



To Willington,

Here we gather to voice you a message  
A few burning words to make this night rise  
So let us breathe **in** our times spent together  
And breathe **out** our hopes for tomorrow's new skies

Where wildflowers grow,  
So flies the wise crow,  
For those in the know  
A secret it glows. Sssshhh.  
There is treasure that beds. Like grown over tracks  
Long hidden embers of years going back.

Put your hand to this soil  
It vibrates with a hum of the tears and the toil  
And the voices and choices, the care and the kin  
Past heartbeats like drums underneath the earth's skin

So fire up and let's go.  
*Breathe*

Back, back. History's faint lines,  
weave their way through our present  
Close your eyes, see them shine,  
Delicate echoes sing luminescent.

The ghost of the Bishop-bound steam train roars through  
Its thundering engine whispers under the bridge,  
Little pink cheeked faces look over and 'woo woo'  
Transparent hands wave over the stone bridge's edge.

Here. And on. There. Now gone.

But see. Oil lamps like fire flies.  
The colliery.  
Our folk who powered the warming of the nation.

*Breathe*

The memory of coal dust clings in its absence  
while shadowed pit ponies beat hooves on the tracks.  
Lines of tired souls filthy, ready for home, while  
The children they play down the dene, or the beck

The beck. Where polite-hatted ladies once did flock. And paddle. And chit chat.

But these bairns, their Mams call them in  
And like silverfish wet through they come.  
One by one. Their day all but done.



Can you see?  
Like you could reach through the years  
and there they'd be.  
Each one a small spark running free

*Breathe*

The high street!  
Getting ready for going to the Big Meet  
Excitement and picnics packed with so much to eat.  
Can't sleep.  
Curling rags tied in too tight.  
So that tomorrow you'll be the bonniest sight  
In all county durham. So sleep safe, dream bright.  
Sleep ponies to ride by your side through the night.

The shops! Oh the shops!  
Sweet shops and Barbers and Hardware (means all-ware)  
And banks and post office, Coulson's fruit shop, oh my  
Cinemas, butchers, the list could go on, where you'd  
Get what you wanted in quite the supply.

Every closed shop once open, its wares on display  
Back in the day. Was the Willington way.

And the pubs, aye the pubs.  
If you began at the bottom of the street with a thimble  
of booze and if each pub doubled your drink  
by the top you'd be drunk as a... pinball  
because the pubs were so many more than you'd think.

The ebb and the flow  
Of the places we know  
And the stories we love  
Lift them up. Watch them go.

In one shop doorway, stands a proud man.  
His postcards and photographs pegged like reports,  
Herbert Coates his name. And with a button he can  
Stop time. His camera - a Tardis of sorts.

In those black and white squares there is caught something fleeting.  
A flash. Cheeky faces are frozen mid-grinning.  
Arms folded, necks scrubbed, school children are seated,  
Or sports heroes beam, cup in hand, fresh from winning!

Or a warm shopkeeper posed, elbows on counter,  
the FA cup crowd's passion roars past on the wind  
The shadow of the late great Dant heap watches over,  
A skyline gone but not lost. A view still in our mind

Now past smiles are our prizes, eyes lively and splendid  
Snatched moments suspended



precious lives never ended.  
Never aging. Unbended.  
Clock stopped.

And now Herbert himself is a time-stolen outline  
Flat capped, eyes locked on a distant view  
But his presence is felt through the years like a kite line  
His vision sails our history high for us now.  
From him to me and to you.  
Old meets new.

*Breathe*

*Look. Look. Here it comes.*

And every old house was once a new venture  
Holding promise of life within its brick womb  
Walls layered with laughter and chatter and nurture  
And a fresh painted door for a future to come

Excited eyes shine, strong arms hold on tight  
At the Welfare the music it plays yet another  
On the floor, dancing shoes take fire, take flight  
And the couples they whirl in a blur like no other.  
Spinning and lifting 'til out of our sight.

LOVE built this town, and I don't mean the man.  
Because stitched in the bricks is the feeling of HYEM

Like rainfall, our heart-call brings memories to surface  
That we might ignite them and send them on free  
Not just to look to remembering's in warm melancholic  
But to manifest what we want **this place to be.**

We've played silver tunes in our Willington blues  
We've tooted and piped even played on kazoos.

And though industry steamed in and burned out before  
We'll never give over our ambition for more.

And the hurt of the closures and the harsh demolitions  
The broken, the leaving, just spare  
The starving of funding, the absence of vision  
No shops. No investment. No ambition. No care.

We'll burn these words up and cast them aside  
Because here. It. Comes.

Willington

Some call you forgotten and warn of changed tides  
Others? Well others they speak with warmth and sheer pride



Like our Olive, bright eyed warden of stories  
She sits in her house and looks down through the years  
She has gathered together the marks that are scorched here  
The kin and the care, the toil and the tears  
And we thank her.

Careful old hands hold a young face and smiles  
***It's yours now.***  
***Protect it. Respect it.***  
***But above all, remember you too can affect it.***  
***Your footprints and heartsong make their own mark too***  
***For folk to find when you pass on through***  
***So pass it on. Pass it on.***

Breathe in  
And out  
Fire up  
And burn loud

***Here it comes.***

### **THE FUTURE**

**What makes us won't shake us it all makes us US**  
**And as the flames burst, let the air fill, a scatter robust**  
**of places and faces and stories sparked by**  
**We'll shout them and cheer them up high**  
**Because they are all WILLINGTON!**

**That the future grows from them, held high, no regret**  
**And those looking on will never forget!**

The laughs and the sharing, the bingo the craic, the loyalty, warmth and the care.  
The prize-winning leeks, the allotments, and all you'll find there.

It is all here. We're all here. **WE ARE** HERE. So...

Draw a map and mark a pin in  
Tie a bright flag round its centre  
Light a flame for the dreams of this place  
From hand to hand our stories pass  
Hand to hand.  
Heart to heart  
Never erase.

**Tonight Can you feel it?**  
**Raise your face to the wind.**  
**Letting go of the hurt**  
***Let the future Come On In.***



**So Willington. We are WILLING YOU ON!**

**This place where roads meet  
Past, present and future  
Forged dreams taking flight.**

**So we gather to voice you a message  
A few burning words to make this night rise,  
Let us breathe in our times spent together  
and breathe out our hopes for tomorrow's new skies**

Like birds of a feather our wants come together  
And together we'll lift our wishes sky high  
In the faith that tonight, fired up, they will fly

***Breathe, feel tomorrow's bright hum***

***Something's not ended, it has just begun.***



### **Young Voices**

*I think Willington should be on the map because I love all of the walkways you can travel through. It can really calm you down making you feel relaxed and peaceful.*

*While you walk through all of the forests there is a heavenly smell of wood, fresh garlic, and sweet flowers. Sounds of birds and green leaves.*

*It feels like you're floating sometimes when you have music in your eyes.*

*I want Willington to be reminded of the past.*

*You can be on top of the world. There's a bench, if you go up this hill and just keep walking, from this bench you can see everything – Bishop Auckland, Durham... all the places all around.*

*And rivers and the orange and black of Parkside. And at night the big lights of 3G (cos I like football). And loads. I know it's not really, but you **feel** on top of the world.*

*I love the pathways. I'd like to find new ones. All the memories, I'd like to make **our** memories.*

*There are secrets gates. Hidden pathways. The houses are on a slant. There's blue paint next to my house. The blackberry bush and the cherry tree. There is my childhood.*