### THIS ROPE

This rope entwining, a kist of stories, a claip of dreams - from long since to the now.

An umbilical of time binding the then

to the still to come.

This rope enfolds the town in memories and hope, divides the town to in-bye and out-bye

This rope is Barley town, the bear and the willow, Berwici super tweedam, Berwick-upon-tweed Berwick the stell, the bield

This rope winding up and doon the passeejes, Spittal to the Castle, The Shammels to the Lodges, Czechoslovakia, Abyssinia Goody Patchy to the Plantin'-Strands of lives gathered woven to a rope.

Dae ye mind?

visits to the pickters,

pickin wilks,

going for a plodge,

getting the messages down Marygate,

the hoy-oots at the church? Memory as comfy as a proggy mat,

memory a painful as a spelk.

This rope is a life, straight and true, a beginning to an end.
But the knots are made and given
by those we meet, to make the cloot of living,
be it monkeys fist or slip
sheep shank, half-hitch, bow once tied
you are never more than a cable length from someone's dream.

This rope belongs

to the farmer with his crawcrook,

the poacher with his bag net

catching willietuck, whithins and kelt and the interloupers and heather loupers, who spoach about

# listing to the bell toll as it rings the end of nine hundred years fifty generations or more of tales and then clicks over to begin the count of nine hundred more

The rope listens I met my future husband on this spot,
and at that church we tied the knot.
in 1942 my father swam the Tweed from side to side
someone called the police, thinking him a suicide.
The p-ow of the fishermen rounding the pier
pulling on ropes to ring out the all clear.
Watching dolphins from my grandparents house,
an elephant crashing into a school.
skinnydippig and playing footie,
My dad in the panto, playing the fool.
Visits from Lowry and Queen Elizabeth Two
Shirley Bassey popping in to buy shoes.

A history whispered through tin cans and string, while crowds walk the line and the choirs sing.

Looking to a future of skyscrapers and theme parks, A Primark, KFC and nicer bars.

There are whispers in the eaves for underwater houses and non-polluting cars another fifty generations hence, nine centuries and more there's a wish for a cleaner, more prosperous town a better time in store.

Now the rope at midnight waits quietly. Wheesht and you'll hear the tags stir, become restless, as dreams and hopes and memories will in the watches of the night. Your memories,

your dreams,

your hope.

Your rope.

### **Tastes of Northumberland**

The Taste of Northumberland cafe on Marygate

Promises chicken curry and lasagne,

Macaroni and burgers, alongside

Butties filled with Pease pudding.

There are American coffeehouses

Selling Kenyan beans,

And a butcher selling local produce

Next to ostrich, kangaroo,

New Zealand lamb and Aberdeen Angus.

Aga eats an Italian ice cream

Outside the Polish food shop.

Jest to przyjazne miejsce,

She tells me.

This is a friendly place.

J'aime venue ici,

Says Monique.

I love coming here.

Fish once were salted here. Then cured.

Things learned from the Scandinavians

And Basques.

Later they waited patiently in icehouses

A trick taught by the Chinese.

Berwick's wealth came from the East

Holland and Russia and beyond.

Each ship brought new delicacies,

New preferences.

Indian tea.

Danish pastries.

French bread.

Almost invisible shipping lines

Tie this place to everywhere.

A town on the edge

Of Scotland and England.

On the edge of the world.

These now the tastes of Northumberland.

## Tide and tied

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The Tweed
         is a rope and
           a rope
                             is a river
A rise
and a fall,
a twist and a braid
an over
           and an under and a
           turn
its end fray
-ed and splay
-ed
its length bound and sure
flowing to a horizon stretched taut as a fishing line
between sky
    and sea
ready to be stepped
                            over
yet the river ties us to this spot
the knot of township, homeship, history
the river calls us to our source
                            and guides us homeward bound
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#### Wall

Was a wall, and then a fortress. Now's a rope.

Gates for walkers, cows and sand. Now's a strand.

A wall is harsh, says go away. Rope is tactile, invites to stay.

Stand a while and remember. Look through and back. Hold the line, take up the slack.

Each thought a thread for the living, the dead. Each thread a link.

A link makes a chain, a chain a rope. A rope connects. And now's a hope, where was a wall