



The Twenty third issue of a sortof letter substitute, kinda thing, maybe weekly, maybe not, from:

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Available only via the net at the moment. As I've bugged up my mailing list I may not have everyone's address. I would especially like addresses for Joe McNally, Carl Juraez, Jeananne Gommol and Graeme Cameron. If you know anyone who would like to receive this letter sub or who has received it in the past but does not appear on the mailing list (which I will change to bcc next issue) please let them or me know. Dated, already, 8/12/97.

"I'm Home, dear "

Derry. I've always been ambivalent about calling Derry my hometown. I was not born there, but on a Royal Air Force base in Ballykelly on the north coast of Ireland. For the first five years of my life I was in bases in NATO countries, Germany being the only one I can remember, as well as the Middle East and Stafford, in England. When I was seventeen I left the city for Belfast and have not lived there significantly ever since. Of my family my parents were born there, but the extended family traces its roots to Donegal on my mother's side and I'm not too sure where on my father's side. Given that chequered past though, it is as good as place as any to call home.

The past two months, since returning from Canada, I have spent a lot of time there as my parents aren't well. Lloyd Penney in a recent fanzine loccol stated that this was the reason I returned. This is one of the reasons I returned, I argued back. Lesley Reece, in one of those moments in any relationship, reminded me that I'd once said that I wouldn't return to the United States to live until my parents were dead. An emotionally charged statement that, after a pause for introspection, I realise was probably true. Derry draws me for many more reasons.

No one I knew from my ten or so years there is worth catching up on. When I first met the kids in my schools I continually had to reassert my Derry-ness in order to gain any acceptance. My first two years in Derry from England were spent in the heart of the Bogside, walking up William Street to the Rosemount area to go to school. These are rough areas at the best of times but in 1972/3 they were especially fraught. If I'd been allowed out of the door I could have watched the events of Bloody Sunday unfold from the balcony of my Grandmother's flat. Needless to say, we all know how cruel kids could be at the best of times but to live there, at that time with your father an ex-member of the British Armed Forces?

So we moved from the heart of the city to its nether regions. Carnhill is one of the newer housing tracts that inhabit a part of the city that is closer to the border with the

Republic of Ireland than it is to the city centre. A huge sprawl began in the boom of the late sixties; the Shantallow ward of Derry was one of the less publicised areas of Gerrymandering mainly because it wasn't even worth bothering about. A boring, dead place that has all the character of an urban tract. But we had our own house, three bedrooms for a family of four kids which, after the cramped condition of my grannies flat in the Bogside was luxury. A brand new, still being built, school and fields and fields of green with that all too romantic border a mere half mile down the road. I quickly settled in, made new friends and started to have a rather enjoyable childhood in my new home.

But Derry was not a place where I would lay my hat. I never fitted in with the people I was at school with I was doing well academically, one of only 15 people who graduated to University in ten years from a school with an annual population of nearly 1500. I spent most of my time in the local library, as there was never anywhere at home to study, until the IRA blew it up. Then I switched to the school library and the rapidly expanding computer suite, which took up a lot of my time, both during school and after hours. As a rather good junior athlete I sometimes went from school at about 6.30 straight to training and got home around 10pm. So I wasn't actually in the house much, there were no real strong emotional ties to that pile of brick: my father was on shift work, I'm the youngest of four kids (my brother is three years older) who were always away somewhere and my mother worked as well. It was a great household to be part of but a place to recoup, rather than live. Derry is like that for me.

Ten years after first moving to Derry I moved to Belfast and University. To all intents and purposes I was from Derry. Generally that pegged me in people's pigeonholes, until I started to mention to some people that my father was in the forces and that altered some prejudices. I was also from a comprehensive school when everyone else I knew from Derry had attended the local grammar school. I knew no one from my hometown, and liked it that way. I got on with having a good time, studying when necessary and returning to Derry infrequently. I was happy at University, very happy, but I wasn't standing out from the crowd. I had the local fans to relate to, Nyree and our mutual friends and then the people from my class (Ian Paisley Junior amongst them.) All of those groups had very little contact, bordering on none, with each other and to them I was from Derry and that was all the background they got.

This continued after University. I started working; I hesitate to call working in the Inland Revenue a career, and was from Derry and therefore a complete unknown. Most of the other people working in the department from Derry actually worked there and those few who didn't had gone to the College and I didn't relate to. So for six years I worked anonymously: work mates had replaced my University classmates and the three groups continued not to mix. I was a man for all seasons to all people.

In Canada I was first and foremost Irish. That was enough for most people and for the rest I was whatever they wanted me to be. My 'family' was from Donegal in the Republic of Ireland, I was from either Derry or Belfast in Northern Ireland depending upon who I

talked to and for those who couldn't accept any of that I told to Fuck Off. That has been the story of my hometown. There isn't one. I'm not from anywhere beyond being Irish. A typically Irish statement: defining who you are from where you come from, and where you come from, normally, defining who you are. If, like me you come from all over the place, you can make up your own definitions. Mine is that I'm from Derry. It's as good as any other choice

The first issue of a new run of TommyWorld's coming at you live and direct from Belfast. For those of you who thought I'd been publishing all along, I can assure you that I haven't and that you haven't missed out on anything. If you think you have, check out the archives at my web site where all the previous issues are collected in HTML format. I prefer to send these out as Word Doc files, to retain the formatting, but let me know your own requirements and I'll see what I can do.

A slight change in format, as you can see. Each issue will be restricted to 2 or 4 pages and if anyone in the United States or Canada would be willing to act as an agent for paper issues (yeah, I know, I'll regret this) then I'd be interested in hearing from you. I don't know how often I'll be doing this as a lot of my time is spent between here and Derry, where in a city of over 100,000 there is no public internet access. Jesus. However, I do hope to retain the weekly format and hope the change in contents won't burn me out. A bit more fannish discourse, as well as the usual personal stuff, will be interspersed on a regular basis. And if anyone would like to contribute small 500-1000 word articles on either a personal or fannish topic I'd be more than interested to hear from you.

On a personal note my current plans (as always in my life subject to change at any moment) is to hang around Belfast for Corflu next year, when I will hear about my Visa to the United States. If successful it will be issued in September when I hope to move. And yes folks, it will be Seattle. A Tuesday, if you must know. If not, I'll re-consider my plans. Yeah, I know this is all nebulous and not very well thought out and all that bollocks but it also happens to be where my life is at the moment.

This is being distributed to a whole bunch of friends on the net, if you received this and would NOT like to be on the mailing list please accept my apologies for this intrusion and let me know so that you will not be bothered by further ramblings. If you know someone who would like to be on the mailing drop me a line.