isolation.

*Alan McKean*



## Now And Then

The neighbourhood is dark and dreary  
Boarded up houses, people weary.  
Pensioners with nowhere to go  
Families just putting on a show.  
Everyone trying to do their best  
Living their lives in this great big mess!

That's what I thought before I found  
Community centres all around.  
Places of activity  
Groups for them and for me.  
Committees that challenge the ruling party  
Fighting for an estate more worthy.

As time goes on I see the changes  
Boards come off the empty houses.  
People move in and are pleased as Punch  
With a Langley that's not "out for lunch".  
Improvements keep on coming  
And Langley people keep on humming.

The neighbourhood is lighter and bright  
The future assured and quite all right.  
Committees that keep on challenging  
Residents that keep on flourishing.  
Everyone trying to do their best  
Living their lives no longer a test!

*Jo Morris*



## Hills of Clay

I used to climb up on those hills when I was just a lad  
And just look out over Middleton's skyline  
Lots of mills and chimneys as far as I could see  
For cotton paid our wages at that time

Those hills that towered o'er Middleton was nothing else but clay  
There's nothing could be built you'd hear them say  
Those hills they were my sanctuary where I found peace of mind  
Dear God don't ever take this place away

Then Manchester decided what we need is an overspill  
To home the people that were moving out  
They looked and saw them hills then said we've found your future  
It's here on hills of clay of that there's no doubt

And so the smoky skyline of Lancashire's grim past  
Was soon to change forever and a day  
We'll build a brand new estate, then we'll call it Langley  
And show that there's a future in that clay

Houses built, those clay pits gone away into the past  
A brand new future about to begin  
As folks they came from miles around to see their new horizon  
For them their future didn't look so grim

I made a lot of real true friends from this brand new estate  
From schooldays through to becoming a man  
Those hills I used to walk on, now took on a different meaning  
With friends like these I'll cope the best I can

But years on as my life progressed, the times they were changing  
I moved on from that valley down below  
Up to them houses up above that once was just a clay pit  
And found a brand new life I didn't know

And as I spend my last few years in peace and in contentment  
With my family and with friends I know will last  
Those clay hills of my younger life now give me satisfaction  
My future's here, thank God, and so's my past

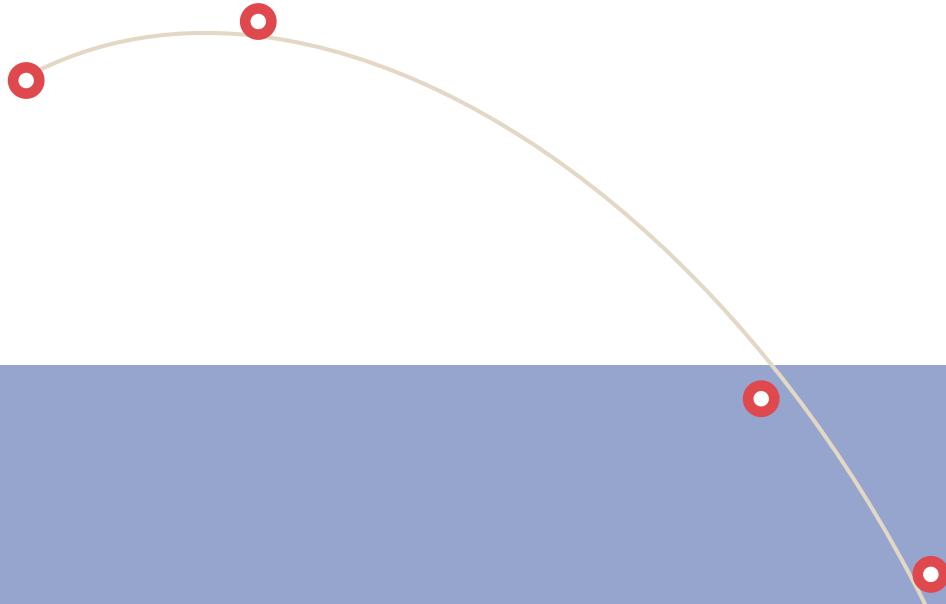
*Frank Chinn*

## Changes

It's lovely to see the church on the hill  
Youths on the corner getting chases off Old Bill.  
Mothers with prams, pushing real hard  
Looks worn out but always on their guard  
Dogs running wild, mobile phones being dialled  
Kids having fun and laughing and playing  
Putting Langley down with what they are saying.

Building sites are all around  
Where wild cats can be found.  
It's all changing now –  
because of Langley people, so take a bow.

*Samantha Amos*



## Life on Langley

There's a famous estate called Langley  
That's noted for fresh air and fun  
People from the slums of Manchester  
Went there about 1951

The children had heard about Langley  
How it was surrounded by fields  
They could play out without any danger  
And have lots of fun with their friends

The houses were all new on Langley  
There were no ruins, no bombs and no bugs  
The baths and loos were inside  
But there were no buses, no roads and no pubs

The first things that came to Langley  
Were the churches, Catholic then Prods  
Then came the schools for the children  
And much later on came the shops

There was community spirit on Langley  
They all pulled together you see  
They helped one another get started  
On this new life – happy and free

News travelled fast about Langley  
The houses were easy to fill  
With people who came to be known as  
The folk who lived on 'the hill'

It's now fifty years later on Langley  
And things are a-changing again  
We had slumps and crime and horrors  
Now it's time for a total regen

There are lots of new houses on Langley  
Bungalows, flats and the rest  
The old ones have all been upgraded  
Our homes are now some of the best

There is a great deal of talent on Langley  
With singers and dancers galore  
And comics and writers and sportsmen  
Actors and scholars and more

There is still a great feeling on Langley  
With community comes a great sense of pride  
If we all pull together as equals  
Our Langley will surely survive

*Freda Robinson*

## The Years Roll By

The years roll by,  
And the memories  
Remain dim.

Do I remember The New Broom,  
Lakeland Court,  
And the Labour Club discos?

Or are they  
Random recollections,  
Like snowflakes in the rain?

Langley in 1965  
Is forty-three years,  
Twelve miles  
And a lifetime away.

*Alan McKean*



# Salt of the Earth

Friends, Families and Neighbours

## The Shape of Langley

I don't know many people on Langley  
but I know Langley.

Easy to get around  
Not a big sprawl,  
I like the shape of Langley.

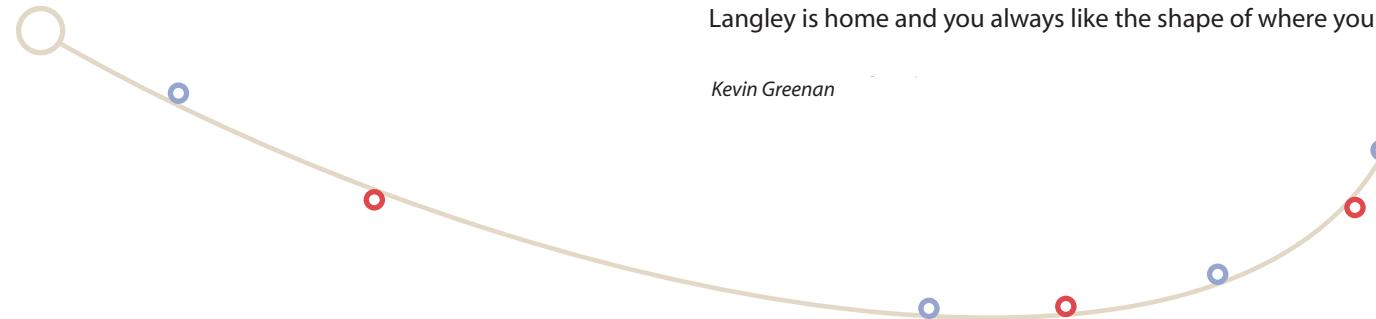
If I get onto Bowness I can go  
straight down there,  
onto Windermere,  
around there and  
I'll end up back again,  
I like the shape of Langley.

Langley's a block  
And guide dogs like blocks,  
I like the shape of Langley.

You could lose me on Langley  
anywhere at all  
and I could get home,  
Because I like the shape of Langley.

If I go back to where I was brought up  
it has changed so much  
But I know where I am when I'm here.  
This is home. This is home.  
Langley is home and you always like the shape of where you live.

*Kevin Greenan*



## People Round Langley

Small fiery women  
Big jolly men  
Large slobby people  
Shoppers looking for bargains  
Nice kind types  
Children playing, laughing, crying  
Happy, clever students  
Pregnant, jobless ambition  
Old folk, miserable funny stories  
Girls made-up, looking for lads, fighting, brandishing mobile phones  
Neighbours  
Salt of the earth!

*Susan Owen*

## My Family (fictional!)

Mum's having a baby,  
Dad's gone crazy,  
Sister's working,  
Brother's lazy,  
Granddad's sleeping,  
Nana's weeping,  
Auntie's cleaning,  
Uncle's gleaming...  
And I'm watching them  
Make fools of themselves!

*Jessica Jackson*

## I'm looking out for you

I grew up in times when you respected your neighbours and didn't give them backchat. Today kids call their neighbours by their first names. In our day you called them Mrs Horner and Mrs Miller. We all looked after each other. We'd watch each other's houses, each other's kids. You'd tell the neighbour's children off if they were doing something wrong. I've still got a mate who lived up the road from me back then. Apparently I was pushing him round in his pram when he was 2 years old. I'd have been about 7. We're still mates over 40 years later. My mam still speaks to some of her old neighbours from Langley over 50 years later. Then it was open doors. Now there are locks.

*Alan McLoughlin*

## Children knew how to be children

Our children made their own fun. They spent most of their time in the fields playing rounders and hula hoops. Sometimes mums would sort the house, sort the evening meal, make a picnic and head off with them. We'd walk across the fields and go through the backs, through Simister to Heaton Park with 8 kids and bats and balls. Then they built the motorway – we had a real job then. Or we'd walk across the fields and get the number 4 to Queen's Park in Heywood for a change. You could paddle there and sometimes you could see a show. We brought a big jar of frogspawn back from Queen's Park one time. I went out of the house one morning and there were frogs everywhere!

*From discussions at a reminiscence workshop at Langley Library, March 2008*

## Bailey

I'm called Liam  
I'm nine years old  
I have many friends  
They'll stick with me to the end  
They're really good  
My best friend  
Is called Bailey  
He's great – that's him  
That's all about Bailey

*Liam Jackson*

## My Friends

I have  
some friends  
they are  
really nice  
I can go to  
them if  
I'm growing  
crazy.

*Bailey Jacques-Lees*

## Kaci

Kaci is my friend,  
We never fall out.  
We never fight.  
We both like chocolate.  
It's a shame,  
I'm in year 3  
And she's in year 2.  
But she's still my friend,  
And so are you!

*Ashlea Wellens*

## Driving Round Langley

I see a woman in black with a bunch  
of pink roses, a young blond mum pushing a pram  
hand in hand with her bottle blond nan.

I see a round man in a bobble hat,  
three builders in orange jackets,  
two old ladies in red bonnets and scarves.

I see houses with trellises, gardens  
and gaslights, net curtains and china,  
and houses with grills on the windows and doors.

I see railings and hoardings round the building sites,  
candy stripe buses and too many speedbumps,  
roads that curve round and come back on themselves.

I see two big churches next to each other,  
one with red glass that's slowly sinking  
and a statue of Mary in front of a cross.

I see a hill, a road between houses,  
farmland, fields, a view of the Pennines.  
The wind whips round me as I get out of the car.

*Helen Clare*



## Different People (1)

Tall, small, fat, thin  
Teenage chavs and emo kids  
Naughty but nice, sweet little babies  
Young adults – some soon to be ladies.

Friends and family  
Mums and Dads  
Stupid drivers getting people mad.

Groups of lads  
On corners of streets  
Talking about rivals  
On school nights.

Different people everywhere  
Talking 'bout each other  
Different people everywhere  
Living without no bother.

*Tyler Boyle*



## Different People (2)

Dads Laugh  
Idiots Crash  
Friends Walk  
Families Talk  
Everyone's Here  
Nutters With Beer  
Teenagers Drink  
People Think  
Employers Employ  
Oldies Enjoy  
Policemen Arrest  
Lovers At Their Best  
Everyone's Here  
With their beer!

*Sara Tasker, Danielle Young, Tom Shepherdson*

## My Sister Died

I was only 3 when my sister died, I couldn't help being only 3  
I couldn't even understand, or see,  
Why my mam cried when my sister died.

"Is our house really scruffy mam, is it?"  
She answered in silence...  
Denied!  
"Is it mam? Is it? Is it?"  
Then she cried,  
But I think it was because my sister died  
Not because the house was scruffy.

I knew it was scruffy you see  
Even though I was only 3,  
But it didn't bother me.

My friend said I were "wearing her dress" and that we had no money,  
I tried to laugh and think it was funny. But it wasn't really.  
"Is my friend only being unkind mam?"  
Because if she is, I don't mind! Mam, is she?"  
My mam answered in silence...  
Denied!  
"Is she mam? Is she? Is she?"  
Then she cried,  
But I think it was because my sister died  
Not because we had no money.

My friend's mother said to her, "You've given up,  
You never bother to work and dust and wash and clean."  
"Is she only being mean?"  
Or have you given up mam? Have you? Have you?"  
My mam answered in silence...  
Denied!  
"Have you mam, have you?"  
Then she cried,  
But I think it was because my sister died  
Not because she had given up.

I was only 3, and I couldn't understand and I couldn't see,  
"Should it have been me mam? Would it be better, would it?"  
See me mam! Talk to me, pleeeeeease...  
I'm here... I'm alive  
On Langley estate, in September 1955."

She didn't reply, she never even tried,  
She just cried!

*Sally Clancy*

## Mr Smethurst

Most people seem to have one teacher who they remember with specific affection. Mine was Mr Smethurst at Langley County Primary School, Thirlmere Drive. He taught me in 3A and 4A in 1964 and '65 when I was 9 and 10 years old.

Mr Smethurst was the most hirsute man I had ever seen up to that point. By that I mean his arms not his face, but despite that he was a great teacher. He seemed to do different things and looking back as an adult, it had to have taken a lot of dedication and enthusiasm to put in all the effort he must have done. I'm not saying that other teachers didn't, but my teacher stood out for me.

On the grass, in front of the school, he had this strange louvered wooden box affair on long legs. This was his Stevenson Screen. It was a device that housed meteorological instruments and the Stevenson Screen Monitor would go along, open it and discern what the weather was doing. This always fascinated me but I never got to be the Stevenson Screen Monitor so I could only continue to wonder at what lay inside. However, I understood from this that the weather must be very interesting indeed.

We used to trot outside and into the Extension. Here we learnt and experimented with the mysteries of the metric system of measuring. It meant that I grew up quite competent in both metric and imperial systems. Years later, I found I was in a much better position than youngsters leaving school who had only learnt metric, therefore did not understand the imperial method we were still using.

The most special thing I remember was at Christmas in 4A when Mr Smethurst designed and rigged up this kind of pulley arrangement. It was a Father Christmas sleigh. Every time a child from another class or a teacher called in through the door, a monitor would pull a string and Santa would glide towards the visitor along the wall. They would then receive a sweet from the sleigh. It was a lovely little welcome to people who came in to 4A's classroom.

Mr Smethurst retired, I seem to recall, around the late 1970s. His Stevenson Screen is sadly long since gone and, as I write this, it will not be too long before the school is gone too.

*Ann Jones*

## What are our children made of ?

What are our children made of?  
Kisses and cuddles and splashing in puddles  
That's what our children are made of.

What are our children made of?  
Temper and tants and all kinds of rants  
That's what our children are made of.

What are our children made of?  
Nightmares and dreams like flowing streams  
That's what our children are made of.

What are our children made of?  
Innocence and fun, and playing in the sun  
That's what our children are made of.

What are our children made of?  
Laughter and smiles in all kinds of styles  
That's what our children are made of.

What are our children made of?  
Flesh and bones and making homes  
All these things they are made of.

*Karen Cunningham, Lesley Butterworth, Kaz Perkin, Susan Curtin, Lisa Burke, Patricia Scullion and Dawn Ward*



## This is Not What I Was After

Mobile phones – I'm on the bus  
The telephone ringing when I've just put a meal on the table  
The grandchildren waking up too early  
My cat throwing up  
This is not what I was after.

The teenage grandson on the phone  
"I've lost my key – can you come with the spare?"  
Hubby saying "I won't be long" (when he nearly always is)  
Shopping, and he says, "I'll wait outside"  
This is not what I was after.

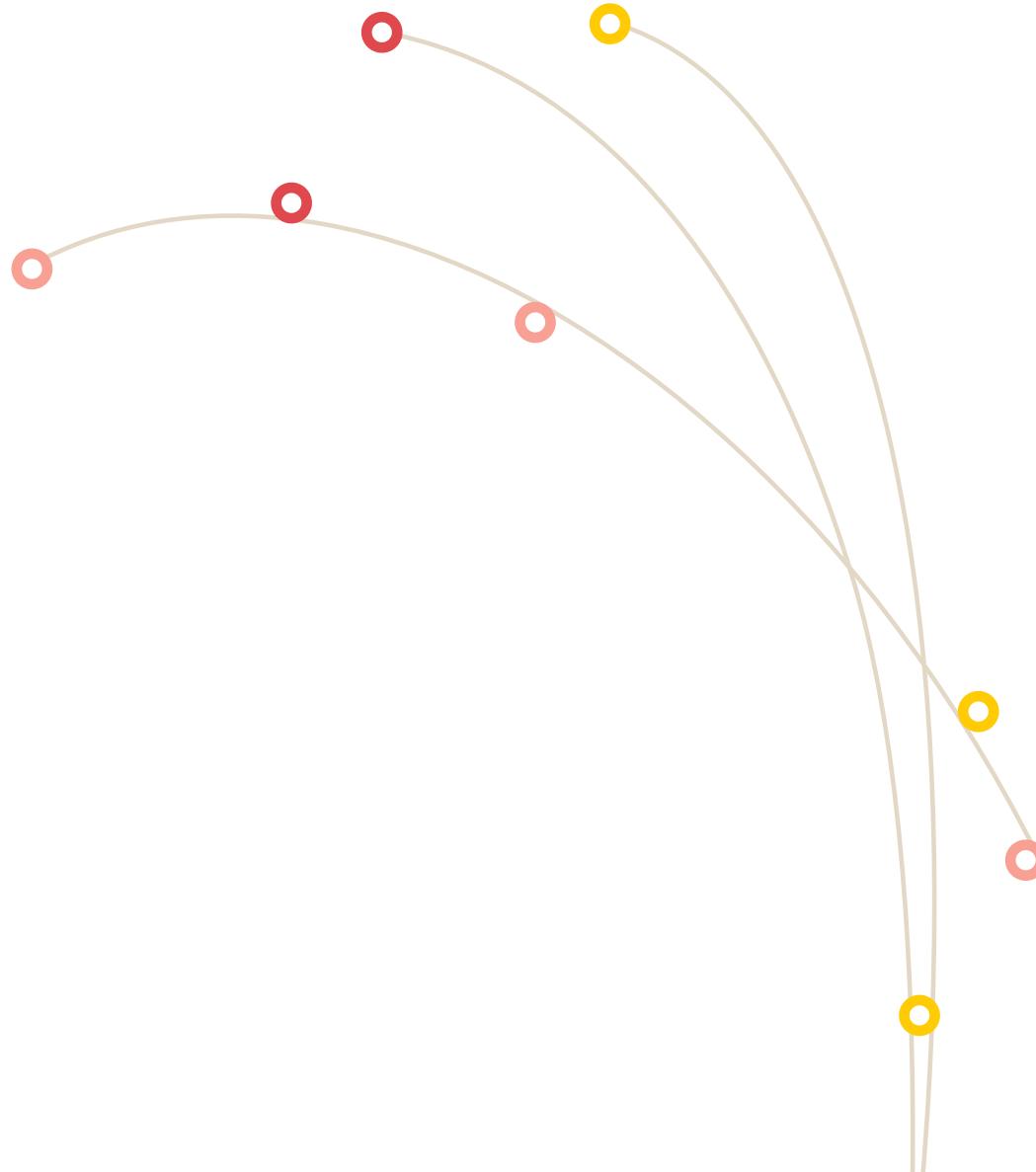
When the bus shoots past the end of the road two minutes early and the next one doesn't turn up  
The person who drives nearly in my boot  
The little ones when they go "Way-Hey"  
My friend when she comes for tea and says it's beautiful before she's even dug the fork in  
This is not what I was after.

*Ann Robinson*



# The Cherry on Top

Fun and Games



## Feel-Good Factors

Quiet times. Sitting with a cup of tea first thing in the morning, before the rush. A nice glass of wine when the children are in bed. A romantic comedy.

Sunny skies. Comfy shoes. A well fitting bra. A lovely hot lavender and chamomile bubble bath. Getting your hair done at the hairdressers. Bouncy, shiny hair.

A night out, if it's a good night out. That first sip after all the hassle of getting ready. A tasty Italian meal. Lots of good food. A night with the girls.

A spending spree. Buying a bargain. Shopping for clothes. Chocolate biscuits and chocolate bars. Having a fag. Lots of coffee. Getting that phone call.

A hug. A laugh. Family and friends. Remembering time shared with someone you loved. Hearing something nice said about a departed relative.

Seeing something you have helped create come together as a performance. Watching when a child does something new. Being here. Coming to Burnside.

*By visitors to the Pamper Day at Burnside Community Centre, November 2007*

## The Place to Be

Langley is the place to be  
but sometimes it's just not for me.

They rip up the mud on their motorbikes  
but I would rather they just had trikes.

They make mud flinters out of drains –  
when it hits you it really pains.

We like playing football, having fun  
but some people would rather have a gun.

I play with my friends on Burnside Park  
every Friday we have a lark.

My baby brother makes me laugh  
every night when he has a bath.

I prefer him when I can't hear a peep  
and then I know he's sound asleep.

I love my dog, it's a Sharpei  
we go for walks and play each day.

St Mary's is a wonderful school,  
Maths, English and Art are really cool.

Langley is the place to be  
but sometimes it's just not for me.

*Liam Hall and Kieran Goodwin*



## Life Was Great!

Playing on fields  
& running around  
our life was fun & free

Lots of fresh air  
& open space  
the best that we could be

We played for hours  
in all weathers  
from one street to another

We didn't need money  
or expensive toys, we had  
fun playing games with each other

Cricket, kerby or football  
were some of the games we played  
exhausting fun & intense  
until the daylight would fade

Yes it was fun growing up on Langley  
my school, my neighbours, my mates  
it has made us good people, we're grounded  
& I'm proud to have lived on the estate

My roots will remain here in Langley  
a place I will always call home  
wherever I wander thru life  
Paris, London or Rome

It's Langley, Langley, Langley  
be proud of the place from where you came  
let's hope the younger ones on Langley  
continue to grow just the same.

*Paula Amos*

## Fun

Hanging out with my friend  
Following roads that never end.

Cars and coaches go by  
Birds and aeroplanes in the sky.

Going to the shop  
Buying crisps and fizzy pop.

Knocking on for my friend  
On Langley my fun will never end.

*Shannon Wellens*



## Man U

Man U the best in the whole wide West  
Man U better than all the rest  
Man U get sweaty in their vests  
When they score they show their chests  
Over the weeks they have impressed  
But when I watch them I get stressed  
And when they lose I get depressed.

*Ben O'Brien*

## Handy Langley

Langley, Langley, always handy  
making friends and eating candy.

Walking down Langley  
having lots of fun,  
walking by the church  
out popped a nun.

Out came the moon  
up came the sun,  
there I was having more fun.

So Langley, Langley, it's still handy  
so hear me know  
put down your brandy,  
talk to Andy  
the mayor of Langley.

*Niall Ward*



## The Cherry on Top

Life on Langley is such fun  
It's like a cherry on top of a bun!  
I go to dancing classes a lot  
Afterwards, I'm very hot!  
I love my school, St Mary's  
Not one of the teachers there is scary!  
If I had one wish, then it would be  
That everyone could love Langley as much as me!

*Abigail Flynn*

## Pottery

What can I say?  
I went every Tuesday  
Concentrating, working away  
Huffing and puffing, rolling the clay  
Cutting out, then I'd go making a pattern, criss-crossing along  
Gluing the clay, the sides making them strong  
Then my cup, vase, ashtray came along  
Choose the paint and give it colour  
Gloss it so it'll not get duller  
In the kiln to harden it up  
My husband and flowers can have a suck  
From the vase and the cup  
The ashtray is on display  
As my David throw his fags away  
I don't do pottery today  
But another day, time I'm sure I'll find  
When I don't have as much on my mind

*Julia McClay*



## The first time

Not been before  
Knew one friend  
Said "hello".

Put face to name  
Now also  
You I know.

So what happens now?  
Get to know names  
Someone takes charge  
Keep quiet and listen.

One by one people speak  
Share their thoughts and dreams  
Stop being names.  
Start being people.  
Think I'll come again.

*Colin Knight*

## Wishing you...

Christmas parties that get you in the mood,  
getting glammed up for works' dos. Buying pressies  
and someone else wrapping them. Time off work.  
Getting in touch with family and friends.  
Children's home made Christmas decorations.  
The same Christmas songs on the radio each year.  
That feeling you get when everything's done.

The last window on the advent calendar  
Children excited, unable to sleep -  
going to bed in new pyjamas, hanging  
stockings on the fireplace, sneaking downstairs  
to try to find presents. Midnight mass  
and getting drunk after. Candy canes  
on the Christmas tree, you know are all yours.

Breakfast that lasts the morning long, soap  
specials, and Santa Claus The Movie.  
Little faces lighting up. All over  
by nine o'clock! All the paper and boxes  
they prefer to the pressies. Crunchy chewy  
melty roasted parsnips. The Queen's Speech.  
Yummy Christmas pudding in your tummy.

Those odd days between Christmas and New Year,  
love them or hate them. Turkey curry,  
repeats on telly, turkey salad, turkey  
soup, the Sales, turkey and stuffing butties,  
cracking nuts with nutcrackers, turkey stew.  
(Oh, turkey, turkey, we are sick of you!)  
New Year's Parties - now you're in the mood.

*By parents at Langley Children's Centre*

## My Place

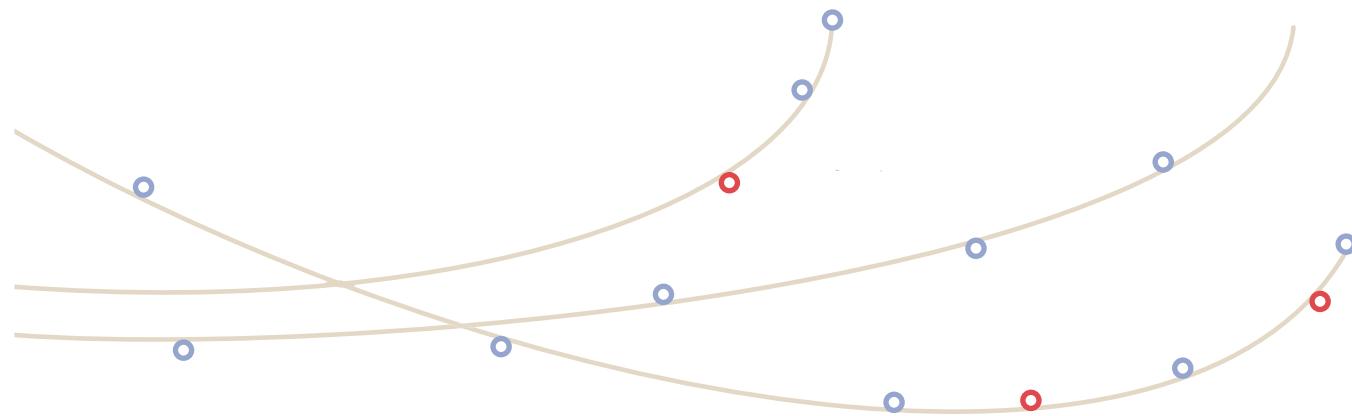
The winding road across the moors,  
Not a house in sight,  
The occasional farmhouse,  
Sheep secure behind wire fences  
Where once they roamed freely,  
The blue sky stretching above us for miles  
Or it can be misty and dark.

All is quiet, the cry of a bird as it hunts for food.

Thoughts of how I love this place,  
How elated I feel as we leave the last town to come up here.

I've never lived here,  
Only come for holidays,  
And yet I always feel like I've come home.

*Ann Robinson*



## Baggage

I'm going on a journey  
So far I don't know where  
But I can take all my comforts  
Which will benefit me there.  
Memories, both old and new,  
My poetry and my books,  
My stuffed dog, a handful of soil  
And pans in which I'll cook.  
Warm clothes, waterproof shoes,  
A fishing net and line  
Together with tent and sleeping bag  
'Cause the weather may not be fine.  
I'll be sure to pack my writing stuff  
To activate my brain  
With a sealed box containing  
The clackety-clack of a train.  
A book of old-time songs,  
Some birdsong and a bike,  
Vitamins, sweets, and a  
Picture of Christine's that I like.  
I'll remember to take my music  
To soothe me, or to please,  
And very carefully cotton wrap  
My favourite cliff-top breeze.  
I'll capture the rustling of the tree  
As summer Zephyrs blow  
But the things I'll treasure most will be  
The smell of spring and autumn,  
My children's laughing voices  
And a jar that's full of snow.

*Anne Wareing*



Voices Echoing  
Different Generations on Langley

## The Road Wasn't Busy Then

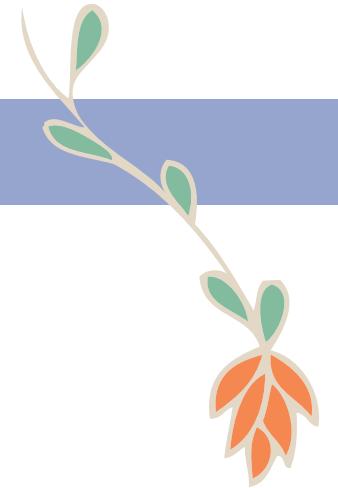
My children played skipping across the street with  
a big long rope  
I'd sit, knitting, on the window box outside the front door,  
and watch them,  
my baby in a pram.  
They played hide and seek up and down the walks,  
their voices echoing in all that space.

*Anne Boyle*

## Sounds

The children were all tiny and it was so quiet  
I remember them laughing and playing, knocking on my door  
for a stroke of my dog, Judy.  
Then all of a sudden the sounds of throwing stones, balls banging against  
our doors and name-calling.  
And the smell of burning things.

*Mary Clements*



## Saturday Mornings

I remember the smell of my mam's baking on a Saturday morning: apple pie, mince pie, lemon meringue - she made a belting lemon meringue - rice pudding and any jam-type pie. None of this ready-made pastry, she made it from scratch. She'd go out at the crack of dawn every Saturday, get her hair done and then go and get her shopping. We'd meet her in Middleton, come home on the bus, put the shopping away and then the baking would start. It would last for two hours, three hours. She'd say, "I'm not using that," when we'd had our dirty hands all over the pastry.

*Alan McLoughlin*

## Shouting from the Rooftops

I was appointed Head of Demesne School in September 1954. I had a chance to come and see the school while it was being built. The autumn and winter of 1954 were dreadful for building and all the sites had to stop work for months. There were kerbs but there were no pavements; there were no proper roads except for Wood Street and Windermere Road. None of the developing roads were labelled and Bowness Road was still 'Road Number 4'. Because of the snow and slush you couldn't walk across the fields. There were no landmarks either. To get people to the school, many a time I would stand on the roof of the school and shout directions to get the children there. And there were no buses then. People had to walk up Wood Street from Middleton. One teacher used to thumb a lift from lorries that were coming up.

*Albert Little*

## Spell It Out

**L** is for litter not to be dropped

**A** is for anger that must be stopped

**N** is for naughty – it's best to be good

**G** is for gangs who hide under hoods

**L** is for laughter you hear in the parks

**E** is for enlightenment out of the dark

**Y** is for youth – reaching great heights

This is our Langley, our future is bright.

*Steve Hartley, Lisa Kelley, Steve Worrall, Lisa Worrall, Barbara Roberts, Susan Curtin, Sarah Morris, Ellen Lee, Wendy Urquhart and Veronica Donohue*



## What It's Like

The people are as unique as DNA,  
My mates are like fun people,

The druggies are like the walking dead,  
The dogs are like lions unleashed,

Dancing is like communicating without words,  
The astroturf is like Manchester City Stadium,

Building a den is like building a paradise,  
Finding 300 needles is like jumping in a bunch of thorns,

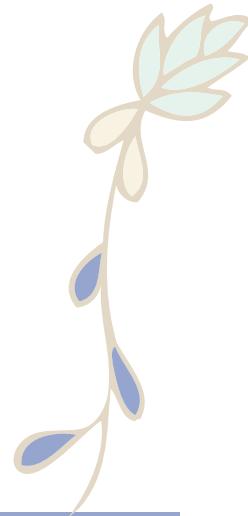
The burned out cars are like empty shells,  
Bowlee Park is like a dog's toilet with quads,

The houses are like hide-outs,  
The shops are like Fagin's den,

The bus service is like a chocolate fireguard,  
The entertainment is like a silent room,

The big bushes are like being in a rain forest,  
And at night it is like a horror movie.

*Bowlee Park Junior Warden Mentors*



## Txt Poems

The chrch on the hill, Langley ex8 mcr overspill, is the 1st fing u c n means  
the world 2 me. Langley ex8 is very gr8, people r str8, tell u like it is, gud n bad.

*Jill Amos*

2 mny guys playin wid lives 2 mny guns n 2 many nives, 2 many ppl cmitin crimes,  
lm ere doin ryms locl mp avin a db8, tel me wt mre can a sa ~ livin on a mcr cncl ex8

*Jake Richardson*

Langley is so bad it makes me sad 2 hear ppl cheer cos of fear, der is alwys crime  
when de sun dus not shine, buses been smshed lucky fing de drivers don't crsh

*Kieran Goodwin*

U cn hav lafs on Friday nites. I sin a girl wiv holes in er tites. Fites, fites, go on every nite.  
Pple drink in MT houses.

*Liam Hall*

Round ere in Langley ex8 u cn make arch nmies or gud m8s. Der r many pubs, da gud n bad,  
an wen dey r burned down it can drive u mad.

*Samantha Amos*

# Yobs

Swearing, spouting  
Screaming, shouting  
Here they come again

Big men, hard men  
'Inch to a yard' men  
Here they come again

Coshes and knives men  
Bottles and lies men  
Down the road they come

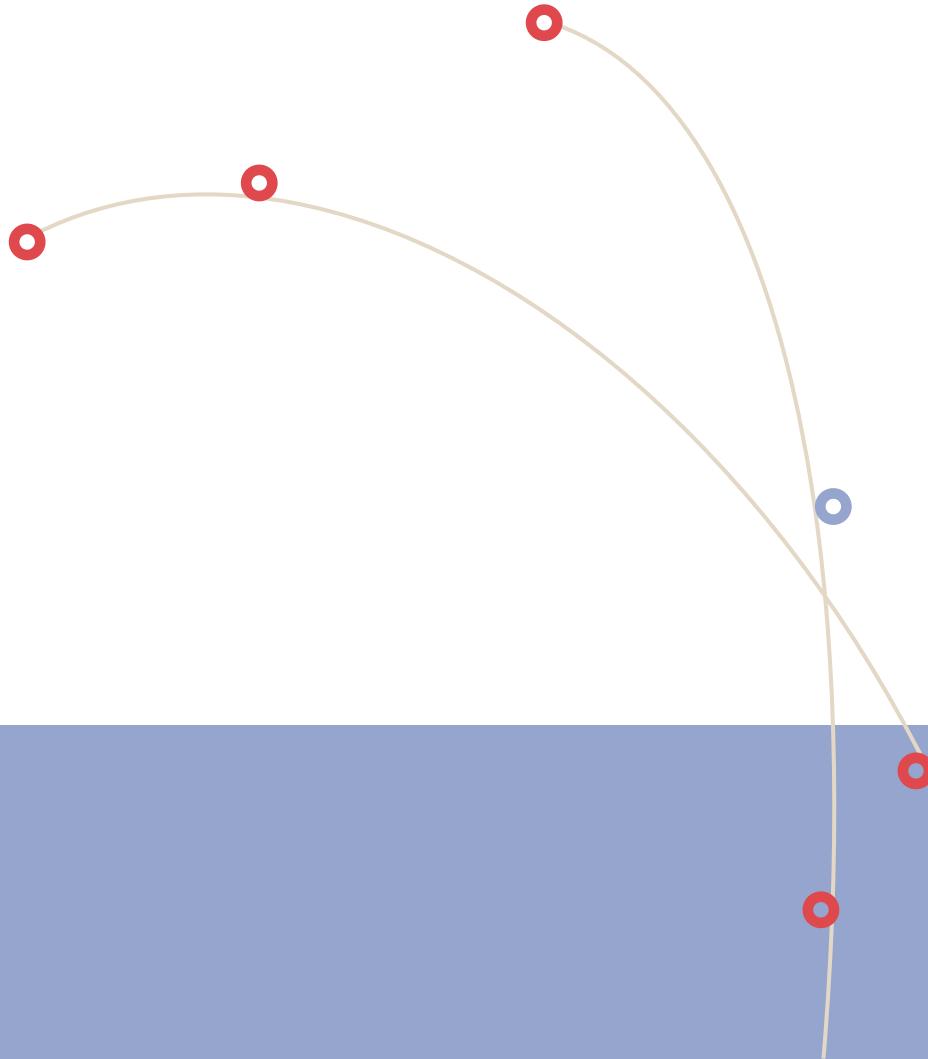
Out for fights men  
'Put out their lights' men  
Trouble on the run

Stamping, beating  
Stabbing, raping  
Criminals every one

But

"They're on drugs, m'lud"  
"They're depressed, m'lud"  
A slap on the wrist – they're done!

*Anne Wareing*



# This is How to Live on Langley

This is how to live on Langley,  
Keep your head down and don't get involved,  
Keep your mouth shut and don't say anything,  
Keep a low profile, get out and about.

This is how to live on Langley,  
Work, work, work to make it a better place.  
We want to sort things but we get hurt for it,  
So we don't come out and we keep our heads down.

Langley is not that bad a place,  
but the best way to live on Langley  
is to keep your head down, go to college  
get off the estate and make something of yourself  
and not get involved with any idiots.  
This is how to live on Langley.

*Rochelle Grierson, Natalie Rennie, Lorna Glaysheer, Rebecca Simpson, KaryAnn Rose*

## Round Here

There are druggies, muggies  
And babies in buggies  
Blondes and gingers and even browns  
And sometimes you might bump into a clown.

*Niall Ward and Leanne Loftus*

## The Things We See

Burnside centre, people and friends  
Rubbish and bins and rainbows and sun  
Grass and roads and bikes and wheels  
Grannies with trolleys and me and my mum.

Skips and chips, libraries and buses  
Traffic lights, flowers, dogs and cats  
Churches and schools, football and shops  
Rain in the sky, grandpas in hats.

Flats and houses, railings and birds  
Coats and girls, trampolines, lights  
Windows and bricks and fireworks and phones  
Sticks and slugs and taxis and fights.

*Langley Theatre Workshop*

## Smackheads

Smackheads, smackheads, 1,2, 3  
You better run! They're after me!

*Lee Crain*



## This Isn't a Game

Politics, Power and Religion

## Class War

Bulldozers driving through  
From Langley Lane  
Like a panzer division  
Clearing homes  
Beautiful homes

Homes where generations have lived  
A family life, which is not transferable,  
But still they drive on

They grind across the estate  
Wiping out the Millennium  
Refurbished at public expense  
But the scar has to be carved  
To make the land attractive

Crummock rubble leads to Willow Park  
And on to Borrowdale and Mosedale  
Homes made good by caring owners  
Publicly funded improvements for tenants  
Crushed beneath the tide of false progress

Then Lakeland Court is cleared  
For a pipe dream piazza  
But this is not Italy  
A safe club will become an unsafe pub

On through Demesne land to Gatesgarth  
Then, their bloody work done,  
The bulldozers rest at Threlkeld Park

This is not happening  
This is on a drawing board  
A Middle England drawing board  
Where the middle class strives to  
Justify its professional existence

The fight to stop them has begun  
This is war  
Class war

*Red Red Robin*



## Langley, Julia McClay, 18/2/08

Leisure

Activities

Numerous

Great

Local

Entertainment

Yes

## Langley, David McClay 19/2/08

Local

Attitude

Negativity

Grows

Landscape

Environment

Yuk



## My List

I ask myself why the streets are like this,  
So here I am making, I'm making a list  
Of what Langley is really about,  
So listen, this is a shout out.  
Youngstas go through so much pain,  
Some can't stand it, it drives 'em insane.  
Obviously they have a smile sometimes,  
But they still stuck in with all of the crime.  
Youngstas hide a smile with a frown,  
Langley isn't a city, it isn't a town.  
It is a community that does stay tight  
And most kids' futures are so bright.  
Then again, a kid gets hit coz of their colour,  
And sometimes a kid's day can get duller.  
And a girl can't walk safely without no worries.  
Sometimes they have to use a fist.  
And yeah, some people are drowning in pain,  
But we know Langley will always maintain.

*Kee Wilkinson*



## The Way It Is (1)

I've lived on Langley all my life  
And it hasn't always been that nice  
Rats and needles, cider bottles  
That's the way it is!

Langley sometimes is compared  
To Hollin, Boarshaw and Kirkholt  
We have different cultures  
That's the way it is!

Guns and knives bring troubles and strife  
Someone's going to take a life  
Prison appeals to lots of youths  
But who cares? That's the way it is!

Please help us to sort it out  
Someone must have some clout  
We want to stop this gang war  
So it's the way it should be!

*Rochelle Grierson*



## The Way It Is (2)

Older teenagers bully you  
and all the parks near us are being vandalised  
by gangs, and when we try  
to got to Boarshaw and Moreclose  
the people from there say we are not allowed  
because we are not from there.  
And some of the people are racist.

*KarryAnn Rose*

## The Streets of Langley

Look, look, look, look too many guns  
Too many knives, too many people are taking lives,  
Too many children stealing just to survive,  
Too many people, too many fears,  
Too many kids, too many tears  
Too many homes, too many families,  
This is my track and it's about the streets of Langley.

When you walk through Langley,  
You have got support off your friends,  
Your mum, your Dad and the rest of your family.  
You hear the gossip and the conversations,  
coming from the youngsters and people from different generations.  
They get their point across by using the radio station.  
Saying I don't like this, I don't like that  
Or the youngsters saying, it's not all about that!  
When you read these lyrics, stop  
Think about yourself, this isn't a game,  
The only thing you're doing is losing your health  
So put down your weapons, you don't need them to protect yourself.

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, too many guns  
Too many knives, too many people are taking lives,  
Too many children stealing just to survive,  
Too many people, too many fears,  
Too many kids, too many tears  
Too many homes, too many families,  
This is my track and it's about the streets of Langley.

Nowadays the streets of Langley are getting too rough,  
Too many crews, some of which are tough,  
Taking all your possessions and stuff,  
Too many threats, too many people having regrets,  
Too many fights, it's all about respect,  
All they're after is boosting their rep.

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, too many guns  
Too many knives, too many people are taking lives,  
Too many children stealing just to survive,  
Too many people, too many fears,  
Too many kids, too many tears  
Too many homes, too many families,  
This is my track and it's about the streets of Langley.

*Jake Richardson*



## U.C.M - Early Days

We had to raise some cash for our Church, we'd been told  
So at a chosen house, the ladies decided to be bold.  
To bring money in, anything we'd try  
Tupperware, raffles, bingo, bring-and-buy.

For an extra donation, we were giving a sup  
Of some kind of beverage in a glass cup.  
This was concocted of mainly fruits and juice  
Until a large dash of alcohol was then introduced!

After much hilarity and laughter  
We achieved what we were after.  
'Cos the evening went with a swing  
And we sold every single thing.

Happy and smiling, we much appreciated  
Every penny so willingly donated.  
Thus our efforts were not in vain  
Because the end result was the Church's gain.

*Anne Boyle*



## I'm Jewish

I was born in Cheetham Hill. There's not much left there of what I remember now. It's all changed, it's all different. I came to Langley with my mother and brother in 1952. There was nothing here at all. I thought, "What have we come for?" When she came here my mum had a bit of an illness. Once she threw my wages in the fire by accident. She wasn't herself. We were the only Jewish family on Langley. We went to our synagogue in Cheetham Hill, until it came down. Then we prayed at home in our own way.

*Leslie Gerber*

## Sister Barbara

My family brought me here,  
My memories are all of fun,  
My school was very dear,  
Sister Barbara was a nun.

Sister Barbara told me off  
When I was badly behaved,  
Never told my mum though,  
Cos that would have been too grave.

Detention after school  
So I would have been a fool,  
I hated it when I was there,  
But cried my eyes out to say Goodbye.

Oh my dear Sister Barbara.

*Jill Amos*

## St. Mary's Snows

Christ on the cross  
in a swirling maelstrom.

Nuns  
whirling dervishes  
spinning immaculate  
washing line  
robes

gathering blind children  
in night's under-wing  
talons flexed  
stripping veiling rags  
from the bright  
assailant.

Wild revenants flee  
the howling smoke-rings  
of dilating eyes

quickly absolving me  
of my mundanity  
in this Roman Catholic reverie.

Suddenly, suddenly.

*Andy Murray*

## A Small Council House

It was 1988 when the Well Women Centre opened its doors -  
A space for women to feel safe,  
be free from judgement,  
take time out  
A place to grow in spirit & confidence,  
to learn about self & others  
A sanctuary of Bach flowers,  
angel therapy,  
Indian head massage,  
reiki healing.

Just a small council house with a huge heart!

Discussion groups, guest speakers, assertiveness training, and liberated  
women emerged to go on to  
bigger & better things  
now within their reach.

Minds & spirits have evolved,  
its members progressing into unthinkable spheres.

Here's to another 20 years!

*Susan Owen*

## Well Women Centre

We are 20 years old this year. Who would have thought it would last so long? It must have been a really good idea. We have done so much over the years: counseling, holistic therapies, workshops, courses and much more. Women walk in looking nervous and walk out looking relaxed and smiling. We all benefit from attending the Centre: staff, volunteers and clients. Anybody who calls in enjoys a chat and a cuppa, and goes out refreshed.

*Freda Robinson*

## The Noise

"I've not heard a noise like that since I was in the Army".

It was a sunny Saturday morning and we were working in the garden.  
The noise was a deep earthshaking sound beyond description.

It was the Manchester bomb, the topic of all conversations for weeks after.  
Where were you? Where was your family? Your friends? Story after story  
appeared in newspapers, on TV: people you knew, an acquaintance who  
worked at Marks and Spencer where the vehicle with the bomb was parked.

Over the years the horror slowly fades and Manchester turns into a better,  
modern, cosmopolitan city.

*Ann Robinson*



Just Close Your Eyes  
Hopes and Dreams

## We'd Like (1)

Everyone getting along and for it to be raining money,  
A nice big beach and always sunny,

No chavs hanging round at the corner of the street,  
But lots of nice people that we'd like to meet,

More colour, more parks, more flowers, more trees,  
Less drugs, less stray dogs and cats and no disease,

A cinema, an ice rink, a go-karting track,  
A zoo with bears that roar and ducks that quack,

Lots of pink and purple too,  
And (not leaving the boys out) a bit of blue,

Better clothes shops and a chilling zone,  
With central heating so no-one can moan,

A free monorail getting us from place to place,  
So we can disappear without a trace,

Secret tunnels to get a Big Mac -  
Closed to druggies using smack -

But wardens and mentors will be allowed,  
So do you want to be in our crowd?

*Bowlee Junior Warden Mentors*



## Hollie and the Mermaid

I woke up one morning and I felt so happy. I felt the sun shining on my face. Where was I? I felt something cold underneath me. I moved my hand to the cold place and discovered I was on a rock on a beach. How did I get here?

Then out of the blue ocean in front of me I saw a beautiful mermaid with a gold shiny tail.

“What am I doing here?” I asked the mermaid but all she did was smile. So I asked her again, “What am I doing here?”

She then replied, “You are here, my child, to become a magical mermaid like me and many others. My tail is multicoloured when I am doing tasks but when I am at peace it shines like gold. So at this time I know I must choose a new little boy or girl to become a mermaid or merman. I have chosen you because you are selfless and kind-hearted so you will now be rewarded.”

“But I’m so sorry,” I replied “and I thank you for your kindness, but I don’t want to live in the ocean forever, because it’s cold and I would miss my parents and my family.” I started to cry because I saw tears running down the mermaid’s cheeks.

“What is wrong?” I asked her.

“My family have told me I must find a new mermaid before sundown or I won’t get my magical mermaid mirror.”

At this I felt so sorry for her that I suggested she pick someone who was all alone and who loved swimming and water.

The mermaid was delighted at this and started to swim away.

“Oh no!” I thought, “How am I going to get back home?” I was very scared.

“Just close your eyes,” a voice whispered in the breeze, and as I did so I felt soft cushions underneath. I opened my eyes to see I was back in my bedroom – and no, I didn’t have a tail!

*Hollie Cunningham-Norris and Karen Cunningham*



## The Magic Ring

I was walking down Wood Street one day, when I saw something embedded in the ground, sparkling in the sunshine. So I picked it up and took it home and washed it.

It was a ring, a magic ring. I put the ring on and it flashed in multicolours, and all of a sudden I was in a magical toy store.

The shopkeeper was a good witch wearing a red sparkling cloak. She told me I could have four wishes, but that I had to use the wishes unselfishly.

I wished for everyone to be kind. The witch said, “Very good. You can now choose a magic toy.” I chose a magical talking teddy.

Then I wished for everyone to have a home. The witch said “Well done! You can choose another magic toy”. So I chose a magical mirror that gave compliments and beauty advice.

Next I wished for everyone to have food and water. The witch said that I could choose another toy, so I chose a magic trick with real magic.

Finally I wished for no-one to be poorly, and the witch let me choose another toy. I chose a magic doll that would come alive when you wanted.

The witch said “Well done. You have used your wishes wisely.” Then the witch magically transported me to Africa and I hid the ring in the walls of a school where another child could find it.

Then I was transported back home and I found that everyone was kind, had a home, enough to eat and drink and was healthy, but I wasn’t allowed to tell anyone why. I went to my room and saw all my magic presents materialise from tiny pieces.

*Katie Seddon, Marie Hartley, Hollie Cunningham-Norris, Karen Cunningham, Luke Hibbert, Sarah Morris, Anne-Marie Mitchell, Teresa Mitchell.*

## A Perfect Day

A perfect day would be spent sitting in the park surrounded by birdsong, the wind sighing through green gowned trees. The buzzing of bees busy gathering nectar is joined by crickets chirping in overgrown grass, water bubbling as it slips over stones in the stream below, and echoes the laughter of children as they play in the playground. A blue sky kicks fluffy clouds across an endless galaxy, while the sun smiles its pleasure on a peaceful scene.

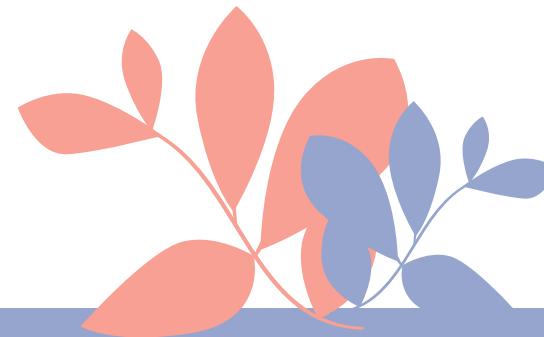
*Anne Wareing*

## We'd Like (2)

We'd like gardens, parks and flowers  
A Big Ben that passes the hours  
An image that brings Hollywood to the mind  
People helping each other and being kind  
A swimming pool and decent shops  
A Friday night without plastic cops  
A castle, and a dome over the whole estate  
A place where you can stay out late.

We'd like more lights, a safe place to walk  
So we don't get women getting stalked  
1000 conker trees all over the place  
Somewhere for people on bikes to race  
We'd like a rugby field and rugby nets  
And somewhere else for all the pets  
A welcome statue to represent the estate -  
A reminder that the people here are great.

*Burnside Youth Club*





The Folk on the Hill presents a fascinating range of voices from Middleton's Langley estate. Charting life as experienced by the first arrivals in the 1950s through to the joys and challenges of later generations, this book explores Langley – and its folk – in all their guises. From daily pleasures to politics, power struggles and some painful times, this is an essential read about a unique Northern community.