**THE BALLAD OF HILLSBOROUGH**
*The Liverpool supporters
Were given the smaller end;
Crammed behind the goalmouth,
The fans were tightly penned.*
*Penned, penned in their thousands,
Penned in under the sky
No one there had reckoned
That ninety-five would die.

The barriers all buckled,
They couldn’t take the strain
The cheers of jubilation
Turned into cries of pain.

And when at last they noticed,
The police unlocked a gate,
But the exit was too narrow,
And they’d opened it too late.*
*The nation watched in horror,
Stunned with disbelief
As the shadows from the goalmouth
Stained a football pitch with grief.*

*An inquiry has been opened
To find out who’s to blame,
But for those who lost their dear ones
Nothing will be the same.

For nothing brings the dead back,
Post mortems, flowers or prayers,
It’s like reaching the top of the stairwell
And finding there are no stairs.

That drop into the darkness
Goes down and down and down;
And grief’s black water well there,
Inviting you to drown.

Never to see your loved ones,
Or hear them on the phone –
It’s hard to believe when it happens
That you’ll never walk alone.*
*But down at the Kop at Anfield,
The goalmouth shows it’s true:
The scarves around the crossbar
Are knotted red and blue.*
*Despite divided loyalties
Liverpool loved its own,
And every tribute there proclaims:
You’ll never walk alone –*

*Not by the banks of the Mersey
Nor down the terraced streets;
Beneath the great cathedrals
A city’s warm heart beats.*

*And now in the cold spring sunset,
The Liver Bird’s aflame
The Phoenix rose from the ashes;
A city can do the same.*

*Simon Rae*

