

40 Winters

I met a man, seemed like an ordinary man, in a town I hardly knew
And we got talking as two men are wont to do, over a pint or two

I asked him what he did to occupy his time, and got a round in on my queue
he said 'I'm a working man whose working life is through, and I long laid down my tools'

But do you see them brick and mortar houses down along the street, in their lines so straight and true
and all them garden walls standing in between? well that's what I used to do'. He said:

CH

Forty Winters I have spent upon my knees, laying them bricks along a straight string line.

Forty Winters I have worked to build this town;
This town that stands on the banks of the River Tyne

He said 'I'm a lucky man, cos I married young you see, and she never asked for more than I could be
and there was always work for a careful man like me, so I paid my rent and I fed my family
and we worked down by the river, where the shipyards used to one
and under the crane down Walker Quay
and the pubs along the Scotswood Road where the working men like me
be just coming out of the Armstrong factory

CH

He said I'll be going now, cos my Vera's making tea. We live right next door you see
and then he shook my hand and he thanked me for the beer
and he started up to leave

And I saw that his back was bent and he could not stand upright
for the stick that he held in each of his weathered hands
but as he left I saw him turn to take the view
of the brick and mortar houses with their lines so straight and true
and I heard the words of a working man whose working life is through, he said

CH

last CH

Forty Winters I have spent upon my knees, laying them bricks along a straight string line.

Forty Winters I have worked to build this town;

There were times we'd chip the ice away before we laid them down

Forty Winters I have worked to build this town;

This town that stands on the banks of the River Tyne

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