

**Nanna Owdbree Towd Me ("Er Did)** by Brendan Hawthorne copyright 2016  
(Based on the stories of locals)

**Intro (sung like an old music hall song)**

Yer owd Nanna Owdbree towd me 'er did, 'er did  
Yer owd Nanna Owdbree towd me 'er did  
Yer owd Nanna Owdbree towd me 'er did 'er did  
Yer owd Nanna Owdbree towd me 'er did  
'er did!

**Poem**

Come eya all on ya me luvverly folk an kin  
Yo'm all on yer welcome, of course yo bin  
From babbies ter owd codgers pin back yer lugs  
cos me werds am as varied as rag podged rugs

We do av our own spake eya yo know the cant o the street yo see  
Cos if a word ends in 'y' we av to mek it sound like double 'ee'  
The rest yo'll pick up as we goo along once yo've gorrover 'er Rood End  
so doe be a barm pot or promise ter goo out on a cat lick owd friend

Cos yer owd Nanna Owdbree's bin 'round a long, long time  
An' ers'n got much ter tell ya in 'er sing-a-long rhyme  
'Er boundries av altered and many people bin un gone  
all th' bostin owd wenches and many a moanin owd mon

The roots to 'er youth begin with the modified River Tame  
Centuries of industry polluted it to such a crying shame  
'Er believes it gid the Black Country its name and identity  
The Celtic tag for dark-slow-flowing powered 'er 'um grun tenacity

The Tomsaete Anglian tribes lived on 'er blackened river-banks  
They settled from the northlands an' to the softened valleys gid thanks  
'Er tributaries flow from Willenhall the other arms um yard sprung  
and all this time the people eya av spoken the muther tung

Then the Saxon's cum an we anglocised 'em to the way we are aspaken  
Nanna's naerme was Ealdenbyrig when 'er lands wuz green un not forsærken  
Then industries and demands on housen and all that that did wrought  
time yielded to more modern ways and the pressures that it brought

'Er ay gooin yampy when 'er tells ya of 'er fower kindling moons  
that roar blasted hell bent furnaces and burnt the sky maroon  
Gid werk ter many families that lived in owd fode back ter back terraces  
and held the spake fer ages that for some now embarrasses

Lloyds the Quaker family set the fust saerfe um fer we dosh  
in the days of owd Victoria when transport from Brum was awash  
wi mawkins, vagrants, robbers and of course the ne'erdo-wells  
who'd drink an fritter the waerges back an end up in the cells

Nanna's fizzog looked younger once gooin back through the years  
with them industry lot asquodgin and a asquaygin on the buses for many years  
Gid purpose, life, economy and pride to this edge of borough town  
where kids wuz towd 'Goo no further than the end o yower end, cos that's yer own'  
The shift werkers and the twilights, haulage and wharfeside loading coal  
The noisy naerbers of industry delivered produce around the clockwork toll  
'Er had tar and roadstone on 'er dowerstep, the trucks un loco's cum n went

to the rolling mills and measurements where some o 'er folk wuz sent

Wi Ruberoid on 'er roofing, Accles tubing and darn below blokes sunk pits  
fer fuel ter mek bikes un box sponners un rods, bows, javelins an alpine sticks  
Medicines and sanitary wears were loop stitched by eye and machine  
Professionals, milk, bread and veg men all werkin together in this scene

Darn the green racing dogs amused them from lockside ums ter passing trades  
paid divis on the diddlums marking cards for health needs an fust aids  
'Er ad dower to dower salesmen selling anti maccassas to bristle brushes  
all on we trying ter mek ends meet befower each bull horn klaxon crushes

Titford pools at the end o' the cut was rowed upon by many a boat  
and the pumphouse kept the lock waerters up ter keep the transport afloat  
Others went ter the Rep, T I Ballroom or Langley Baths gid half a chance  
ter get ter grips wi their partners wi friends darn at the local dance

People returning cummen um like a salmon, some as flighty as a bob howler  
Darn the bug ole bustle cinema shartin an chuckin, throwed out by the corsiteyer  
The palace and the smoke, 'pale im til he's pale' we scream and scream agin  
an' when the credits scrolled up fer the last time we looked to bingo fer a win

Victorian Danks darn Brades Village med boilers and tanks an stuff  
Metal bashing Brookes' and Jones' Coal yard slack an others if that ay enough  
But there wuz a time when parties and sports un socials was a way life  
before economic welfare shifted when book balancers wielded the knife

'Er ad them rise-an-fall gas tanks which cum a land mark on motorways  
They've gone fer scrap now as we change environments cos nothing eya stays  
An now 'ers at another crossroads in this town amongst towns  
as the council sets its central plans for the other five in close bounds

The trams departed early yo know an left the streets ter shanks' ponee  
cos people walked in them days when they day av buz fare yow see  
'Ers also a town of many a faith and is accommodating from all angles  
'Ers even 'ad stained glass winders moved in the company of angels

Irish navvies and migrant businesses, fairgrounds and Carny parades  
Pens an' railway carriages and how quickly the memory fades  
Chance Glass Chemical Werks and bottling and drinking pop  
Quench yer thirst on flaervoured waerter, get deposits back from the shop

The cuts and the rails and the jack bannock trails an locks and boats and trains  
Getting fittle in a dry place when rarnd town the clouds rolled in an it rains  
The Polar Bear café jukebox rammed us in but we could still get a taerble wi luck  
Back to the back yard for Tip Cat and the screamin abdabs achobblin suck

Playing on Newbury Lane slag heaps where yo'd scrage yer knees with ease  
Kids walkin on the wall round the church square where yo cud do as yo'd aplease  
Cos on the tops o coping stoons the owd cast palings got sent off to war  
It's A Long Way To Tipperary Judge sang when he wrote the five bob score

They loaded fust werld war tanks darn the station when conflict demanded  
Housed POW's rarnd the naerbrud when officers and ranks commanded  
In the secunden we had sophisticated Americans on trains and in public bars  
where some were left outside by birth and romance bost under the stars

An' on the top o Rowley Bonk Big un Little Bertha cast their shadow eya

an' when they fired the ground shook but one day we cast many a tear  
Cos a misfire sent a shell towards a local wedding party held at the Boat  
an' killed an injured innocent people who were there or there about

In '42 at the Shadow works a smokescreen blotted the bombers view  
Foremen sent to Newtown 'not to talk ladies', a constructin for the Barracuda's crew  
Manufacturin' spittfire an' hurricane parts, barrels fer stens under the fire watch tower  
to stop Germany sending over another destructive bomb wave terror shower

An yo'd ear the boots and si the strings of coalified spit as dark as a pit bonk oss  
Seeing strangers cum um from battlegrounds, faerthers some thought we'd lost  
An it'd rile yer noggin in disbelief and send yer a cogwinder ter understand ett  
to tek in an like someone yo day know from Adam, a person yo'd never even met

We 'ad lamp post swings and drainpipe escapes allus ad those kind o things  
Some wenches got up the stick before the church bell chimes un wearing gowd rings  
Nanna welcomed post-war Polish lodgers, gid pre-fabs to Italian families  
er ad no time fer ignorance though some locals caused controversies

'Er remembers the food we had if we wuz good - stuff yo couldn't beat  
arunnin darn to Parkes' and Fragnoli's, Scrivens caerkes darn Corbett Street  
Seeing squalin pig escapees from the abertoir by the flats befower they wuz built  
Maers buttered brazils, coalyard baercon, chocolate eclairs dipped up to the hilt

Polly's garden memory from the fountain lies within this towns map  
down at the public Junction Polly's memory landed in its lap  
Nanna's lost such a lot yo know in the naerme they gi progress  
but 'er mind is still tin-tack sharp if not showing signs of a little distress

Many av left 'er streets an' gone ter mossive one stop shaps  
Yo could buy anything once on these market streets from onions ter cloth caps  
There'd be that many people rarnd eya that'd atta glimpse or sneak a peak  
or stond on the 'eads o' shappers like walking on the 'eads of sheep

Thowd plaerces served the town's needs and was where people stopped ter cant  
but yow look around ya now and yow might feel the communities am scant  
The shaps av changed the winder dressing and the models changed their cloos  
The decades av run the streets and their families paid their dues

Gone are the shared two up two down front and backs, brew uss fode an' pump  
Er's lost the downstairs electric, tin baths, gas lights and knocker uppers thump  
Er's lost the factory werkers boozers, buz routes and slow food establishments  
an ended up with boredom and sterility and vandalism from malcontents

An off 'er ring road reasons there's many who'll miss 'er hidden legacies  
even though er's got a Free transmission service an a Big House full of authorities  
'Ers got Langley Green an' Warley that reaches all the way out to Brummagem  
Got Brandhall, Londonderry, Brades Village and the blocks at Lion Farm fer some

'Ers ad er share o' writers, boxers, athletes and politicians  
Photographers o' tennis wenches showin knickers in cheeky compositions  
Archaeologists and comedians, moosicians and them oo med the naerme in press  
Presenters and contestants and fer all them oo'm ter come along and impress

So thanks fer listening to some o' Nanna's taelles of all things present and past  
'Er thanks yo fer coming ter see 'er an hopes it woe be yer last  
Cos this town may av much of its time left behind, in all them years gone by  
but 'er can be great and feel loved again if we all pull together and try

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