

**LEDBURY POETRY FESTIVAL COMMUNITY PROGRAMME  
SEGMENTS POETRY WORKSHOP  
JUNE 2021 : POETRY ON PLATFORMS!**

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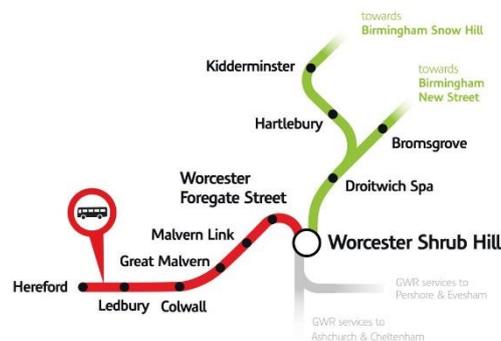
Hello,

Thank you for attending Ledbury Poetry Festival's Segments writing workshop on Wednesday. It was really good to see you there and I hope you enjoyed the session.

Here is a transcript of the workshop with the activities and images. Scroll down and you will have the information I gave during the session at your fingertips. You might like to grab a cuppa!

We will be exploring the rail line from Worcester Shrub Hill to Ledbury as part of Ledbury Poetry Festival's project POETRY ON PLATFORMS.

A huge thank you to Hannah Green, project manager and lead researcher for Poetry On Platforms, for providing the information for our journey.



## Introduction

Ledbury Poetry Festival in partnership with West Midlands Railway are launching “Poetry on Platforms”, a campaign celebrating the poetic heritage of the rail line to Ledbury both past and present. The project involves the local community in Ledbury, station communities along the line, The Friends of the Dymock Poets and the national and international community of poets who have travelled to Ledbury for the Festival over the last quarter century.

Festival Manager Phillippa Slinger says: “Ledbury Poetry Festival has long wanted to highlight the role of the railway to the Festival. The railway’s legacy is little known – people should be made more aware of how the line has shaped and determined much of the area’s cultural landscape. The Festival encourages rail travel by all poets and performers travelling to the Festival, as well as by our considerable audience.”

Poetry on Platforms will install QR Codes at Ledbury Station and other stations towards Worcester. The signage will create a Poetry Trail on the line culminating at Ledbury, Junction for Poetry. The codes will link directly to poems, histories and memories of poets both past and present who have used the train to travel here.

Hannah Green has arranged this information like a train journey, with the various stops, so we’ll look at them in order of the train line: Worcester Shrub Hill, Worcester Foregate St, Malvern Link, Great Malvern, Colwall, Ledbury.

Make notes on your thoughts, feelings, memories, anything you find interesting that are evoked by your associations with the theme in general. We will also be stopping off along our journey to do some quick writing exercises! All aboard!

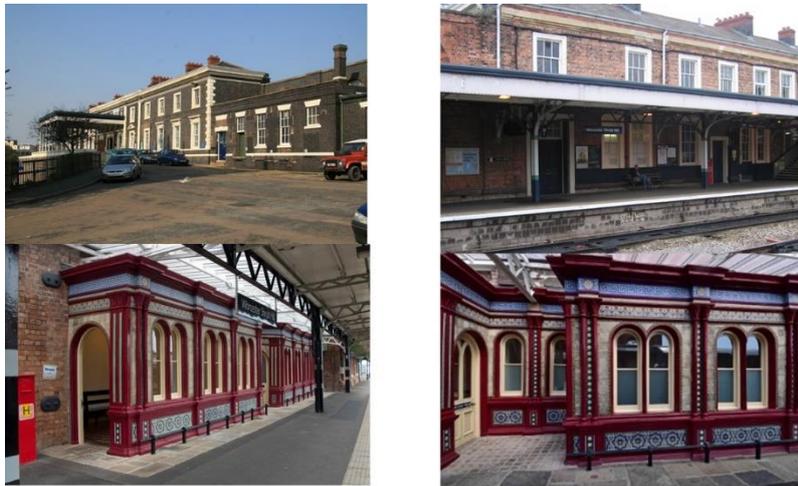
### Our Journey Begins

Welcome to Poetry on Platforms! Ledbury Poetry Festival and West Midlands Railway are celebrating the poetic heritage of the railway line from Worcester Shrub Hill to Ledbury. From the group of young poets and their families who visited each other in a little village called Dymock in the months before the First World War (whom we now think of as the Dymock poets), to the poets who have travelled along this line every summer since 1997 to share their work at Ledbury Poetry Festival, we are exploring how poetry connects us: from place to place, past to present, and person to person.

We will be calling at the following principle stations:

Worcester Shrub Hill, Worcester Foregate Street, Malvern Link, Great Malvern, Colwall, Ledbury

### **First Stop: Worcester Shrub Hill**



Clockwise from top left: Worcester Shrub Hill station entrance, station platform, recently restored tiled waiting room exterior and interior

Many poets have travelled up and down these railway lines over the past 150 years. In the beautiful waiting room at Worcester Shrub Hill station, the tiled walls have seen countless travellers come and go.

Railway lines across the country have had an enormous impact on the way we travel, the way we work, and the way we connect with others. But there is something special about this line, and the people who have used it. Railways take us from A to B, and in their own way, poems transport us too. In this poem, Dymock poet John Drinkwater is swept from the streets of Birmingham to the Dymock woods by the song of a blackbird:

### **Blackbird**

He comes on chosen evenings,  
My blackbird bountiful, and sings  
Over the garden of the town  
Just at the hour the sun goes down.

His flight across the chimneys thick,  
By some divine arithmetic,  
Comes to his customary stack,  
And couches there his plumage black,  
And there he lifts his yellow bill,  
Kindled against the sunset, till  
These suburbs are like Dymock woods  
Where music has her solitudes,  
And while he mocks the winter's wrong  
Rapt on his pinnacle of song,  
Figured above our garden plots  
Those are celestial chimney-pots.

*John Drinkwater*

Our journey by train from Worcester to Ledbury will take a little longer than the blackbird's song in Drinkwater's poem, as along the way we will be stopping to read poetry, learn about the line and take in the views.

### Next Stop: Worcester Foregate Street



On the left, old pictures of Worcester Foregate St, on the right, modern day!

Standing here in Worcester Foregate Street Station, this is the busiest by far of the six stations on our journey. Many commute to Birmingham from this medieval cathedral city, rushing on and off trains with a coffee and maybe a quick on-the-go breakfast. But once the flurry of the commute is over, there is a period of stillness on the train. Some use this time to work or catch up with the news, but others prefer to grab a precious half hour to read.

Think about how many readers have unknowingly sat in the same seat that their favourite author has sat in on their way to or from Ledbury Poetry Festival, pressed the same buttons on the doors, heard the same familiar announcements echo across through the station and along the train carriage...

What was it that drew a loose group of poets and friends to this corner of the country in the early 20th century? Among many factors, it seems to have been friendship, poetry, beautiful countryside, hospitable locals and good cider - many of the things that continue to draw people to the area today.



#### Who were the Dymock Poets?

The Dymock Poets, from left: Lascelles Abercrombie, Rupert Brooke, John Drinkwater, Robert Frost, Wilfrid Gibson and Edward Thomas

In the summer of 1914, another group of poets gathered in the nearby village of Dymock, five miles south of Ledbury. The poet Lascelles Abercrombie and his wife Catherine had set up home in Ryton in 1911. They were followed by their friend, the poet Wilfrid Gibson and his new wife, Geraldine, who lived in Greenway, and in April 1914, Robert Frost and his family moved to nearby Leddington.

Among the poets and friends who joined Gibson, Abercrombie and Frost in rural Gloucestershire in the golden summer of 1914 were Rupert Brooke, John Drinkwater, Edward Thomas, and Eleanor Farjeon. W H Davies, D H Lawrence and Ivor Gurney also visited. The wonderful network of railways facilitated these visits, allowing for the exchange of ideas, inspirations and friendships. The excellent rail links between cities like London and Birmingham and rural areas meant that it was possible for poets to escape to the country and at the same time maintain a foot in the literary world of publishers, editors and reviewers.

#### Poets Past and Present

The Dymock Poets continue to fascinate and inspire to this day. Poet Katrina Porteous' reflection on Ledbury Poetry Festival and Ledbury's poetic heritage illustrates the links between that group of friends and the Festival today:

'On the 300 mile train journey from Northumberland, I thought of Wilfrid Gibson, the Northumbrian poet who settled near Ledbury a century ago. (...) That he felt the need for a literary community, while writing what was somewhat condescendingly referred to as "people's poetry", contained a massive tension. The implicit questions - who and what is poetry for? What place has the countryside in evolving English culture? - remain acutely relevant.

In Ledbury's medieval market setting I reflected on some common cultural distinctions: South and North, metropolitan and rural, "literary" and "popular". I was a long way from home, but the festival - its celebratory atmosphere, packed readings in the Burgage Hall, sandwiches and chatter in the green room, the volunteers' kindness and hospitality - briefly gave me a sense of belonging, immersion in a community of poets - an invaluable, necessarily impermanent, gift to take back into everyday life.'

#### What is Ledbury Poetry Festival?

Every summer, the historic market down of Ledbury hosts poets, performers and poetry lovers for a ten-day poetry festival. Ledbury Poetry Festival is the biggest, brightest, most superlatively international celebration of poetry and spoken word in the UK. Surrounded by woods, orchards and hills, poets from all over the world gather in this independent market town to perform, write, read and listen to poetry.

Contemporary literary titans stand alongside upcoming talents to illuminate a thrillingly electric mix of events, from readings, performance poetry, masterclasses, walks, talks and films through to breakfasts, music, exhibitions and bike rides.

Alongside the Festival's annual ten day poetry extravaganza, there is also a year-round programme of community projects and workshops to encourage participation and widen access to the wonderful world of poetry.



### Coming and Going

For some, the railway is part of their daily commute, but for others a train journey can change everything. Alison Brackenbury shared this poem for Poetry on Platforms, about the train journey that took her aunt Edith from the Buckinghamshire countryside, to a new life of service in London:

#### **Edith Leaves**

There she was, my Aunt Edie, going off to service,  
scared, and fourteen, crying  
by the side of the train.  
She did not want to be a maid,  
but to run straight back to the cottage,  
to her grim red mother, to the tall bean row  
where her taller father waited.

So he, in his labourer's best boots, climbed  
with her on the train, then travelled  
to the next brief stop  
(could he pay? was he caught?),  
jumped down. She sat, still crying.

How did he reach home? I know. He walked,  
the lanes smoked dust. He did not see  
the hawthorn's fresh and spiky leaves,  
cream, heavy heads of elder.

"What use was that?" her mother said.  
"You could have ridden all the way  
and she would still be crying."

What would you be, as the train shook by,  
as the pollens stroked his shoulder,  
the flowering may, with its neat chopped thorn,  
the heady, weeping elder?

*Alison Brackenbury*

**Your Poetry on Platforms - warm-up writing exercise - jot down notes in response to these prompts:**

Put yourself in the shoes of one of the Dymock Poets or imagine you or someone else is travelling by train today. Where do you have to be? Have you brought a book to read, important work to finish, or are you simply sitting, watching the houses and chimneys of Worcester slide past, giving way to fields and woods and distant hills? Maybe you feel moved, by the bustle of the town or by the quiet of the landscape. Maybe this is your first time seeing these sights, or perhaps you come this way every day. Make notes about anything that comes to mind.

**Next stop: Malvern Link**

**(so called because carriages stopped here to 'link' up extra horses for the steep ascent!)**



Clockwise from top left: old Malvern Link station, new Malvern Link, platform views, the Malvern Hills in winter as seen from Malvern Link, and an old picture of the hills as seen from the link

The freshly painted cream and pink wooden roof of the bridge over the track, the smooth shapes of the well-tended greenery stretching alongside the platform, and the daffodils curving in the design of the wrought iron gate. This area is loved by many people for the surrounding landscape, but there is loveliness in the small things just under your nose here at Malvern Link station.

Behind us, the Malvern Hills loom majestically over the landscape. Lascelles Abercrombie, a Dymock poet, wrote these lines about their beauty:

*from Ryton Firs*

'I had a song, too, on my road,  
But mine was in my eyes;  
For Malvern Hills were with me all the way,  
Singing loveliest visible melodies  
Blue as a south-sea bay;  
And ruddy as wine of France  
Breadths of new-turn'd ploughland under them glowed.

'Twas my heart then must dance  
To dwell in my delight;  
No need to sing when all in song my sight  
Moved over hills so musically made  
And with such colour played. —  
And only yesterday it was I saw  
Veil'd in streamers of grey wavering smoke  
My shapely Malvern Hills.'  
*Lascelles Abercrombie*

### A Community of Poetry Lovers

Ledbury Poetry Festival started with a group of friends and poetry lovers in 1996. Richard Surman, one of the founders, remembers the cast of characters who put things in motion: 'The origins of the Ledbury Poetry Festival were modest and more than a little eccentric: of the original group that got together to discuss the idea of a poetry festival, a disparate "gang of six" emerged: a former blue badge guide turned artist, a joiner, a photographer, an organic farmer, a teacher and a former information officer with the British Tourist Association.' It was the enthusiasm and hard work of a group of local friends that got the festival off the ground.

### Do It Yourself: The Dymock Way

In the early 1900s, another group of friends launched a special literary project not far from Ledbury. Whilst they were living in the area around Dymock, Wilfrid Gibson and Lascelles Abercrombie, along with their friend, the poet, playwright and actor John Drinkwater, decided to publish a journal of their poetry.

*New Numbers* was assembled in the Abercrombies' cottage, and sent out to hundreds of subscribers all over the country from the Dymock Post office. In 1914, when the first issue was released, the railway still played a key role in the postal service. The journals, with addresses hand-written by Catherine Abercrombie with a baby on her knee, and stamps licked by Wilfrid Gibson, would have rattled across the country by train. Despite its humble beginnings, it was an important little journal, and it was the first place that Rupert Brooke published the poem which would come to define him: *The Soldier*.

Hannah Green, project manager, says: "I was struck by the DIY spirit of the first festival, which was put on by a group of local friends and poetry lovers. It reminded me of the *New Numbers* poetry journal that Lascelles Abercrombie, his wife Catherine and Wilfrid Gibson put together in their cottages around Dymock. This was a really important publication, with some great poems (including some by Rupert Brooke), but its beginnings were just as DIY as those of the festival. It's fantastic to think of two groups of people, five miles and 80 years apart, starting their own poetic projects."

### Women and Words



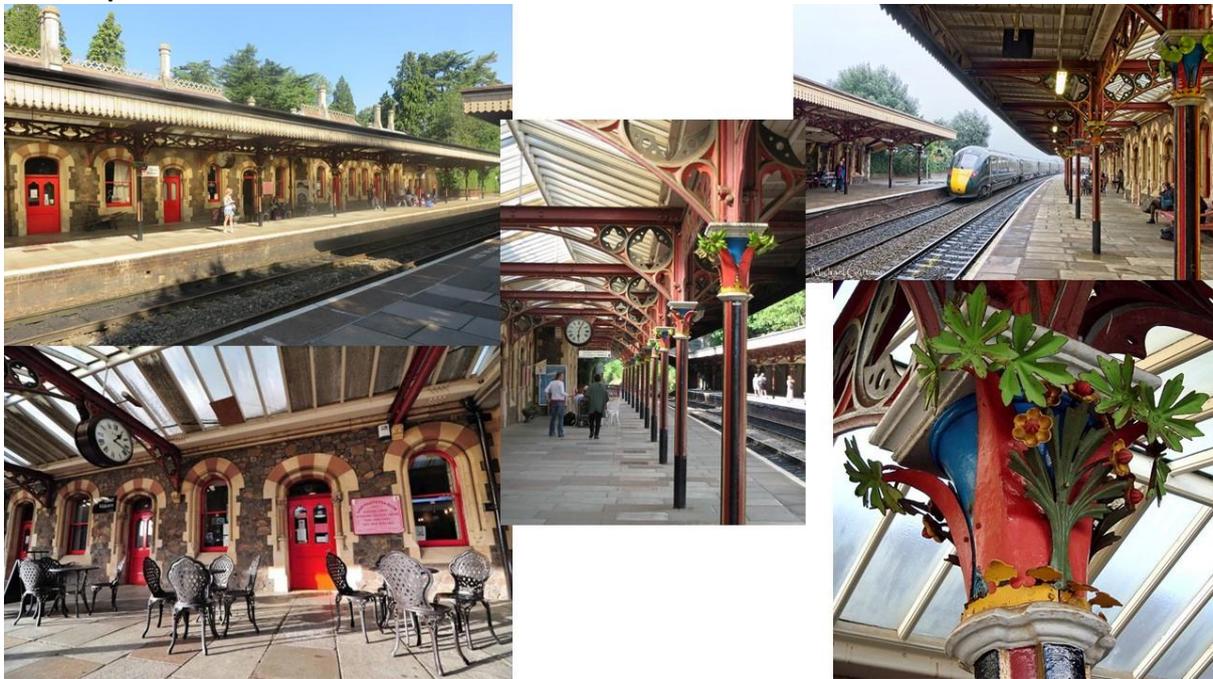
It is thanks to the reminiscences, records and letters of the wives of the Dymock Poets, and their friend Eleanor Farjeon, that we are able to build a clear picture of the summer of 1914, when this group of poets came together in the lanes and orchards around Dymock.

Before she met Lascelles, Catherine was part of a burgeoning, forward-looking art scene at Liverpool University and Geraldine Gibson (pictured

left with Wilfrid) was a Cambridge-educated, bike-riding suffragette who attended university at a time when male undergraduates were angrily protesting the proposal to award degrees to women. It is important to consider the role that these women played in facilitating much of the work of the Dymock Poets: caring for their children, keeping their houses, cooking, cleaning and hosting, as well as reading their work and offering advice on New Numbers. Indeed, in a letter Rupert Brooke duly acknowledges that where the publication was concerned, 'Mrs A. does the work'.

Hannah Green says: "These women are interesting personalities in their own right, but I've also been thinking about how they might have made poetry 'happen' - created the conditions in which it was possible for the Dymock poets to write. This could be looking after children, reading countless drafts of poems or helping to secure publishers (as Catherine Abercrombie did). It's very strange delving into the personal details of other people's lives and marriages in this way, even when both parties are long dead. It brings the Dymock circle out of the hazy past and makes them real people, with their own jealousies, frustrations and joys."

### Next stop: Great Malvern



Clockwise from top left: Great Malvern Station, view on platform, train pulling in, detail of ornate iron work, Lady Foley's tea room on station.

Look up. At the tops of the pillars supporting the cast iron girders of this station, there are intricate designs of flowers and foliage, their colours brightening the grey and red uniform of the railway station. These are the same buds and leaves that looked down on a woman on this platform over a hundred years ago. Imagine: their colours are deadened by the darkness of night, as she tries to herd tired children and wayward luggage across the deserted platform. The woman is Helen Thomas, wife of poet Edward Thomas and it is the 4th of August 1914, on the eve of the Great War.

### Helen's Journey

Helen, pictured below, with Edward, is travelling with her two young daughters, and a Russian boy in her care to meet Edward Thomas and their other child Merfyn, who are visiting friends in Dymock. That day, World War 1 has been declared.

David Constantine has shared this wonderful account of that journey in a piece specially written for the Poetry on Platforms project:

'Station after station she saw platforms crowded with serving soldiers and reservists summoned to their regiments; also holiday-makers hurrying home. So she with her party and copious luggage was heading against the grain of world catastrophe into a locality of idyll: of woodlands, fruit, flowers, streams, ancient farms and churches, in a glorious hot summer, to be among poets.

The train, scheduled to run to Ledbury, halted at Oxford and everyone disembarked. The stationmaster, not certain there would be another train, advised Mrs Thomas to find rooms in Oxford for the night. But a porter assured her there were none left. Nor could she have afforded it. She sent Edward a telegram, and waited.

A train came and, stopping at every station, got them to Malvern by midnight. There the



stationmaster was certain: no onward train that night.'

"I shall never forget that journey," Helen later wrote. But despite the stress of her arrival, she had happy memories of the following few weeks spent at Dymock, with the Abercrombies, the Gibsons, the Frosts and visiting friends: "We spent those happy weeks in the open air, in the evenings sitting with our friends and talking - talking of people and life and poetry."

### Coming and Going

Great Malvern station has seen many travellers come and go throughout its 161-year history. Many poets travelling to and from Ledbury Poetry Festival use this line every year - full of excitement (and maybe a few nerves!) on the way there, and full of poems on the way home again.

The poet John Hegley shares his memories of a return journey from Ledbury Poetry Festival, illustrating the reflective quality of rail travel:

'Festival action completed, I leave Ledbury late morning on the Birmingham-bound 10.56. After thirteen minutes aboard, I step down at Great Malvern, in order to say hello again to the end-of-the-platform café, where I settle with a bevvie and a bag heavier with poems, than on my outward journey.

My first ever railway experience was a steam train service with my father which rather bonded us; the livery on that occasion, other than Great Western. My onward connection is at just after a-quarter-to-two, so there is much time to mull and to chew over biscuits and poetries.

I think you would have liked the souvenir displays here Dad, and the glaze on my Festival memento although time is a spoil sport. Still, I will take a short while to savour that other day's British Railway joyousness and the flavour and the texture of this last café custard cream.'

Lady Foley's Tearoom at Great Malvern Station is named after Lady Emily Foley, who owned much of the land around Great Malvern. She was a very important sponsor of the station, and had a private waiting room built for her exclusive use - which now serves as a tea room for travellers. John Hegley's piece really taps into the feelings of reflection that rail travel can instil - returning home

after a busy festival, with a bag 'heavier with poems', and admiring the glaze on his festival memento (a bowl) are experiences many poets who have visited Ledbury will be familiar with.

**Your Poetry on Platforms - warm-up writing exercise - jot down notes in response to these prompts:**

Does the railway remind you of any special days? They could be as momentous as the outbreak of war or as simple as a visit to a friend. Maybe the railway makes you think of a special person, and a journey taken together. Whatever connections that people and trains form in your minds...

**Next Stop: Colwall**



It's quiet here at Colwall station. As the noise of the train fades into the distance, there is birdsong: the trill of a blackbird, chattering sparrows, the harsh cry of a magpie. The bridge over the single track doesn't lead to another platform, as you might expect. Instead, if you follow the steps down you will come to a public footpath shaded by willow trees, which leads, as the green sign sticking out of a clump of bushes will tell you, one mile to the Malvern Hills.

An Unwonted Stop

On 23rd June 1914, Edward Thomas was on his way to visit Robert Frost at Dymock. Thomas wasn't a poet yet - many have speculated that it was his trip to Dymock, and the long conversations he had with Robert Frost, that turned his pen from prose to poetry.

Edward Thomas was a serial note-taker, and the poem *Adlestrop* grew out of the detailed notes he made at that small unexpected stop:

**Adlestrop**

Yes. I remember Adlestrop—  
The name, because one afternoon  
Of heat the express-train drew up there  
Unwontedly. It was late June.

The steam hissed. Someone cleared his throat.  
No one left and no one came  
On the bare platform. What I saw  
Was Adlestrop—only the name

And willows, willow-herb, and grass,  
And meadowsweet, and haycocks dry,  
No whit less still and lonely fair  
Than the high cloudlets in the sky.

And for that minute a blackbird sang

Close by, and round him, mistier,  
Farther and farther, all the birds  
Of Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire.  
*Edward Thomas*

Trains, and train journeys, were a vital part of Thomas' life. He regularly travelled, by rail, from his homes in Hampshire to London, in desperate search of writing commissions to earn his living. Trains brought the Thomas family to Dymock, and to his crucial meeting with Robert Frost. When Thomas was in the army, he composed on trains... and, of course, that chance stop on a summer line led to his most famous poem, *Adlestrop*.

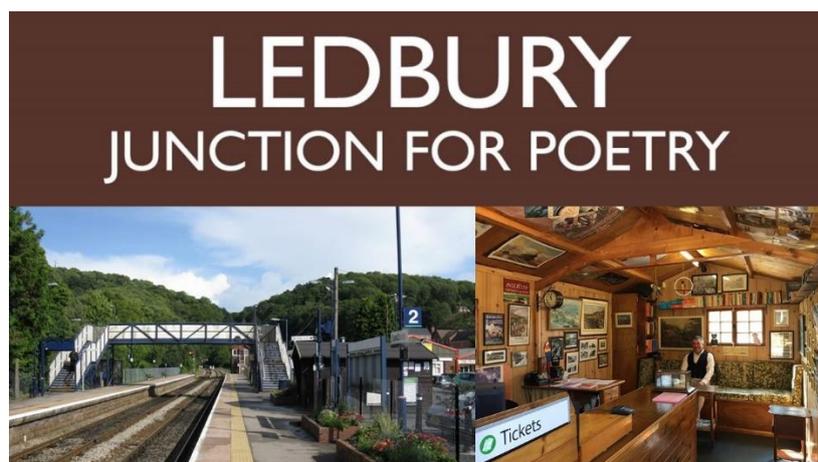
### Eat, Sleep, Poetry, Repeat

Over the years, many poets have found a welcome refuge in this part of the country. Just as some of the Dymock poets were put up by local farmers, the people of Ledbury and the surrounding area today continue to host poets in their homes over the course of the Festival providing a comfy bed, hot meals, and a slice of local life. The poet Yang Lian provided this reflection of his stay in Ledbury:

'There are hundreds, if not thousands, of poetry festivals worldwide, but to me, Ledbury Poetry Festival is a very special one. I had some great experiences in the two times when I was invited there. Firstly, the town represents a very special depth of the nature and the history of England with all its beautiful and ancient buildings, and thus naturally became the best setting for international poetry. Even more, we were also invited to come live with an English family, so the discussions of poetry were not only happening in the events, but at all times day and night, with both poets and Ledbury people, and exchanging poetical understandings with these people brought the poetry down to earth.'

'Bringing poetry down to earth' is an important part of Ledbury Poetry Festival: poetry doesn't just happen in prestigious publishing houses or dusty studies. Instead, it happens everywhere, from dinner tables to woodland walks to rural train stations like this one.

### **Next and final stop: Ledbury, Junction For Poetry**



Clockwise from top: Ledbury Junction for Poetry sign to be found at Ledbury Station, Ledbury ticket office, view of footbridge and both platforms

We have arrived in Ledbury. At first glance this may seem like another quiet rural halt, but follow the main road into town for just a few hundred meters and you'll be immersed in a bright, bustling

market town with a very special history. If you look around, you'll spot the enormous clue about the nature of this history: a large station sign that reads 'LEDBURY: JUNCTION FOR POETRY.'

In 2019, the station was renamed in honour of its poetic heritage, from the vibrant festival it has hosted for the past twenty years to Robert Frost and the Dymock poets who stood on this platform over a century ago. West Midlands Railway also hosted a special 'Poetry Chair', in which passengers are invited to take a moment to sit (it can be found next to the ticket office), and write their own poems.

### Cider Suppers

Every year, Ledbury Poetry Festival hosts a cider supper for its visiting poets, in honour of another cider supper that happened five miles away and a hundred years ago.

In the little village of Dymock, a group of poets came together in the summer of 1914. Poet and author Eleanor Farjeon was staying with a local couple called the Farmers, and she recounts an evening of food, fun and cider had by the poets and their families:

'The table was loaded with huge shapes of food, a ham, a great joint of beef, a raised pie and birds, among dishes of butter and pickles and salads, and sauce-boats of dressing, and slabs of home-made bread. If ever a sideboard groaned that sideboard did, with fruit tarts and trifles and cheesecakes, and at least two flagons of my favourite rough cider.

Everyone was wiping his eyes with laughter, and we finished the meal with the cheese. Mrs. Farmer rose. I rose, and Helen rose, and Elinor Frost. Mr. Farmer rose. The Poets attempted to rise, relapsed on to their seats, and regarded each other with comical consternation. They were perfectly sober, though exceedingly gay; but the gallons on strong cider, against which I had been inoculated, had gone to their legs, and not one of them could stand without support. I saw Edward and Robert stagger to their feet, clutch each other, and go down; they rose again with great caution, clinging together. On the other side of the table Gibson and Abercrombie were behaving similarly. Two brace of poets staggered out into the moonlight and went hilariously homeward like two sets of Siamese Twins. I have boasted ever since of the night when I drank all the poets in Gloucestershire under the table.'



Eleanor Farjeon

## Connections and conversations

Peter Arscott, one of the founders of Ledbury Poetry Festival, describes the continuation of this excellent tradition in Ledbury today:

'This annual event is always an opportunity for celebration and the Cider Supper offers our guests a cheerful and informal rendezvous with colleagues where nothing is expected of them other than merriment, chat and general fun while sampling local produce such as cider, perry, beer, ham, beef and Mr Waller's famous Poetry Pie. A few poets have had to rely on volunteers and interns to get them back to their accommodation, and one poet did spend the night in Dog Hill Woods after getting quite lost.'

The poet Luke Kennard reminisces about his own visit to Ledbury, and the celebrations that ensued: 'I remember the Ledbury audience sitting in Penguin deck chairs and I remember waiting before the reading in a building on stilts. I remember being a little star struck by other writers. I remember completely unlit pub gardens and, for some reason, drinking beer out of a bowl, I remember being very hungover and eating a very good scotch egg. I have no recollections of the poems I read, but a vague sense that the audience were generous and my hosts extremely hospitable.'

## Long Live Local History!

[https://www.allaboutmalvern hills.com/ledbury\\_town\\_history\\_of\\_transport\\_walk](https://www.allaboutmalvern hills.com/ledbury_town_history_of_transport_walk) A walking route exploring Ledbury's transport history taking you along the former canal and railway line.



Hannah Green says: "Over the course of my research for this project, I've grown very fond of local history websites. They're so full of minute, lovingly recorded details about the smallest and obscurest of places. I've found out about, amongst other things: the 17th century curse inscribed in lead found in Dymock, the 'daffodil line' that ran from Gloucester to Dymock bringing seasonal workers from London to pick the abundant daffodils to sell in the flower markets in the capital, and lots of very detailed timelines about what happened when on the railway line, and what

trains were used. Before this project, I was totally ignorant of the canal's impact on Ledbury. The first barge arrived at the wharf on Bye Street in 1841, carrying coal to the gasworks at Ledbury (which I didn't know existed!). The railway line replaced the canal, with the Ledbury to Gloucester stretch opening in 1885, passing through Dymock on its way. There is so much wonderful, meticulous information on the Ledbury History Website."



The Brewery Inn used to be called "The Boat", a clue that that's where the canal went, and then the canal was converted into the railway line. Walking past the Brewery Inn then leads onto a small grassy area known as Queen's Walk. The grassed over space was formerly Ledbury Town Wharf where canal boats plied their trade between Hereford and Ledbury and the tidal reaches of the River Severn at Gloucester. When this was redeveloped for the railway it was known as Ledbury Halt, pictured left.

At Ledbury railway station, you can visit the ticket office which has been adorned with railway memorabilia.

## Foundations of the Festival

Hannah Green says: "For some background reading, I have been perusing *Hwaet!*, Ledbury Poetry Festival's 20th Anniversary anthology. There are some great recollections there about the formation of the festival - friends and poetry lovers from all walks of life getting together to put on a festival - who could have predicted the amazing successes of the next twenty five years?"

### **Found Moments**

*The next train to depart from platform 2 is the 10.40 Central Trains service to Hereford. Calling at...*

Found moments. Glimpses. One minute there.

Next instant. Lost. A flock of waterbirds unfurling  
paper white wings, following the horseshoe river  
into dusk. Pollen caught in sunlight, whirling  
in a flurry of faery after the train, slow  
past Leominster station. Two horizons –  
over there! Spotted through rain on the bus window;  
a trick of the clouds above the Malverns.

Another herd of Herefords, mapped with red,  
earth made animal, their whitened faces  
grounded in the county. Breath... look ahead,  
catch sight of winter, the fingertraces  
of sheep in snow, frosted ice on the Wye,  
apple trees in white wedded to the sky.

*Sara-Jane Arbury (from Hwaet!)*

We hope you have enjoyed your journey. Please don't forget to take your bags and personal items with you when you leave. Thank you for travelling with us!

### **EXERCISE TWO: Poetry On Platforms**

Write a poem/piece inspired by the theme. Here are some suggestions:

- Look over the notes you made during the presentation and the short writing exercises. Use these to write your poem.
- Write about some of the themes we've looked at - Coming and Going, Fresh Beginnings, Pause for Thought, Arrivals and Departures, Journeys Through Time...
- Write a personification poem from the point of view of a train or station or waiting room, or the train track itself. Imagine if walls could speak... Write your poem imagining the thing or place is 'alive' and has the same attributes as a human being. What would it say? Think about the function of the object or place, where it is situated, what it senses of the world around it etc. Memories? What does it think/dream about? Where would it like to go?
- Write a poem inspired by the theme that evokes a personal memory for you, maybe involving another person or a personal story.
- Write a poem inspired by the history or a story we have looked at today. Think about your response to it and why you felt that way.

You may wish to use an example form from a poem we have looked at today, eg: nature poem full of imagery and description (*Blackbird*) / musing on the past with direct references to today's readers (*Edith Leaves*) / considering the impact of views (*Ryton Firs*) / quatrains and gentle rhyming of second and fourth lines (*Adlestrop*) / a sonnet (*Found Moments*)

And, of course, you may write a poem about the theme in your own way and in your own style!

Please send your finished poems to me or Phillippa [manager@poetry-festival.co.uk](mailto:manager@poetry-festival.co.uk) and they will be pinned onto the Ledbury Digital Poetry Pin Trail: [ledbury.poetrypin.info](http://ledbury.poetrypin.info). Contact Phillippa for more details about this.

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