



## Sheffield Poets and Poetry Walk.

**December 11<sup>th</sup>. 2014, starting 10.15 at the Mappin Gallery, Weston Park.**

There can be many poetry walks in Sheffield – this is just one.

This is quite a long walk, you may wish to split it into two.

The walk starts at 10.15 on December 11<sup>th</sup>. outside the Mappin Gallery in Weston Park where we will start with,  
**An Edwardian Sunday, Broomhill, Sheffield by John Betjeman.**

Just the second verse

<p>Serene on a Sunday          The sun glitters hotly          O'er mills that on Monday          With engines will hum.          By tramway excursion          To Dore and to Totley          In search of diversion          The millworkers come;          But in our arboreta          The sounds are discreeter          Of shoes upon stone -          The worshippers wending          To welcoming chapel,          Companioned or lone;          And over a pew there          See loveliness lean,          As Eve shows her apple          Through rich bombazine;          What love is born new there          In blushing eighteen!</p>
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From there it is a short stroll down the park path to the statue of Ebenezer Elliot just by the University Department of Molecular Biology and Biotechnology. Known as the Corn Law rhymers for his leading the fight to repeal the Corn Laws which were causing hardship and starvation among the poor. Though a factory owner himself, his single-minded devotion to the welfare of the labouring classes won him a sympathetic reputation long after his poetry ceased to be read. The Corn Law Rhymes, first published in 1831, had been preceded by the publication of the single long poem The Ranter in 1830. They were inspired by a fierce hatred of injustice, and are vigorous, simple and full of vivid description

### The Ranter

<p><i>Verse One.</i>          Miles Gordon sleeps; his six days' labour done,          He dreams of Sunday, verdant fields, and prayer:          O rise, bless'd morn, unclouded! Let thy sun          Shine on the artisan - thy purest air          Breathe on the bread-tax'd labourer's deep despair!</p>	<p><i>Seven, very long verses later</i>          .....          But where the rude heath hears the plover cry,          And swings the chainless cloud o'er summits bare;          There shouldst thou rest - thy heart was ever there!          There shouldst thou rest, beneath the mountain wind,</p>
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Poor sons of toil! I grudge them not the breeze That plays with Sabbath flowers, the clouds that play With Sabbath winds, the hum of Sabbath bees, The Sabbath walk, the skylark's Sabbath lay, The silent sunshine of the Sabbath day.	Far from the pauper's grave, the despot's door; Though few would seek thy home, and fewer find Thy brief inscription on the shadow'd moor: - "Here lies the preacher of the plunder'd poor."
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Straight down Glossop Road takes us to Simon Armitage and In Praise of Air. Simon, Professor of Poetry at the University, and Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Science Professor Tony Ryan, have collaborated to create a catalytic poem called In Praise of Air - printed on material containing a formula invented at the University which is capable of purifying its surroundings.

Photocatalyst particles of nano-TiO<sub>2</sub> were sprayed on to the surface of the poem during manufacture. The coating only works in the presence of light and oxygen. It doesn't need to be sunlight – the street lights which surround the catalytic poem are fine. The photocatalyst causes oxidation of any substances adsorbed onto the surface of the poem.

### In Praise of Air

I write in praise of air. I was six or five when a conjurer opened my knotted fist and I held in my palm the whole of the sky. I've carried it with me ever since.	Let air be a major god, its being and touch, its breast-milk always tilted to the lips. Both dragonfly and Boeing dangle in its see-through nothingness...
Among the jumbled bric-a-brac I keep a padlocked treasure-chest of empty space, and on days when thoughts are fuddled with smog or civilization crosses the street	with a white handkerchief over its mouth and cars blow kisses to our lips from theirs I turn the key, throw back the lid, breathe deep. My first word, everyone's first word, was air.

Across the busy dual carriageway to stand by the old Henderson's Relish building and recite Sally Goldsmith's, **Relish**. Sally is a poet, songmaker and scriptwriter living on the edge of Sheffield next to the Peak District. Her first full poetry collection, was titled, Are We There Yet?

### Relish

Endo's of Leaveygreave Doin' business even now Still darkly brown No anchovies No capers but plenty of spirit An orange waist coat and a near flat cap Just the stuff Nothing fancy mind For a slosh on your corned beef 'ash Your once upon a time Butlers meat and potato
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Next it's all down hill to our next location. Fagan's Pub on Broad Lane and Sheffield-born Helen Mort and her poem

### Fagan's

Themed quiz, the host part-drunkard, part-Messiah, his long hair flapping at his mustard tie. I'm trying to connect everything with fire: the page reads starter, cracker, fighter, fly	My pints of Moonshine and my team of one. The strip lights catch at table like a spark I turned to ask you something and you'd gone – the windows give their version of the dark	Half way down West Street, you'll be lighting up. What links the fire of London and the colour blue? I'm wondering if a match would be enough or if there's really no smoke without you.
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Continue on down Broad Lane, then right along West Bar, cut through, on the left, the modern office blocks of Irwin Mitchel *et al*, and along the bank of the Don, crossing at the footbridge and right along Nursery Street to the new

little garden / park to recite Carolyn Waudby's River Don. Carolyn has taught journalism and creative writing at the University of Sheffield, the University of Leeds and Sheffield Hallam whilst continuing to work as a writer in both genres.

### River Don

Today I hope to remain undiscovered  
Peace. Almost silence. The stillness of stopping  
It is I who drives the wheel  
The world comes to me – sun, clouds, trees  
Paper, curses, whispers  
I do not let them in  
Send them back

A short walk next, back to Ladys Bridge and take the riverside Five Weirs Walk path and cross under Derek Dooley way and immediately above the river and on the side of the dual carriageway we find Carol Ann Duffy's

### The Five Weirs Walk.

I have a mother's hand and you a child's  
Hand in my hand you walk beside me now,  
for miles under the cutlery silver grey  
of the clouds the old buff spoon  
of the sun the river Don rolling away  
From Lady's Bridge now like the rusty industrial past  
now like the blue of your future, infinite, clear

This is the Five Weirs Walk, we are here  
and if an X were to mark the spot we would stand  
at the heart of a kiss where change and history,  
knotweed and balsam meet. Come on then  
follow the river's narrative as the city wakes  
from dreams of itself. Some walk ahead of us or behind  
I walk with you holding the flowering bud of your hand.

Next, back to Ladys Bridge, up Waingate and Haymarket, cross the trams – look both ways and veer right to the top of the steps. Its Noel Williams and Over Looking Bakers Hill. Noel is Associate Editor of the poetry magazine Orbis, and he has an MA in Writing from Sheffield Hallam University (where he is also a lecturer).

### Over Looking Bakers Hill

Rather a long poem so we'll just take the first verse.

I see them where they never stood above those tessellated steps, a staircase steeply doubled back, cupping the tread of decades.  
Hand in hand: brother, father, brother.  
His heavy yellow fists rough comfort for their mittened fingers.  
Through railings ungreened by rust they gaze exactly as they never did, the folded stair dropping into a tide of mail vans and sidings.

On we go, through the bus interchange and pop out opposite the railway station; we are looking for the top of the steps by the traffic lights and Ian McMillan's

### The Passenger Now Leaving Platform Five

The passenger now leaving platform five  
Arrives in a place of shining steel  
And it makes that person glad to be alive  
Because where you are dictates how you feel  
And even on a day when it chucks it down  
Sheaf Square puts a spring in the tireddest step  
This vista makes a smile from the deepest frown  
And fills you full of vim, and verve, and pep  
And people are standing by the sculpture  
That curves with light and runs with water  
And they take photographs of each other  
Here's a boy and a girl and a mother and a daughter

This place makes you participate; you feel you are a player  
Utopia, Nirvana or if you like; Sheaf square

Cross the road an head along past the Showroom Cinema, turning right at the hubs to The Corner of Arundel Lane and Charles St, the name of the first published poetry collection of Tony Williams, Tony grew up in Matlock, and now lives in Sheffield. We will try just one of the poems from that collection,

**Landscape for August Natterer**

Two darkened semis  
blue eyes blazing  
Malcolm and Sarah and  
Chris and Leslie  
staying up to watch  
the final of the swimming

Looking to the right, or left, depending which way you are facing, on the side of Hallam University is our second Poet Laureate of the day, Andrew Motion and

**What if**

O travellers from somewhere else to here  
Rising from Sheffield Station and Sheaf Square  
To wander through the labyrinths of air,  
  
Pause now, and let the sight of this sheer cliff  
Become a priming-place which lifts you off  
To speculate  
What if..?  
What if..?  
What if..?  
  
Cloud shadows drag their hands across the white;  
Rain prints the sudden darkness of its weight;  
Sun falls and leaves the bleaching evidence of light.  
  
Your thoughts are like this too: as fixed as words  
Set down to decorate a blank facade  
And yet, as words are too, all soon transferred  
  
To greet and understand what lies ahead -  
The city where your dreamling is re-paid,  
The lives which wait unseen as yet, unread.

Next it's the Winter gardens and Roger McGough for

**Twinned with Mars**

When they closed the foundries and the mills  
You could have taken to the hills  
But you stayed  
Might have given up the ghost, but instead  
Took a deep breath, forged ahead  
Bright as a blade  
I like this place  
My son is a student here  
City of space, open skies and stars.  
Sheffield

Such a contrast when we have crossed over to the Crucible for Harold Pinter from 2007 when visiting Sheffield he wrote

**Laughter**

Laughter dies out but is never dead  
Laughter lies out the back of its head  
Laughter laughs at what is never said  
It trills and squeals and swills in your head  
It trills and squeals in the heads of the dead  
And so all the lies remain laughingly spread  
Sucked in by the laughter of the severed head  
Sucked in by the mouths of the laughing dead

On now to Division Street and Jarvis Cocker, but not the famous Trashed on Cider – that's opposite Aldi across the ring road, here it's a blue sticky note, not quite a plaque which shows where he fell from a flat window whilst trying to impress a lass, he failed, she treated him with disdain and he wrote

**Common People**

First couple of verses

She came from Greece she had a thirst for knowledge  
She studied sculpture at Saint Martin's College, that's where I caught her eye.  
She told me that her Dad was loaded  
I said in that case I'll have a rum and coke-cola.  
She said fine and in thirty seconds time she said, I want to live like common people  
I want to do whatever common people do, I want to sleep with common people  
I want to sleep with common people like you.  
Well what else could I do - I said I'll see what I can do.  
I took her to a supermarket  
I don't know why but I had to start it somewhere, so it started there.  
I said pretend you've got no money, she just laughed and said oh you're so funny.  
I said yeah? Well I can't see anyone else smiling in here.  
Are you sure you want to live like common people  
You want to see whatever common people see  
You want to sleep with common people,  
you want to sleep with common people like me.

Doubling back on ourselves, it's a left turn to Benjamin Zephaniah (honorary patron of the vegan society and republican!), with 3 poems: 'minds' 'question' 'heroes', from 1998. The poem we will be able to see from Rockingham Lane is Question. The other poems being viewable from Rockingham Street and around the internal courtyard.

**Question**

WHERE IS YOUR LOVE?  
WHERE IS YOUR FAITH?  
WHERE IS YOUR HOPE?  
WHERE ARE YOUR DREAMS?  
WHERE ARE YOUR FRIENDS?  
WHERE IS YOUR SELF?  
WHERE IS YOUR PATH?  
WHERE'S YOUR ESTEEM?  
WHERE IS YOUR PRIDE?  
WHERE IS YOUR SHAME?  
WHERE IS YOUR SOUL?  
WHERE'S YOUR CONTROL?

WHERE ARE YOU PLEASE?  
WHERE ARE YOUR KEYS?

Just at the taxi-rank opposite John Lewis and it's the scene from the Arctic Monkey's

**Red Light Indicates Doors Are Secured**

Verses, four, five and six

Well how funny was that sketch earlier, up near that taxi rank  
Oh no you will have missed it, think it was when you went to the bank  
These two lads squaring up proper shoutin', 'bout who was next in the queue  
The kind of thing that would seem so silly but not when they've both had a few

Well calm down temper temper, you shouldn't get so annoyed  
You're acting like a silly little boy  
They wanted to be men and do some fighting in the street  
He said no surrender, no chance of retreat

And so why are we in a taxi?  
'Cause I didn't want to leave  
I said "It's High Green Mate, via Hillsborough please!"

Quite a contrast that across at the Cathedral and it's the statue to James Montgomery where we can seriously recite

**West Indies**

The West Indies I behold, Like the Hesperides of old, Trees of life with fruits of gold	No,— a curse is on their soil; Bonds and scourges, tears and toil, Man degrade and earth despoil.	Horror-struck, I turn away, Coasting down the Mexique bay; Slavery there hath had her day
Hark! eight hundred thousand tongues Startle midnight with strange songs; England ends her negro's wrongs.	Loud the voice of freedom spoke, Every accent split a yoke, Every word a fetter broke.	South America expands Forest-mountains, river-lands, And a nobler race demands.
And a nobler race arise. Stretch their limbs, unclose their eyes, Claim the earth, and seek the skies.		

For the very energetic, there is a stroll down The Moor, for the poems on the benches; lets pick out Berlie Doherty

**Here Lies a City's Heart**

Here lies  
a city's heart.  
There in her hills lie  
her green bones. Quiet under  
the clutter of houses and streets.  
And there in her rivers run veins  
That long ago powered her mills.  
Her long limbs reach to the  
moors. But here, here  
lies her throbbing  
heart.

And to finish?

It's that Jarvis Cocker again on the side of the Forge student accommodation,

**Trashed on Cider**

Within these walls the future may be being forged  
Or maybe Jez is getting trashed on cider  
But when you melt you become the shape of your surroundings:  
Your horizons become wider.  
Don't they teach you no brains at that school?

Pheew

Bring a flask of coffee for enroute and, if you like sandwiches for the finish by the Winter Gardens.

If, as is likely, this walk proves to be too long, we'll stop at lunch time and come back another day to complete.

Inspiration.

Mick Nott, Sheffield Friday Night rides.

Sources.

Sheffield Friday Night ride, October 10<sup>th</sup>. 2014.

The Sheffield Anthology. Poems from the city imagined. Eds: Lehoczky, Piette, Sansom & Sansom.

Sheffield in Verse. Machin.

Sheffield in Poetry. Ed,: Lovelock

## **Steel City Wanderers.**

### **Pat & Clare Ryan**

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