

Correspondence

Harry Leeds and the Turnblazer Chronicle

Russell Haley (aka Harry Leeds) finds the manuscript of Alan Brunton's 'Turnblazer : A Pastoral idyll,' posted to him serially from South East Asia in 1973-74. See [Leaving Luang Prabang: A Tale of Two Travellers](#) by Michele Leggott in **kmko #4** (September 2007).

I went round to Michele Leggott's house a few months ago to give her a few postcards Alan Brunton had sent us back in the early seventies. I told her I would look through my boxes of papers to see if I could find Alan's 'Turnblazer' poem. I was sure he'd sent it to me when we were somewhere and he and Sally were somewhere else.

But I'm working on my own personal chronicle – *The Company of Lost Voices* – and I wanted to find a piece of *my* writing from when we lived up in Waiwera. In my search for 'Gehenna' I opened a box I thought I had already searched and there were most of the letters, cards, envelopes – because Alan had asked me to keep them with their foreign stamps – and the top copy of 'Turnblazer.' I have somehow hung on to Alan's papers since we lived in Morgan Street, Newmarket, in 1971 and we have moved house something like fifteen times since then. It seems as though I've looked after my friend's papers much more securely than I have my own. I still can't find 'Gehenna.'

Alan sometimes called me Harry – my first name – and just as often used my middle name – Russell. I was quite used to this because my names became interchangeable when I was a child growing up in Leeds. My Dad was plain Harry Haley and my mother didn't like it when my elder brothers called me Little Harry. We swapped to Russell but around the age of eleven I thought it too posh and changed myself back to Harry. When we had to leave Leeds and moved to jet-black Dewsbury I reverted to Russell.

Alan liked to call me Harry Leeds and he once told me he passed through that Yorkshire city on his way to Scotland. He said he understood more about me after looking from the train at the dark industrial wasteland where I had grown up. He said he wept for me. I never did tell Alan that we lived five miles from the City Centre and we could bike out into Wharfedale. Our ordinary semi-detached house was almost on the edge of lovely countryside. But Leeds *was* a ghastly dirty city in my childhood. The story goes that we were never bombed by the Luftwaffe because the German aeroplanes couldn't find the city. Our part of Yorkshire was covered in a pall of smoke.

Russell Haley

Auckland, February 2008

Russell Haley, Auckland novelist and short story writer, is presently working on *The Chronicle of Lost Voices*, a prose narrative with fictional and autobiographical elements.