

## W for weather

*“Manchester is lovely the weather’s sometimes fine*

*I’ve even known the sun to shine in Ashton-Under-Lyne”*

It’s not fair, the sun does shine, a lot, in Ashton. On hot days the tar between the cobblestones bubbles up. I pop the bubbles with an old lollipop stick. The tar is on my dress and my sandals *and* my legs. I’m in trouble but I do think my dad shouldn’t have been quite so rough scrubbing my legs with the same stiff scrubbing brush my mum uses on the kitchen floor. My skin feels red and raw. I’m sent to bed without any supper.

I wake up. Something’s different. The room is bright, much lighter than usual. Jack Frost has worked magic during the night; there are fantastical patterns on the glass. I kneel up in bed and scrape away the frost pattern on the window. Outside it’s Fairyland. The whole world is white. All sounds are muffled, even the milkman’s clanking bottles are muted as he drives by. I wake my brothers. Perhaps we can stay off school today.

- It’s Saturday, silly, no school today-

We gobble down our cornflakes and toast and scramble into coats, hats, scarves and mittens. Then we are running out into the street, pulling our new sledge behind us. Grandad has polished up the metal runners so the sledge moves easily over the snow.

--- you go first then ---

Dorothy dares me to go down the hill. I lie flat on my tummy so that I can use my toes as brakes. The hill suddenly looks very steep. The sledge swoops along; all the houses look blurred. At the bottom I topple off into the snow, breathless with excitement. Everyone’s hurtling down the hill; they’re using tin trays, dustbin lids as well as wooden sledges. We want to stay outside forever but my little brother is complaining that his hands are cold. I drag the heavy sledge back up the hill. Paul and Sue are building an igloo in their garden so we join them. We pack the snow into blocks. Our hands are blue with cold and our gloves are soaking wet but we carry on, building the walls higher and higher. The roof is more difficult; it keeps collapsing. I wonder if my Dad knows any Eskimos. We could ask them how to make the roof.

The snow is still there on Monday when we have to go to school. I crack the ice on every puddle as I walk to school. There’s a satisfying crunch and crackle before the muddy water seeps through spoiling the smooth clear ice. The school playground is a heaving mass of sliding bodies. There’s snaking lines of glassy ice criss-crossing the playground. The bell rings. We line up to go inside. Later we are all nudging each other when Mr Solan’s back is turned. It’s snowing again. Will we have a snowball fight across the brook with Christ Church school?

*“Christchurch Bulldogs sitting on a wall*

*Eating cow muck, penny a ball”*