

## Down in the Dumps

The wind buffeted the corner of the house, annoyed with itself at being unable to blow the house down. In the dark grey clouds the sun had taken the day off, it was not a day to be out and about. Victoria Street ran down towards the shipyard only stopped in its tracks by the disused railway line. Around the lamppost at the far end, a few children played swinging on a rope attached to the arm of the lamp. The mothers stood at doorways with neighbours chattering and smoking, while occasionally shouting at the children to behave. It was a grey day in a grey street.

Charlie stepped out into the street, closing the door with a bang, and at the same time hanging on to his cap as the wind sensing a victim tried to take it off his head. So with head down and one hand on the top of his head holding his cap, the other in his pocket he set off for the post office fighting the wind all the way.

The queue at the post office was long, so it gave him a chance to learn the latest gossip, who had gone before or was about to go. The wind and the weather, or the lack of it also occupied the attention of the queue.

Making sure his pension book was secure in his pocket and the money safe in his trousers he wandered into Joe's all day cafe. The air was heavy with tobacco smoke, which did not seem to affect the appetites of the diners. After wrapping himself around a bacon sandwich and a mug of tea, Charlie made his own contribution to the smoke laden air.

The dinner lady stood at his door the mid day meal invitingly wrapped in silver foil in her hands, as he came down the street. "Just in time love" she said to him as he relieved her of the parcel, "what is it today?" he asked. "Liver and onions your favourite" she answered getting into the red and brown council van.

The liver and onions placed in the gas oven to keep warm and the table to be set ready for it and so was he. Meanwhile outside the wind had given up in disgust after making no impact on such a miserable street and the sun had made a belated appearance.

That was all. Charlie enjoyed his dinner; the mothers went inside with the children, leaving the street empty, like the lives of the residents of Victoria Street.

**Robert Mather, March 16<sup>th</sup> 2004.**