

23<sup>h</sup> 0<sup>h</sup> 1<sup>h</sup> 2<sup>h</sup> 3<sup>h</sup> 4<sup>h</sup> 5<sup>h</sup> 6<sup>h</sup> 7<sup>h</sup>

The Long Road South to find True North

CEPHEUS

CAMELO-PARDALIS

Polaris  
 $\alpha$

To escape, to leave behind  
Whatever hinders

To shake the shackles that  
captivate

What do I find in my lostness?

A pleasure in rising

again

URSA  
MINOR

+60°

+60°

Rita

DRACO

URSA  
MAJOR

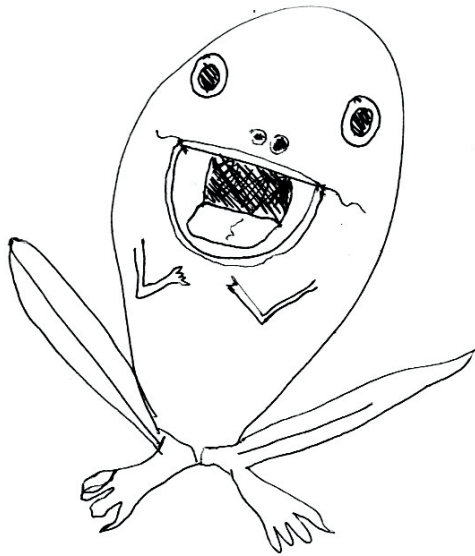
16<sup>h</sup>

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UPWARDS  
I  
GO



AGAINST  
THE FORCE

Poems by many authors  
Caritas Salford Cornerstone day centre, Hulme, Manchester  
Summer 2025 to Spring 2026

*Dedicated to the memory of  
Lawrence McGill  
a poet sometimes without residence*

*Front cover: poem by Rita, design Darren Marsh  
Back cover: poem by Anonymous, "wish frog" sculpture  
made with Christine Johnson  
Frontispiece: Basho as frog, by John*

This project invited Manchester people - many affected by homelessness - to make poems together. It was an offer to all who came to Caritas Salford's Cornerstone day centre over a year.

Cornerstone is a place where you'll hear many languages spoken; there are up to 50 nationalities sharing the same space. Their journeys, whether across the globe, or simply across the city, are to be found here as poems. But their words are also a reminder that the journey continues with you...

This project for Caritas Salford was devised and directed by poet Philip Davenport, who worked collaboratively with participant-makers to facilitate the poems. Artists Christine Johnson and Darren Marsh worked on a series of poem sculptures in consultation with the makers. Songwriter Matt Hill developed songs and sounded poems with them. These works were all exhibited at Manchester Central Library and Manchester Poetry Library, in Spring 2026.

The poems reflect real-lived experience and themes including recovery, faith, doubt, trauma and hope. The project enables people to express their personal voices and reflections and support educational purposes. Some contributors have chosen anonymity, and participation and publication were by consent and with appropriate support.

Some poems included reference themes such as addiction, mental ill health, imprisonment, grief or distress.

Supported using public funding by Arts Council England.



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**



## **FOREWORD**

*by Amanda Croome*

*Head of homelessness at Caritas Salford*

Helping someone to thrive takes more than just giving them food. We all need to eat and sleep, but we are much more than those functional things.

At Caritas Salford's Cornerstone day centre we give people a warm welcome, create a feeling of safety and enabling us to start to build trusting relationships. We feed people first of all, then we try to look after the whole person. In the morning, we provide breakfast for people who are currently homeless, at lunchtime we open our doors to the wider community, including local people who are lonely, experiencing poverty and are at risk of homelessness. At the same time, we offer support, and access to a full range of advice and health and wellbeing services.

Sometimes to move forward, to really make a future, it's necessary to rethink our lives, our possibilities and one way we can help people to do this is through encouraging and enabling creative thought. Which is just what our poetry sessions do.

Our latest poetry project, True North, came out of a conversation with Phil, our resident poet, at the funeral of Lawrence, a Cornerstone visitor and volunteer who we have both known for many years and who had found a home and had shared great insights with us through his poetry. I suggested that we make a project about beginnings, imagining better futures, rather than ones that end in sadness and early death.

True North has done just that. The poems feel like they've dived deep into people's experiences but also given space for optimism and blue sky thinking.

Every week of the project, Phil typed up and emailed over the latest poems for us all to read. They were among my favourite emails of the week. They bring humour, beauty and best of all hope for what is coming next.

Expressing ourselves is important to everyone, but particularly for people feeling isolated and challenged by day-to-day life. Reading these poems, people allow you into their hearts – it's up to you to welcome them.

*Amanda Croome*  
*Head of homelessness at Caritas Salford*

## INTRODUCTION

*by Phil Davenport*

Cornerstone is a kind of borderland between inside and outside, in every sense. It's a special place, where each Thursday I have the most illuminating, silly, wise and sometimes horrifying conversations that I ever have, on any days.

Some people have literally come out of a war zone, they are refugees. And some are in a societal war that's happening here, the struggle between haves and have-nots. Right now, they are in hostels or sleeping on streets. Many of the conversations I have are with people who haven't slept for days, who are bruised, or sometimes bleeding, blue with cold, who are struggling to find hope for something better.

Poetry itself is the introduction, to everyone. Each Thursday I bring some paper and a few pencils, I sit down with anyone, scribe for them as they talk, and very quickly we'll start a poem. Then I'll show that to somebody else and maybe they'll add to it. The poem becomes a temporary residence for like minds. That's how I spent my Thursday mornings here, and in the afternoon we've had a more formal poetry workshop for anyone who wants to come.

For this project we've taken Basho the footloose 16th Century Japanese poet as companion and mentor. He's somebody who spent a lot of time on the road, just like the writers in Cornerstone and so they've a shared interest in figuring out how far to go, where is safe, or dodgy, who will bring smiles and treachery, who to trust.

If you are street homeless, you'll generally only survive into your early 40s. The acrobatics of staying alive are continuous, a twisting, turning rope ladder in wild weather. It's this present, and imagining a better future, that has been our place of exploration.

Poems don't just sit on pages. They capture, but should also leave a mystery. The makers worked in consultation with artists Christine Johnson and Darren Marsh to find a different kind of page for their work. They also became sounded and sung, in collaborations with songwriter Matt Hill. Many of the poems ended up on folded paper "wishing frogs", based on the childhood game we played to see what the future might hold. And on paper boats, stars, infinity loops and even an embodied group whisper. All of them ready to help a traveller navigate and find a way through.

The poems in this book have rumpled edges and carry many scars. But they're vibrant, funny, profane and muster a spirit that I've encountered in very few poets, whatever their literary credentials. And now that they're done, they sit in your hands, as encouragement. Because we must each make this journey towards our own True North, even as it slips over the horizon.

## **I - PREPARE/pond mirror**

In the black pond  
Tapestry of constellations  
Spreads green across time's waters.

Listen to the animals living  
You're just a visitor  
In the black pond of galaxies.

*Brandon*

Mist rolls over still water  
Fly buzz, cricket croak. Dawn was born  
Became a daughter  
as the sun broke.

*Conner*

## **Morning drinker cracks beer in the sun**

You hold a little bird but  
It will die in your hand  
Fear kills the heart.

How does a dog know  
Your intention?  
Trust beyond reasonable doubt.

You free the little one:  
When you were in handcuffs  
You lost your mind.

You see in life  
What your heart sees  
Innocent 'til proved guilty of crime.

*Anonymous*

## **Robin Goodfella**

Weather's changing, football on telly  
Team of yellow shirts fall  
On Market Street, the poppies

Changing tree plumage causes comment:

"Y'know Boss, that's spectacular  
A bloody good way of speaking  
Them autumn hues are true."

Like a snowball down your neck  
Asteroid knocking your door down.  
These extremes, when time's lean

The season's gift is  
Hunger.

Robin jumps  
into my hand.

*Acacia, Ali, Anonymous, Bernard, Dave the Rave,  
Mishes*

## **insects & myth**

put myself to sleep deranged  
till I dream  
wake so hard, exhausted and enraged

drugs  
    rule  
        everything  
    around  
    me  
the moth in my dream said  
"go towards the light  
even if it burns a little"

        burial  
        rots  
    especially  
    at  
        the  
        heart  
the dragon in my breath survives  
"bring more gold  
I'll tell the meaning of life."

        why  
    hurry  
        even  
        reality  
    evolves  
back in my dream, I'm breathing  
it's getting hotter, the gold's scarce  
still no answer, rage remains gleaming.

*Seb*

## **The dying to come**

When you don't want to be found  
Lost in the circle of things  
Arguing with a faceless system, ask:

What do you want to lose?

*Anonymous*

Seasons changing out of my hand  
Leaves in a vortex spinning  
Smoke on water clouds my mind.

*Persons Unknown*

Winter's a gap in time  
A full stop at the end of the year.  
I like waking up in the fresher air, but

Cold hits you like a wall.  
If I was housed, probably be alright,  
I'd be warm

Before the next cold morning  
before the night.  
But I'm not housed, no letterbox on my front door  
The next cold war.

*Jonathan*

The other side of Spring  
The place that makes one shiver.  
The place you go to be alone  
is where someone keeps his Winter.

*Seb*

## **Her Princes Within Are Roaring Lions**

Sometimes jobless, sometimes homeless.  
Reaching out, feeling hopeless

the lion has fallen.

The sky's an either-or question  
Zip the mouth and  
go see if

Love is still with me.  
Here, there, in my dreams  
Love lies where

the lion has fallen.

*Group poem*  
*Cornerstone Breakfast Club*

## **British Lion**

Think about it  
While we're eating this prison food  
Businessmen rake in millions, from

Rundown hotels  
Near to demolition  
Do the ££ addition.

And in your room  
A bully vapes the oxygen  
It's 2 x 4 people and you can't breathe.

You and me wait outside for scraps  
Mark my words: little dogs are dangerous  
In packs

They'll eat your British lion for a snack.

*Anonymous*



## **The perfect breath**

Good oxygen, the wind, the blizzard  
Feels clean, it's nice to drink  
Sharp visions of ice.

*Anonymous*

Leave the fake, the ugly, the evil.  
Future is sunshine, not burnt eyes  
Hold courage in empty hands.

*Zhang*

Floating in tranquillity  
Or hopping mad  
I am the universe and I feel your happiness.

*Innocent*

## **Pirate Queen of Salford**

Nine years in Ireland, my mum  
Brought us up from babies.  
Father working in England

Til we had to leave it all  
The house and the river and the  
Horse chewing the clothesline.

Slept in the shed, once in a sandpit  
Slept on the floor or cold nights  
Me I was in the wardrobe

And our uncle told us tales  
Of the Pirate Queen of Ireland  
And the O'Malley Clan.

I climbed the cliffs of Clare Island.  
Where the Queen threw herself off  
Looked down my future, my bloodline

To England. Wooden door  
Bell pinged as you went in  
Climbed up to Daddy's workshop.

And that's how I arrived.

*Kathleen*

## **II - JOURNEY/tangle**

### **Omen**

I have seen many sparrows  
Here in this country  
Like seeing crows in my home.

It is a sign to see sparrows  
Omen of something good  
Or bad to come.

Secretive, anxious  
I'm ready to experience the unknown  
The sky feels like lightning.

Help repair my soul.

*Joseph*

Little lark in the sky, little mouse scurries by  
Autumn and Spring in a wonder  
Ghost writer writes the spells of winter.

*Anonymous*

Lying on my back as a kid  
Looking up at the stars just cos  
You don't know what's coming. Beautiful innit?

*Gary*

Time, North

Sun forever multiplies

People clockwise.

*Andrew*

**scar / star path**

maybe I reached out for the stars  
maybe it's the indelible scars  
a thousand doors on the path.

*Mishes*

See things in the night  
& they start to make sense, then

paint, draw, dream, give them shape.  
Put the seed in my head &

I have built a house in my sleep.

*Andrew & Kieron*

## **Fly Off, begone**

4am staring down at his feet  
suspicious, or  
looking for fish.

I like them, herons.  
They don't trust  
No one.

Dock leaves, nettles, thorns, cans, crap.  
Hazardous  
Down by the canal we're

Nesting.

*Lee*  
*Image, James*



## **Nonesuch Mountain**

Our beauteous scriptures  
Are all in Rasta music, but our  
Clothes are made from sackcloth.

Back here in England we  
Step into the smog and  
Face the fucking music.

Heal your hurting heart  
Our wave starts with a ripple  
That flows down Nonesuch Mountain.

*Sampuran*

Travelled the M1 and M6  
Looking to see is  
The other grass greener?

A million truck miles  
Not going anywhere  
But seeing that

To be transient on every level  
Is my blessing.  
With wings I join the flow.

*Dave*

## **The train**

Once you're hooked, you don't look back  
Until it's too late, you feel that pain  
Again and again  
No stopping, you're on the train.

The same feeling, yawning after morning  
Again, again  
There's  
No stops allowed upon this train.

Missing things that bring you happiness  
Milestones missed  
Again again  
Again again.

Listen reader, I'm saying again  
: don't take this train.  
Your life will end but never stop

— now it's too late, you feel that pain?

*Stuart*

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ጠፍቷል

::

Coming to this place I found  
A question beyond my ability to solve.  
When I picture the

Future: am I happy  
Or not?  
Will I know how to live life?

We search rubble  
For good news, but  
It is lost.

*Seblewengel*

A dragonfly flies  
Finally reborn after a previous life.  
It's Springtime

Living behind forever  
Inside this second in my pocket —  
A precious present.

*Sergio*

Living's a mystery and the journey  
A step between  
Destination unforeseen.

*Ali*

## **European death guy**

This is about a woman on drugs  
She's in and she's out  
Here and not.

Then the shades are off and you see  
The real, the person  
And the next time, they're not  
— and  
Good songs have stories  
That interlace ying and yang.

Off in limbo  
Chasing £10 for the next wrap  
Here and not.

“Don't talk don't talk.  
People are listening  
In the quiet room.”  
So the less we say the better — and  
Good songs interlace  
Ying and yang.

*H*

## **Exterminator/Angel**

Descending from high heaven  
Thru vibrant blue-filled skies.  
I have, upon my wings, white auric, sparkling feathers  
Flowering within the heavens

Spectacular visionary wings  
Here to guide us, our every endeavour,  
Small or large, matter or not  
For there within, all the while, just in case we need a little

Ease  
Patience  
Humility

And each of these is  
The length and width  
Of the sea.

*Ali*

## **Skip full of rain**

Get older, I get dad-like  
Ain't it hard to explain  
wisdom?

Got no home, just history  
Got no money, just shoplifting

And the rain,  
I fear

Is telling me something.

*Anonymous*

## **Prey**

Police stopped me  
(Still shaking)  
They assume so many things.

Standing around you  
In a circle, they make you feel  
Wrong.

*Anonymous*

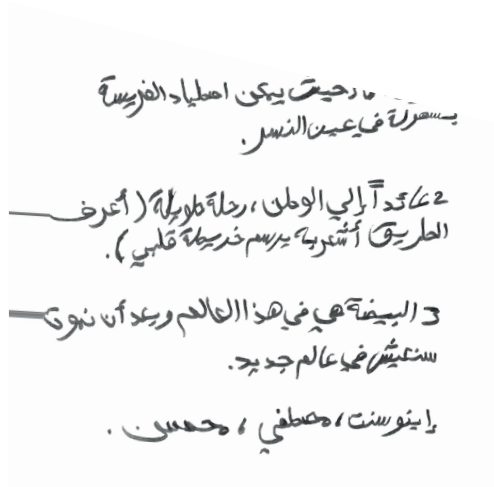
### 3 eagles, seen

1  
Over water where the exact prey  
Is easily caught  
In an eagle eye.

2  
Flying back home, long journey  
(I know the way  
Feel it mapping my heart.)

3  
The egg is this world  
And after we die, we will get  
A world anew.

*Innocent, Mohsen, Mustafa*  
*Calligraphy: Ahmed*



Wind  
Puts something in your mind.  
A feeling

My grandma  
When she was becoming a child again  
Told me three times a day:

She saw an eagle  
Take a fresh chick and  
Time's whirlwind

Nothing stops it  
Lifting you above yourself  
Overhead, out of the flesh.

*Seb*

## **Faint smell of snow**

Deep one in Manchester  
No clue what to do, not a  
Penny in my pocket

And I don't know the lingo.  
They speak to me but what they say

Goes over me, buries me.

*Kieron*

## **99 days**

Asleep in bins and alleys  
Putting pen to paper is a hard task  
I'm rising up one percent a day  
Just need 99 days more, but

Seen the white side of a shadow  
Vibrations that come out the radio  
Watched rollercoasters crashing.  
I line up,  
    pay my ticket fair and square.

*Harris*

## **Beowulf vs Grendel. A story to send you on your way**

The Danish Chief had an encounter with a water demon. She gave birth to a horror-child: Grendel the monster. The Danes were partying but the monster had sensitive ears, & was triggered. He visited the party like a bad fairy, blew the fire out & bit off the backs of their skulls. Brain mush everywhere. So they sent word & a warrior came, the hero Beowulf.

Beowulf paid special attention to Grendel the monster. He hit together pieces of metal, loudly as he could. Punched Grendel's ears, the tormented monster was confused. Then Beowulf chopped off Grendel's arm & nailed it to the wall as a souvenir. Grendel crawled back to mummy. The monster's weakness released the king from the spell. He jumped out of a tower to stay free.

Meanwhile the demon seduces Beowulf. He's also trapped by spells and a year later a child is born. A golden child, winged like a dragon, with Beowulf's face. Beowulf fights his monstrous child on the beach & both die. The demon shows her head above the waves & drags them to a watery grave.

A bit of history & myth, in the Dane tradition but written in Anglo-Saxon. The meaning's for you the reader to decide, a joke in the eye of the philosopher.

*John*

## **Marilyn Munrobots**

Just because you watched  
The towers brought down  
Now you think the world ain't round  
You start using words like  
    “SHEEPLE”  
Think there's alien underground bases  
Run by lizard people.

From mad Alex Jones digging up dinosaur bones  
Falling foul of a burning effigy  
Of a giant owl at Bohemian Grove  
Adam Weishaupt's kept it apt  
And under his cap.  
Formulating war with no bullets to dodge  
Doctors, judges and Five-o  
Could stay safe in their lodge.

While all the while  
The true X-Files never get solved  
And Darwin shot JFK  
So the CIA could evolve.

*Charlie*

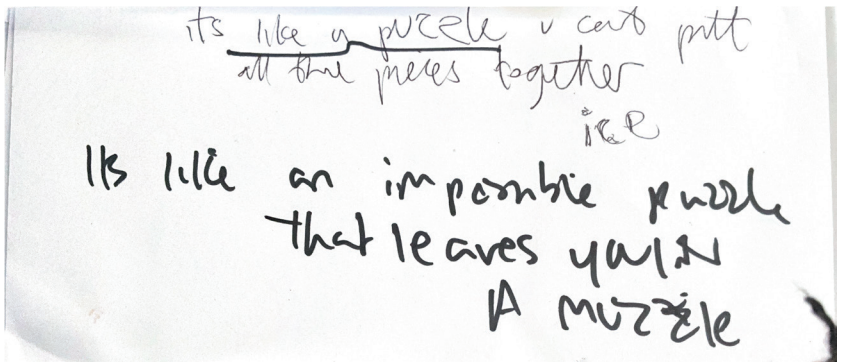
## Hell's window

All's not what it seems, in a web of dreams.  
To get a grasp when all is crumbling,  
Is not easy.

Temple's falling, spectres calling.  
You are lost, you are lost  
Like a beggar in the storm

No one can hear your voice  
And no one can help you now...

*Steve*



## **Wise man**

Fly me to Bethlehem  
Where Jesus was homeless  
Arriving in Bethlehem  
Would be my enlightenment.

We don't know the other side  
Creatures of silence  
Arriving in Bethlehem  
To start our rebirth.

Showering stars lead the homeless ones  
We all find our proper place.  
Outside humanity.  
Wise men and Mary, wait

Sending riches, roast chicken.  
A welcome to get warm  
In rain, wash yourself  
In the stable, be born.

*Colin*

## **Those who put their trust in vanity**

And have no love for humanity  
They shall fade away  
Rich is getting richer every day  
And what little the poor have they take.

The destruction of the soul is vanity  
And destruction of the poor is poverty.  
If life was a thing that money could buy  
The rich would live and the poor would die.

*Sonny*

Lines that line the road  
Washing lines, waving in the wind.  
Ley lines show the way home  
Lines given as punishment.  
The railway lines look into the lost

HORIZON  
that hides  
The dead away.

*David*

For us, the angel is now sent seeking  
Whether he comes bringing the suffering of creation

Or to help with the ending  
That arrives at the appointed time –

Since he is called an angel  
How can you best serve him?

The one that comes in a troubled moment  
Like a wind carrying what emptiness holds

He has returned and intervened:

::

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የፍጥረትን ስቃይ ይዞ ቢመጣ

ወይም በተወሰነው ጊዜ የሚመጣው እርዳታ -  
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እሱን እንዴት ልትረዳው ትችላለህ?  
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*Temesgn*

### III - HOPE'S/honey

I listen with my minds eye.

My lips are not exactly perfume  
But they speak truth.

If you want honey  
Get stung by life.

*Mehdi*

*Calligraphy: Ahmed*

عسل الامل  
استمع بعين عقلي  
شفائي ليستا عطرًا تمامًا لكننا نتعلقان  
بالحقيقة.  
إذا أردت العسل فلتسك الحياة

## **Manchester Buzz**

Love sends you honey for blood  
You'll feel sweet, burp and smell of flowers  
Bees chasing you, a gentle show.

Flower-vibe is people-like, y'know,  
Bees aren't daft, dodge rain showers  
And love gives you honey for blood.

Me I gotta sunflower glow,  
I roll with my first thought, no problemo  
Bees chasing you, a gentle show.

Hey sweet, let kindness grow,  
Everyone has kindness in their power  
Love gives you honey for blood.

Hugging trees, the world will heal its woe  
Not bleed, but bloom with every flower  
Bees chasing you, a gentle show.

I'm not shy of a prison cell, my flower  
Love sends you honey for blood,  
This bee's chasing you, a gentle show.

*Paul & Gary*

My family is in Uganda  
With passports, no dollar  
Every time I ring lawyer, no answer.

I'm homeless in Manchester  
Work Amazon warehouse  
Work chicken-killer.

Manchester is big  
DROP-IN CLOSED. Go away.  
I got money for three days.

\* \* \*

I wait

For my butterfly's return, home sweet home.  
Everyday go to my window, to  
A garden, surrounded by nature

But not by my butterfly.

*Anonymous/Harem*

## **To have a beehive in place of a heart**

(A beeline for Antonio Machado)

Last summer, I felt a bee-hive arrive in my chest.  
Let the colony grow in me.  
All summer, the gaps between my bones filled with honeycomb  
My chest vibrated and hummed.  
I knew the brood was healthy  
The phenomena sang through the hive  
The queen laid 3,000 eggs.

I could smell the honey jelly  
It made my fingernails curl.  
I spent days trying to free the bees from my hair  
I couldn't comprehend:  
A beehive in place of my heart.

The gold bees  
Making white combs  
Eradicating my past failures.

*Ali*

I have a brand new moment  
My pain has spoken, wicked and true  
I've made peace with my time

And pain is my name.

I'm grateful for breathing, it's  
A gift, a human resource  
Giving life to people who need it

And death, who do not.

So pain will be my gain. My superpower.  
The more it hurts the stronger I get  
No need to stop.

Not just yet.

*Kieron, Jayne & Amanda*

## **Salome**

I come with questions  
but no answer  
an admission of defeat.

The Queen sprinkles  
on her breakfast  
locusts and wild honey.

*Rita*

## **Human**

Listen. Lately, I've been feeling suicidal  
Conflicts inside of my head.  
I've been standing on the edge for a while now  
I hope my troubles don't find me  
Cos all these prescriptions and drugs and alcohol  
Has finally taken its toll  
And if I'm always surrounded by loved ones  
then why do I feel so low?

From all my mistakes, I hope I don't break  
Who can I turn to when I need a friend?  
They say you're a man, got to be strong  
What they don't understand is

I'm only human, only human, only human.

We're not here  
We exist between both worlds.

*Clem*

## **This is eviction poem**

One.

Sat in a car park, feeling the wind in my heart,  
Thinking to myself: got to get out of here.  
We push our shopping trolleys up the hill.

Two.

Pretty grim, to be honest.  
The streets are sensory hell, it's windy when I go outside.  
This was supposed to go well.

Three.

High Court Enforcement, huff and they puff.  
They'll kick the door down, leave us on the street, disappear  
Us, like mist. Won't let them bully us out of the city.

Four.

Organised, we build a community  
One day and one day only, don't have to fight for our right  
We will overcome, maintain and resist.

*Persons Unknown*

## **Woolworth Street**

Wherever I am,  
Butterflies in my mind  
    In my body. Love her.

She was a street worker, I asked:  
“What d’you need to get off  
    This street?”

    Only 30 quid? —  
Here it is. Given free.”  
She started shaking, started

To shake totally  
Her hands  
    Her body fluttering.

From then  
    How do I say it?  
She’s my fate. Always comes back.

Her and me  
We go everywhere  
    Got no money

Just love the air.  
Butterfly  
    In my storm.

*Anonymous*

Whistling and growling  
Winter chases off the leaves  
Sniffing out secrets.

Blows me trouble.  
Biting at my bones  
                  he moans:

“I’ll give you fucking hello.”

Fussy with his treats  
He unlocks dark gloom.

Got deep pockets.  
He’ll piss coldness on any tree, grinning  
“Spring’s beginning.”

*Gary*

Darkness is where truths  
Come out of hiding.  
Repository for deep feeling.  
A place where reality  
Cannot be falsified, where things as  
They truly are  
Without embellishment

appear.

Or don't. I love darkness,  
There I am one with my strength.  
Darkness is not a person but a time  
Don't run away, pass through,  
Search the hidden  
Stillness within — and when you  
Understand, you'll find darkness

faded.

*Ahmed, poem & calligraphy*

الظلام هو المكان الذي نخرج فيه القمامة  
من مناسبات مستودع للثمن العتيق وكان  
لا يمكن فيه تزييف الواقع حين تعلم الأشياء كما  
هي حقاً دون تزيين.

أولاً أنا أحب الظلام هناك أكون واحداً  
مع قوتك أحب النور في الظلام فكل شيء شخصياً  
بل ومحباً لا تعرب بل اجبر البحث عن السكون  
الحق في الداخل وعندما تضع  
ستجد الظلام قد تلاشى.

## **Flourish**

I know the daffodils  
Winter Aconite's gold and the first snowdrops  
A sign at least that spring is

In daffodils spread out along the lake  
Windermere, Coniston in a rush

A petal for happiness  
Sunflower yellow absorbs the sadness  
Rosemary's for memory of

Ardwick Green full of primroses and  
An orchid would be nice, an orchard  
The flowers of summer

The lilies in Romania, the seasons' harbinger

Brings brightness earlier and the green leaf later  
The bird's  
    wing in green light and the

Wood is alive, could be fuel, could be yourself  
Burning  
    or regrown.

*David, Jeremiah, Nabi, Seb*

Spring days when you're in prison.  
Understand the importance  
Of the wild.

*Colin*

Surrounded by love's positivity, and support,  
I'm a living result of the stuff I've been taught.  
I am grateful for my life, I am grateful for yours.  
I am guided by my inner child  
And controlled by good thoughts.

*Jeremiah*

The clouds will be rolled back  
Back to my cup  
Put hot chocolate to melt  
dark clouds

Turn to cotton candy.

*Zhang*

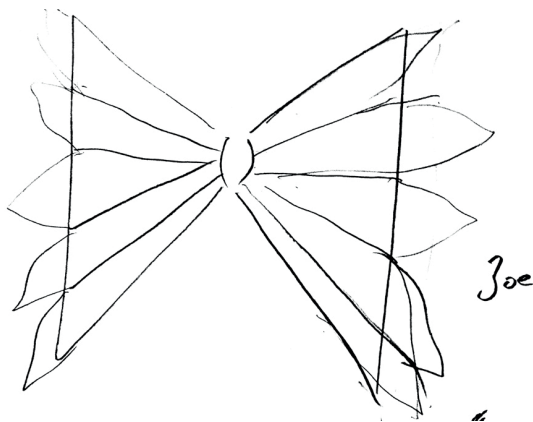
My mum would be a honey tree,  
Evergreen, lovely to look upon,  
But prickly when you try to be too close.

My sisters would be dandelions  
When they have what they want,  
They go to the wind.

My Jamie is a lily, waiting for me to pass.  
So he can be placed on my cross.

And if you listen, you will agree:  
A bumblebee knows more than you and me.

*Zoe*



## **IV - DIRECTION/true north**

### **Long road South to find True North**

To escape, to leave behind  
Whatever hinders  
To shake the shackles that captivate.

What do I find in my lostness?  
A pleasure in rising  
A-gain. A-new.

*Rita*

### **Monument against the flow of time**

This ghostly, unknown creature dreams  
The meaning of life's mystery  
Being born, not knowing the end, remembering.

*Innocent*

## **Warrior buried in deep grass**

I'll leave my criminal record behind.  
Yeah, but  
Take the education.

23 hours banged up  
Prison taught me thrift  
And the trades of the hungry

And when my head dropped off?  
Another lesson needed:  
Psychiatric Unit

Teaches kindness  
To those who bring themselves  
To that special mercy.

*Anonymous*

Jellyfish softly  
because it doesn't exist

(it means what you want it to mean...)

Inside yourself.

*Steve*

## **Rainbird**

Sky broke open today.  
Everything I've ever known  
Blends into a stream and

Upwards I go  
Against the force  
I pull away into the unknown

Their call, a ghost of the wind's  
Sixth sense.

*William*

## **Hamam**

If the egg cracks open: fly back to Sudan.  
Feel freedom I will know the people  
*By the smell of Aseeda.*

*Mohammed*

## **How many days & nights have we slept on the road?**

Heart burning in the sun, yet  
Lost my touch  
I throw myself into winter

Because I know next is lightness.  
Darkness judges  
The uncertainty point between fear

And infinity —  
You're in hospital  
Electrocuted, awake again.

*David, Bruno, Temesgn*

Frog still in head, mind scrambled  
Personality split  
All ideas infected.

A loud croak at the front of my forehead  
A storm of the brain.  
The sky is busy with atoms.

*Rozina & Georgina*

T I M E'S  
D A R K  
F A C E

My time is different hands on loved faces  
My key to the door is motherhood — but  
My footprints light up monsters

plotting in dark shadows.

*Jayne*

KEYLESS  
TIMELESS  
& FOOLISH

Keyless entry into heavenly happiness.  
Flowing footprints; lights for foolish wisdom.

*Anonymous*

## **Their penances are the angels**

In No Man's Land, at an ancient church  
I opened a can.  
Stayed the night and a window lit like a heart,

In the city, dustier, dirtier, smellier  
Life's rushing, talking multiplies in your head.  
You don't hear, but sense, their restless pain

Someone's down in the gutter  
I'd pick him up, put him back to rights  
In the sky.

Out in in No Man's Land  
And a window lit the path  
The road within the mind, to get out.

If the wind's gonna take you, how d'you know anything?  
I keep my feet on the ground, and the old ones say  
"Put angels on the tree. Ring the bells on

Christmas Day, they'll get their wings."

*David*

## **Manmade**

Music is more than a child,  
It's an essence. And poems are  
Powerful spells. I watch how I speak:

These things are all seasons  
In the movement of our  
Constellations.

For an easier computation  
Time is the most valuable  
Knowledge comes according

And as for wealth?  
I owe the sum of the bearer.

*Sampuran*

## **On the eve of the full moon**

Take  
a proper  
gander

at the propaganda.

ADHD  
In HD

Abstinence

Abstinence

Absinthe

Abyss.

*Charlie*

## **Friends part forever / wild geese lost in cloud**

Nettles and blackberry bushes stretch out after winter-rest. Leaves uncurl from sleeping buds. Electric green. Warm life-giving wind, sea salt breezing on cliffs and waves crushing puming rocks. Cascading and crashing the cymbals. White horses racing and racing on rocking sea. Seathrift and lavender lying low on the cliffs, hiding from the stormy winds.

Dragonflies race over the graveyard to the pond. Kestrel sits at the top of the tree, studying the terrain. Natterjack toads sing the spring chorus for a mate. Vernal smells dowse and dye the air, with a perfume of growth and life's fulfilment.

Hundreds of geese circle to the mere. You feel like flying away with them because they're free.

*David*

የጠፋው ከባድ ቃል ነው፡-  
ለማስቀመጥ ወይም ለማሳሳት ከባድ ቃል።  
እራሱን ማግኘት አለብዎት

መስመጥ, ግን ተንሳፋፊ እና

በዚህ ክፍተት ውስጥ እንጠፋለን.  
እንደ መናፍስት በመዞር እየተደበቅን ነው።  
ብንኖርም.

ተመስገን

::

Lost is a hard word  
A hard word to place, or misplace.  
You must find yourself

Sinking, but floating and

In this space we disappear.  
We're hiding in rotation, like ghosts.  
Though we exist.

*Temesgn*

Nature coming to life, trees, plants, fruits, ripen.  
Sunflower makes me smile when seen.  
Everybody leaves. You're on your knees.

Garden, worship place, church, mosque,  
Coming to direct contact  
God's watching over you  
The person you were, yourself,  
Your legacy.

*Nabi*

می‌شوند رسیده میوه‌ها، گیاهان، درختان، می‌آید، زندگی به طبیعت  
می‌آورد لبم به لبخند می‌بینمش وقتی آفتابگردان  
زده‌ای زانو. می‌روند همه  
مسجد، کلیسا، عبادت، محل، باغ  
مستقیم تماس در  
دارد نظارت تو بر خدا  
خودت، بودی، که شخصی  
تو میراث

Lost in my reflection.  
Listen to the animals living;  
I'm just a visitor in the black pond of galaxies.

*Brandon*

When it starts calling, I'm  
Walking at night  
I'm out in calmness

Looking for the brightest light =  
Call it the Northstar.  
Everybody knows True North

but me.

Spark up  
On a little bench, by Christie's  
Peaceful, free.

*James*

## Credits and thanks

All poems and artworks were made collaboratively at Caritas Salford's Cornerstone day centre, from Summer 2025 to Spring 2026.

Philip Davenport devised and directed the project and collaborated in the making of these poems; artists Christine Johnson and Darren Marsh devised 3-d poems, in consultation with the makers. Our "wishing frogs" were inspired by Dom Sylvester Houédard (dsh), maker of the original frog/pond/plop, which is archived at John Rylands Library.

Thank you to everyone at Cornerstone who contributed poems, lines, words, thoughts, encouragement, criticism, humour and patience. These are your words, you own them. Thanks particularly to the Thursday afternoon poets who created not only poems, but a shared safe place.

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Finally, thank you Alison and Darren at Manchester Central Library, Becky, Kaye and Martin, at Manchester Poetry Library and Jess Smith at John Rylands Library.

## **Caritas Salford's Cornerstone day centre**

Caritas Salford is a charity which supports people from right across Greater Manchester and Lancashire who are experiencing poverty, homelessness and discrimination, and its services are embedded in the local communities it supports.

Cornerstone day centre is one of the services run by the charity and works with people experiencing homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless - not just in preventing homelessness, but also ensuring that people are helped to secure safe accommodation, and no one has to sleep rough. The team also aims to enable people to improve health and wellbeing, access specialist support services, and take up education, volunteering opportunities, training and employment, as a means of sustaining positive housing outcomes.

With many decades of experience, the charity is proud to work alongside local people to develop its services and ensure that they are embedded in the local communities.

For info on Caritas Salford and its services, visit [www.caritassalford.org.uk](http://www.caritassalford.org.uk)

For information on Cornerstone day centre, visit [www.caritassalford.org.uk/cornerstone](http://www.caritassalford.org.uk/cornerstone)

Or to make a donation in support, please visit [www.caritassalford.org.uk/donate](http://www.caritassalford.org.uk/donate)

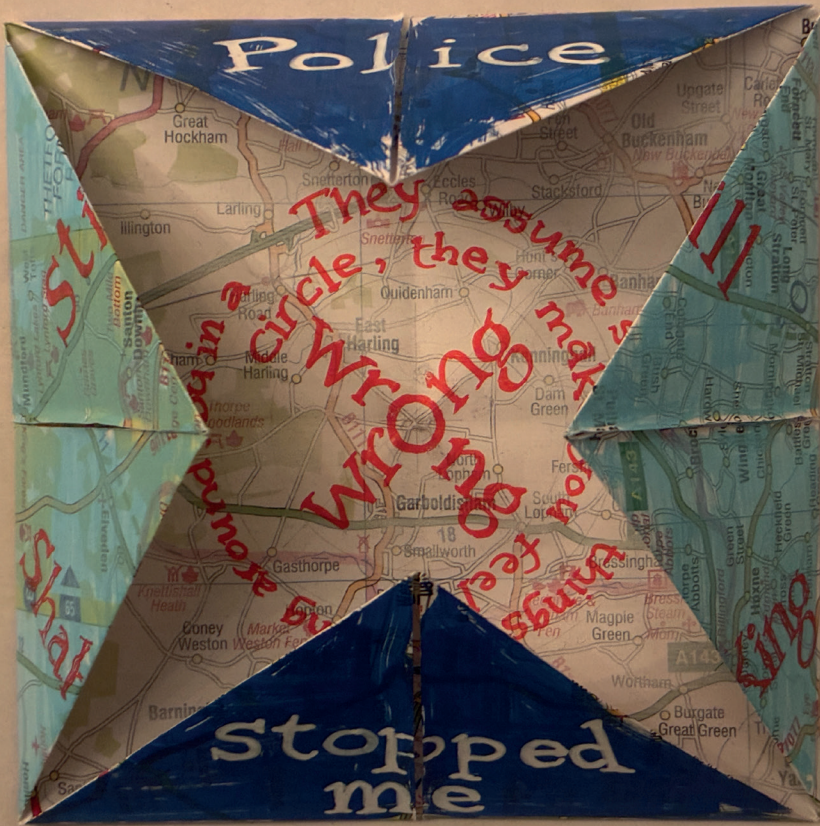
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0161 232 8888

[Cornerstone@caritassalford.org.uk](mailto:Cornerstone@caritassalford.org.uk)

Open Monday to Friday from 9.30am to 1.30pm



## THE LONG ROAD SOUTH TO FIND TRUE NORTH

Take a poetry trek from loss to hope, from home to infinity, to find your own personal True North.

Eighty people from the Caritas Salford Cornerstone day centre in Hulme, Manchester - many affected by homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless - have made poetic paths for all to follow, opening eyes to a wider world.



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**ARTS COUNCIL  
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**Cornerstone**  
Caritas Diocese of Salford

