



BRICKS AND MORTAR: WHAT IS HOME?

A little online lit mag
from The Nuthatch

Issue 2.

A foreword from the one and only Barry Hollow...

Take the dirt and take the sand and take the water. Adventure far and take it from familiar beaches. Take it from mountains, seas, rivers and forests. Especially the forests. Those carry hidden seeds for Spring, yet to break frost. Find clearings and mix them. Mould as clay. Form and mix and form the mix and form the bricks. Collect kindling. Build the fire. Stoke the fire and fire the kindling sticks and fire the bricks and kindle more. Kindle with kin and bellow into the kiln. Give strength, greater than the sum of its parts. Congregate and collect conversations around the fires and feel warmth. Feel the language in your mouths and celebrate. Suspend pots and cauldrons and warm the waters. Harvest and blend the perpetual stew. Flames give licks of friendship and bonds of blood. Inhale scents of ambrosia and eucalyptus. Abdicate to reminiscence and bestow new memory of sanctuary. Share broth as brothers and sisters and bind as mortar. Bake and break bread. Build as moons pass and golden light leaves scatter and blanket ankles. Remember to sup from the Quaich. Stack the bricks high. Memories breeze through. It reminds to build with longevity against harsh climes. Commemorate with gaps. Windows for low summer sun to kiss through. It will cast shadows. Turn to see willow-wisps of callused hands who build foundations. Let light in and keep the fires burning. Leave apertures at either end. One to usher in new friends and those who bring harvest to the hearth. The other for those who must leave to find new adventures. Some leave more than they brought and the rest will bring abundance for all. Share with love. Make rooms and make room. Some advise branches be laid across these walls. They may shelter. Ponder how you will let starlight in. Wonder at revelations and revels under nomadic clouds. How will rain find seedlings? How will you lay for rest and comfort? Bring the hay and fashion a bed. Make it warm. Rise and raise from the ground. Though not too high that bare feet can't be grounded. Ask yourself, is this how we make it home?

**Roam free to gather
and commune apricity
joyous sanctuary**

FLYING ORDER



I Am The North

Jess Furey

You Do Not Have A Home

Helen Grant

The Fundamental Component

Megan Layley

Thread By Thread

Gary Bunting

I am the ditches through the wetlands

Bronwen Evans

Take Me Home

Janice Mathis

Map of Indefinite Leave

Kate Larsen-Daw

Renovations of the Self

Rosanna Foster

Vivacious

Philip Taylor

Our Bodies Are Our Home

Sarah Cain

Estate Of The Nation

Adam Elms

The childhood home as an archaeological dig

Elizabeth Fevyer

At Home I Don't Exist

Benedicta Norell

I Am The North

I was raised down the road from Liverpool in a town called Runcorn. Mum's side are scousers. Dad's side are from Lancashire, going back a few hundred years. Making me Northern through and through. And proud of it, in that cliché way that all Northerners are. Proud and loving of what we stand for and why we stand for it. I love Northerners for all that we are. We are strong in a resilient kind of way. We are humorous and caring of the people we love, sometimes too much. Family and love has always been at the forefront of everything that we do. In the North, we never give up. Strength comes from those who came before us, and we fight for belief, culture, freedom and right. When Thatcher ripped the North from the inside out, we never gave up. During the Hillsborough disaster, Liverpool's people became one and kept as one. Our towns are brick cities, laced with rotting history. A gold mine of yesterday's stories. We keep it alive with tales of our grandparents in the war, through laughter in a pub somewhere deep in the Northern Quarter, by passing on all we know—Northern whispers to our friends. My mum speaks with a scouse wittiness seldom registered outside of this concrete mass. Usually a chuckle at the end of a sentence, a local snigger you will hear from a joking Liverpudlian. I thought my dad knew of everyone who existed, with the way I watched him hold a conversation. The recipient always laughed or stayed so engaged. I try to be like them. A north-west kind of goodness. I will be sorry if I fail to achieve it. I'm sure, outwards of our pie crusted walls, the people will have their own idea of righteousness. But not comparable. For the downsides, I love ten more of our oddities. I love beige food. I love when it rains, the fine kind that soaks you through when you're trying to do your shopping. I love the culture we have saved, and showcased in free museums to revisit 6 times in one month. I love what was once Northern and has sprouted outwards but will always know its roots—actors, musicians and comedians. They are just like us in the end. We will always be just like us. Northern to the core. We will one day lay buried, pushing up Northern flowers. Haunting Northern streets in the dead of a grey Northern night. I am just like you. I am the North.

Jess Furey

Jess is a poet and creative writer from Liverpool. Right now, she's at the start of her writing journey. She's working on getting her foot in the door of the professional writing world. Nature and the seasons are among her biggest influences in writing (alongside history and mythology).

You Do Not Have A Home

After Richard Scott

I saw a poet on my broken computer screen
who read at a Zoom event 'you do not have a home
apart from these words so you keep on walking,'
and an hour before I had been looking
for a home, from behind my broken computer screen

because of
broken family and broken benefits and bailiffs knocking
for the broken, which in this instance, happens to be my broken family,
which is my broken hope,
which is partly wondering what to do
with my belongings as I'm looking for a home,

and my belongings include a bookcase
whose shelves are bending
under the weight of books
which contain words
I've always been finding a home in.

Helen Grant

Helen Grant has been published in a wide array of magazines, including The Poetry Review, The North, Stand, and Acumen. She was longlisted for The Live Canon Award 2019 and shortlisted for The Martin Crawford Award 2019 as well as the Creative Future Writers' Award 2020. Helen was also a finalist in TLOP's Voice of Peace competition 2021, was highly commended in The Dead Cat Poetry Prize 2023, and also longlisted in the Black Cat Poetry Press Nature Competition in 2024. She's also an associate editor for the Kitchen Table Quarterly. You can find some of Helen's poetry by visiting her Instagram page (@helenlgrant).

The Fundamental Component

You're the foundation, cement,
plumbing, central heating.
The warm bed, the winter
blanket, the fixer of
my eyes weeping.
Our digs aren't on par,
with Chelsea or Beverly Hills,
bricks are bricks only,
with a mortgage+bills.
No matter where, when
or how far. I go where you go,
my home is wherever you are.

Megan Layley

Megan is a poet from Reading, UK, who has had pieces published online and in print. She also runs her own blog, The Swift Poetry Review, which is available to view on her website. You can find all of the above via her Linktree (<https://linktr.ee/meganrlayley>).

Thread By Thread

I've only had four homes in my time
The first (No.42), a red-bricked end terrace in a small northern town
With an escapologist Irish wolfhound called Blue
And a hamster who dragged my school jumper
Through the bars of his cage one night
Thread by thread
These memories exist in blurred photographs
Moments on 35mm negatives stored in the spare room
Endless summers on bicycle rides
Eating parkin on bonfire night
A cricket pitch at the end of the lane
Starting high school and hating every day
Sobbing in my mum's arms at the foot of the stairs.

There was a glitter ball hanging from the box room bedroom ceiling
In my second home (No.387) when we moved in
It plummeted to the floor and shed its mirrors
When, along with my sister, I gave it a good spin
Dad ripped up the floorboards during the Mexico '86 World Cup
I was in bed with a chronic stomach bug
I discovered books, poetry, guitars and solitude
The sound of the sewing machine as mum altered my sister's jeans
The smell of an engine ticking over as dad tinkered with the Ford Sierra
Grandparents started dying
Nieces and nephews appear, a realization of adulthood
We watched the total eclipse of the sun sat on the front step

Remember that?

On a Sunday evening I sat alone on a two seater sofa in my third home (No.780)
Surrounded by my possessions in a landscape of cardboard boxes
Wondering what the hell I'd done
Mortgage around my neck, all my money gone on the deposit
A creaky attic and a horror film cellar
An empty shell in the darkness
In a town I didn't know
When the world switched from analogue to digital
Then mum died on a Thursday evening
The grieving is never complete and you don't see it coming.

I now sit here in house number four (No.28)
My love and I laugh
About what, I can't recall
But once we start
It's hard to pause for breath.

Gary Bunting

Gary Bunting is from Yorkshire and is one of the writers at Hello America Stereo Cassette. He has recently been featured in Ey Up Again and Mantis. His current obsession is photographing numbers.

I

am

ditches

through the wetlands

I have heard the Curlew call
when across the mudflats my cries fell silent
sequestered through deep gullies in the green.
Robin, I can hear you but I cannot see you, you are shrouded in the bush.
Little waders fixated just as I am, scurry/search/scoop. Stare out to sea and be still.
Glasswort only sees me at low-tide, cordgrass sometimes bends a wave
when the current runs high by the pebble ridge,
sand-pools cupped by the northern edge
daylight's map, sailing all the way
back over the salt-marsh bedimmed
in soft grey mist, horizon held in languor
brushed gently out to sea. I have blue and storm
all before me, all still to go/so much left, all left to see.
Refracting sod catches the thud of my thinking, splashes out
tricks of this existence so I can remember again. They land
spread atop blades of grasses, lulling down into the rhyne
to be forever rested under lucid, marsh-held rushes
that breathe life back up at me. The slowing love
of this place, haunted by gull's call, guarded
by heron, walks by you, it is not florid
when the light floods in lidless.
Surrounding song lifts
my voice
with more breath
than my lungs. Pirate
smile at radio lapwing.
Each/whinnying/chorus
builds up my endless home
of gold portent reed feathers.

Bronwen Evans

Bronwen is a writer living in Somerset, originally from London (currently studying in Scotland). Her main inspirations for poems are found in nature, observation, memory, and magic. Bronwen's poetry has been featured in a number of nature and eco-poetry anthologies, including The Black Cat Poetry Press, Sunday Mornings at the River, and The Wee Sparrow Poetry Press. She previously won Folklore Publishing's Poems for Trees competition and has been published by Blood Moon Poetry, Wild Roof Journal, Humana Obscura, Samfiftyfour, Hermes magazine, and Juno magazine. Bronwen enjoys walking, birding, painting, and singing.

Take Me Home

It's gone now, the place I called home
fallen under the kudzu and honeysuckle vines
sacrificed to progress, then left to die

It was once a happy place filled with
warmth and light, music, laughter
and love

a shabby little house on a hill surrounded by
large oaks and bright maples for shade,
flowering shrubs blossom to brighten our world.

summer nights lit with the single front porch bulb
and lightning bugs glow,
the smell of freshly cut grass transports me.

Guitars ring out.
Old gospel and country, new rock (classics now)
voices harmonize with the love of brothers.

little sister their biggest fan,
an audience that never tires of listening—
"Take Me Home Country Roads"
to the "Green, Green Grass of Home."

Janice Mathis

Janice Mathis lives in Acworth, GA, with her husband of 39 years. She is a Medical Assistant and Referral Coordinator for a private Physician group. She writes as an emotional outlet, finding inspiration in the beauty of nature, the dynamics of relationships, and the love of her family.

Map of Indefinite Leave

I bought the book on citizenship
But you would not read it

Safer to remain
Than to beg belonging and be turned away

I ask my ancestors
Where they were at home

The place they began
Or the place they came to stay

The only thread I can trace
Across oceans and time

Red restlessness
On every side

Kate Larsen-Daw

Kate Larsen-Daw is a writer and artist living on the West coast of Scotland. Her work explores nature, mental health, and sense of self. She has had work published in the anthologies *Kaleidoscopic Minds* and *Mother Nature Burns* as well as magazines including *Artists Responding To* and *The Nuthatch*.

Renovations of the Self

I am home when I admit that my walls are lined with pattern,
that mole-dappled wallpaper dances
beside knee caps bent, stretched spiral staircases
carpeted in odd places;
I am continually renovated.

For home is both private and public
and multiple versions of me exist under this roof.

See, eyelashes wander, as dust moults from mantelpieces,
and mossy, unkept gardens
under arm
unarm
prospective guests at my property.

For home is both an intimate now and
a decorated vision.
And I am cemented in the belief
(a conscious decision)
that my patterns do frame me
with transformative precision.

Rosanna Foster

Rosanna's usual creative practice is in delicate pencil and pen drawings (on Instagram @RosannaFosterArtist), but she finds words complement visual art beautifully, and loves exploring their connection.

She's come a long way since her BA in Creative Writing and now hopes for natural and sensual themes to sing in her work, sharing pieces that voice personal vulnerabilities and aim to empower.

Vivacious

Mark my words,
One day, I'll own a blue couch
And it will sit front and centre
In my living room.
It will be a strong and bright blue,
A hue that steals light
From other parts of the room.
As you walk through the door
You will say,
"Wow, that's a blue couch",
And I wouldn't have it
Any other way.
If you see anything grey or dull,
That I myself have picked,
Squatting in my house, know
that I am in more anguish
Than you could possibly imagine.

Phil Taylor

Philip Taylor is an aspiring writer from Essex, United Kingdom. His poems span a range of topics from the classics, like love and friendship, to things like fridges and annoying neighbours. He hopes to publish his own collections in the future.

Our Bodies Are Our Home

As amateur architects, we naively plan
Our homes, homes built from smooth skin
And chiselled bone, all skilfully erected
Over many loving weeks, where warm blood flows
From room to room, pausing to exchange
Oxygen fuelled words, words that diffuse into
Open plan spaces, filling them with the scent of
Serotonin, before condensing on to cold glass.
And as complex wiring hidden behind walls, moves ions
Across cells, light appears in the life of he who
Dwells within, bringing warmth and comfort,
Long after daylight fades. But all of this aside,
A home is not a home without
A cosy, close-knit family kitchen –
Somewhere polysaccharides are simmered
Into life-preserving energy,
Feeding the mind with music,
For there is always music,
Often at the heart of the home,
Where everyone gathers
At the end of a long day
Albeit briefly,
Just because.

Sarah Cain

Sarah is a mum of four currently residing in beautiful North Yorkshire. A former scientist, she now works as a teaching assistant in a local primary school. In her spare time, she loves listening to music, cooking, and writing poetry. She's passionate about nature and the environment but is now hoping to explore how she can communicate her love of science through poetry.

Estate Of The Nation

The estate agent's oil slick hair unsettles me,
pasted horizontally to his smug little head:
if he leapt into open waters, birds would surely wash up dead –
wielding an engraved fountain pen like an ice pick,
Rowan's smarmy grin makes the Cheshire Cat seem clinically depressed
as from his clammy palm to mine a gently warm contract is pressed;
scattered vulture colleagues hover with crooked necks and glinting button stares
whilst I peruse the unnecessary jargon, eternal terms and conditions, finer details
of my new gaff, my pad, my fresh start—a converted cattle shed in rural north Wales.

I sigh, I sign; they exclaim, they exhale;
I own a home and they've bagged a sale—
and it's not half bad: bit poky, no windows, reeks of sheep shit – still – how thrilling!

Cracking out a beaker of tap water, a white bread sarnie (sans filling)
for some rousing first-night celebrations,
I beam with undisguised pride at heeding previous generations:
Netflix? Days out? Posh coffees? They'd have left me flat broke;
Trips abroad? No way! I was quite content in Basingstoke;
Takeaways? For the foolish, so I told myself: "NO MORE!",
and besides, they didn't have Deliveroo during the war
therefore, why should we? It's simply pure greed, not an essential need;
brunches got canned, I stopped buying organic;
if a friend suggested drinks, my bank account would panic;
and I've never so much as side-glanced an avocado
let alone bought one, had it on toast—pah! What a luxury!
Glad I gave it all up for an existence frills-free.

Have I enjoyed my life? Well, that's not really the point,
it's worth it to have my own joint, a place where I'm boss;
I can never retire but who gives a toss
'cos I'm finally on the property ladder!
Hurrah! An achievement! I'm so proud! Yes! Go me!
And not before time for I'm now eighty-three.

Adam Elms

Adam Elms is a visually impaired Devonian theatre creative, writer, and wannabe knitwear model who has lived in Bristol for almost twenty years. He recently returned to the poetry scene after a decade away and won the Waltham Forest Award in 2023 with his poem, 'The Last VHS Player In England.' When he's not wrestling with complex rhythms, sibilance, and finding a rhyme for 'purple' (there isn't one), you'll most likely find Adam on a twenty-mile hike in the Somerset hills, wild swimming in all weathers, and singing with the mighty Gurt Lush Choir.

The childhood home as an archaeological dig

We begin in the living room.
Nine months for our grief to gestate.
Brushing away at the top layer,
as a parent brushes hair
from the eyes of their sleeping child.
Brushing with such gentleness
that we might be here for years
- and that might be the point.
He wanted us to keep this place,
our father, with his model planes,
his books of stamps and medals,
his carrier bags of receipts.

We sweep away the dust-layer,
a conglomeration of dead skin, so rich
it must hold all of us in its ash.
We chip away
at the piles of crockery,
the petrol station mugs,
the empty film canisters.
We leave the lid
of the paramedic's needle
on the stairs. Its red cone,
an unfinished exclamation mark,
stopping us in our tracks.

There's buried treasure, too.
The signed pink ticket stub,
Paris 1959: Our father
at the Folies Bergère, with a girlfriend
(whose name was never part of the story)
and Elvis in the next seat.
Brick-fat wads of postcards,
a pair of glazed clay hedgehogs
pressed by our own tiny thumbs.
Libraries of bank statements.
We buy an incinerator
and place it in the garden,
next to the dried-up pond.

My brother tells me
there's a wall at the local tip,
where you haul
the larger artefacts
up one side,
raise them to the top,
then let gravity do its job.
The trick is to wait
until the wind
is louder than the crash.
What happens next is a secret,
known only to the screaming gulls
and Council staff.

Elizabeth Fevyer

Elizabeth lives in Cardiff, Wales, with her children and two geriatric cats. She's been writing for her own joy and solace since she was a young child. You can find Elizabeth's writing at Scapegoat Review and One Sentence Poems.

At Home I Don't Exist

I am out with lanterns looking for myself—Emily Dickinson

The to-do list lives
in the air, the molecules
of home. Something
happens to me when
I'm not there,
I become a person
with feelings of my own,
passions and perceptions.
I am myself
walking by water,
at the cinema
or the museum,
or sitting across
from a friend.
I am myself
on an empty bus,
in anybody else's house,
in the eyes of the stranger
taking my money
for ten minutes
in a new costume.

Benedicta Norell

Benedicta's poetry explores themes relating to identity, self-worth, family, nationality, and body politics. After her MA in Creative Writing at Oxford Brookes University, she worked as an editorial assistant before becoming a freelance editor of fiction and memoir. Her poems have appeared in Poetry Worth Hearing, Ink Sweat and Tears, and Blue Press. Her debut chapbook, Terrible Mother, is forthcoming in late 2024 with Black Cat Poetry Press.



Images by Ally Hammock.

THE NUTHATCH



**"The home should be the treasure chest of living." —
Le Corbusier**

Thank you for reading and a colossal thank you to all of our epic poets. What a journey it has been.

The Nuthatch is co-founded and run by Dan Hughes and Ally Hammock in between their day jobs (in writing and conservation) and looking after the three beautifully quirky fledglings they share, as well as Skye Dog.

If you would like to submit to The Nuthatch, see our [submission guidelines](#).

Until next time... Ally and Dan. xxx

Website: <https://www.thenuthatchmag.com/>

Instagram: @thenuthatchmag

