

Poems for memories by Chester Performs

On Saturday, 10th October, Chester Performs opened the 2015 Chester Literature Festival with an unforgettable day of poetry and memory as we delivered a county-wide project that took in 6 libraries across Cheshire West and Chester. Here are some of the poems created on the day...

CHESTER LITERATURE FESTIVAL

CHESTER
PERFORMS

POEMS FOR MEMORIES

Saturday 10th October 2015

69



—CHESHIRE—
MEMORIES

POEMS FOR MEMORIES

Saturday 10th October 2015

On Saturday, 10th October, we opened the 2015 Chester Literature Festival with an unforgettable day of poetry and memory as we delivered a county-wide project that took in 6 libraries across Cheshire West and Chester.

In a unique partnership with the charity Snow Angels and the Cheshire Memories Project, we sent a host of wonderful poets to libraries in Ellesmere Port, Neston, Northwich, Winsford, Frodsham and Chester.

At each library, members of the public were invited to talk to our poets about a memory of their locality, their family, their childhood, or anything that was special to them. Our poets then got to work interpreting their memories and presenting them with their very own poem. There were lots of laughs and a few tears shed on an inspirational day for both the poets and the people who were kind enough to share their past.

Here are some of the poems created on the day...

ELLESMERE PORT LIBRARY



For Thomas

There was nothing like Christmas-time
at my old school -

the dinner, the garlands, the pudding
(my fave)

And all of us happy and playing
the ~~foot~~ -

I loved all those Christmases back
at my school.

Oct. 10th 2015

Elkmere Post library

For Stewart.

From tiny villages to towns
how mighty Ellesmere Port has grown.
The fields and woodlands all long gone
when industry took over. Now
The factories are going too, also the shops,
Ellesmere Port a massive urban block.
It is not what I remember.
It is not what I once loved.

Oct 16th 2015

Ellesmere Port Library

Ann Harty

For Ann

How we loved that pond,
its tadpoles in the early spring
and always newts and frogs.
How we loved those fields of green
where children went to play
and people walked their dogs

But the pond is gone -
likewise the fields of green
The pond is now a nesting-home
the fields turned into streets.

Oct 10th 2015

Evesmere Post Library

Ann

Fov Pak

At Man sells

Bacon, an entire flitch,
placed on the machine
with the letted blade
and any rasher-thickness made.
The smell of coffee beans
that once perfumed the air,
hot Horlicks, hot blackcurrent,
always ready there.

I ran errands for this shop
and had the pleasure then
of seeing all these joyous things
that will not be again.

Oct 10th 2015

Ellenmere Post library

Quintus

For Bea

War-time Memories

The skies were dark with barrage balloons,
The streets dark with sailors and soldiers.
A common part of our daily lives
were gas-masks and air-raid shelters.
And every feeling, every scrap
was sent off for the pigs, though we
had little enough for ourselves.

When the American G.I.'s came
we'd ask them "any fun chum",
Then all of us dancing in the streets
when V.E. day had come.

The relief the joy. It's over at last
And yet -
We are the ones who will never forget.

likewise

FRODSHAM LIBRARY



Grandad

Me and Kelsey
sliding around
on carpet tiles
in the back
of the old blue van

My grandad driving
always doing, could
never sit still, always
smiling, always
cracking jokes

even when the words
cracked and vanished.
He taught me all
the animals' names -
Bactrian Camels,

Dromedaries, which
had the humps
and which ones didn't.
He ~~wasn't~~ wasn't allowed
to tell me about

the planes he worked on
but made me a plane
from a two pence piece.
This is a memory box
for my Grandad.

Andrew Rudd
Oct. 2015

Sweets at the Post Office

Mum helps you on
with your moon boots
and you slither together
down the slushy snowy pavements
to the post office
for the family allowance.

You hold her hand tightly
at the scary sight
of the thin postmaster looming
up behind the counter
little half-moon glasses
halfway down his nose.
He laughs at your boots
but you don't mind really
because there are sweets!

Under the glass counter
out of reach, you have to point
to the ones you want, and he'll
fish them out. Cherry Lips,
Sherbet Dip, but skip
the horrible liquorice sticks.
Palm & Violets, Aniseed Balls,
twenty Mojos for 10p.
Flying Saucers, like Eucharist wafers
layered with sherbet, Kola Cubes,
with controversial spelling -
what a choice to make!

Andrew
2015

My holiday in Scotland (Noah)

Two years ago
when I was four
I climbed up a mountain .

It was my first mountain,
just me and mummy.
Eventually

we could see
the tiny park, down
by the river

where I paddled
my canoe, a long time ago
when I was four

Andrew Rudd
Oct. 2015

Weston Primary School

'Beware a whistling kettle
and a whistling woman' he used to say,
but no need to beware of Mr Birtwhistle.

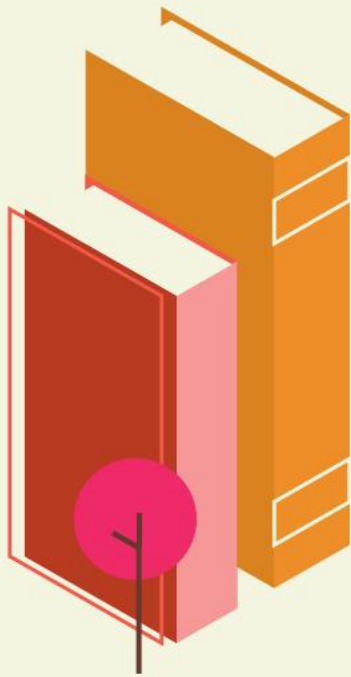
There were lady teachers, but the chaps
made their impression. He was like
Cary Grant, smartly dressed, immaculate,

quiet authority. The new school spit-spot.
I couldn't wait to start. Everybody
was called Susan but me.

for Pam Hitchin

Andrew Ridd
Oct 2015

NORTHWICH LIBRARY



Displaced

Rounded up, pushed, moved, split
to places whose names still fill the news
Bellarusse, Middle East, Liverpool
until we settled like faded butterflies
in old army huts at Marbury Park.

From school, the sweet shop
with Lucky Bags and cards
of the America civil war
or space-ships + aliens

Back then we shuffled them,
bound them in tight elastic bands
kept them safe like all the other
memories we've owned.

Jay Double

Shuggles

Bears like picnics, a chance to sport specially knitted outfits, even underwear, in greys + browns, the colours of autumn.

Being young and newly named back then, my fur still golden, velvet soft, I went to all those picnics, mixed with bears from quite another class.

These days, although I know I'm loved, I don't get out much, legs stiff, no power in my squeak, at an age when memories spark my day.

Jay Walker

'Safe Zone'

When gas lights + valve radios
were shattered by bombs, when
we ate pomegranate skin because
we didn't know any better

when we made our own paper chairs
exercised at school to keep warm,

when I saw my own room
without walls, the butcher's bacon-slicer
on my bed like an orphaned child

Joy Wukie

Up

Our friendship mirrored a Disney film
kind deeds in a bad time

a plastic talisman rescued
from a supermarket cart,

a badge - Ellie's badge,

rescued from a thoughtful heart.

Joy Wukle

Brooch

A raised eyebrow, a knowing look
would do the trick, elicit our thoughts
into a wavelength of understanding.

The brooch a symbol with its silver
heart.

Your gift to me, a smiling golden bow
now broken. Yet we remain connected
our love still whole.

Joy Wankle

NESTON LIBRARY



Mary's Maternal

I have a strong heart
Its chambers are walled
with iron and stone

I have a strong heart
Its muscles are strong
with carbon and steel

I have a strong heart
Its vessels are lined
with diamond and jet

I have a strong heart
Only I break it open
Bladed love used, unspoken

But turns iron to rust
And stone to dust
And diamond to charcoal
Makes

a butterfly's wing

of the fabric

of the soul.

X marks the spot

Xantia came here

After 'away'. After 'downs'.

Her mission is clear:

To get fun from this town.

Xantia and her mother have their mission

To be together now and to share.

To be 'a part of' and not 'apart,' not wish on

But do, and this moment grasp the sky blue air.

And wrest the best from

Employ enjoy from

Wring the zing from

Xantia and her mother have a mission

Life has offered them a commission

Their answer? No need to guess.

It was yes... yes, yes, yes.

Lee
Williams

Penny in a Pail

A penny,
a pail of water,
and the coin dropping.

A glint
but only the sun catching it
- like a brass button
- or an embroidered throw
- or a call to arms
here
- and then gone.

Today I reach down,
through layers of satin-smooth time,
determined this once
to hold
and keeping holding -
that coin
that slip of coin.
My sleeves wet.

Clare Redman
10/10/2015

Baby Brown

Over the wall
out into the field
and onto the stile.

'Baby Brown, Baby Brown,
They're coming to take me,'

Some things stick
Some things stay.

Some things have to be plucked away.

'Baby Brown, Baby Brown
Don't let them take me'

The miners
The Christmas Goose
The slag heap scramble.

'Baby Brown, Baby Brown
There, through the window'

The fisherman's boots
The ice-cream shop
His head at my window.

'Baby Brown, Baby Brown
We won't let them touch you.'

The TV man's face
The outside law
The bolted gate to the animals.

'Baby Brown, Baby Brown
Come, let me show you'

Cecile Pedman
10/10/2015

The Time of the Twilight.

Ray knew its from its song
and its pink rump
and its fuss in the puddle on the under lone.
Time after time, he'd go and look
bus, then ferry then bus again from Liverpool.

'There was a drop to the beach then,' he says
'And the marsh was there, but smaller'
and the Twights - they'd come in to feed
the salty weeds of the edible Scrophire.

The sand comes first, he says,
then the sandbanks, and then the Spartina
The sea Astor went out for a mile
- but that come later.

It's temporary all this, he says
- the rise, the fall,
the balance of water and nature -
one day it'll stop, and the sea will rush in
- like it does every summer and winter.

'I won't see it,' he says, 'but it'll come,'
- the end of this world, with the warming
and the earth will go on
without the nuisance of man
and his imbalance of wit and destruction.

Clare Rudman

10/10/2015

The Box

There was a box
inside it,
a lilo,
a lizard,
a diver in a pool,
- both standing up
and sitting down -
and Oliver and Oliver
and Oliver
and Max. Make that twice.

Then once,
while we changed,
from men
- until now -
we 'saw' a bang
of big stars.

And it's all still there
in the box we left behind
one thing slipping in beside the next
- like lizards into cracks
and no gaps between stars.

Cave Sidman
10/10/2015

Snowfall

It was at moment in a shop,
a time abroad,
and a memory of an imagined place
- part real, part not -
when all was young
and I too walked and rode
through woods
'lovely, darn and deep'.

It caught me there
that booth, the shop,
that perfection of words
and at time
with promises
and 'mules to go'
from then to now.

It draws me still
that page, that song
that memory of men
and then again
- to stop, to watch
'his woods'
and their filling up of snow.

Clare Rudman

10/10/2015.

CHESTER LIBRARY



Better Than

Better than warm clasp of duvet
than the hard sky of the streets
Better or nailed - in hostel place
than the tremors of the feet

Better an indifferent duvet
than the living way of air
Better the paid-for smiles of staff here
than the flimsy cardboard care

of a semi-detached stairway
sending these snores to the heart
or the legs there above me -
Cafe Nero. Better bored

and wishing to a boring ceiling
than the sun's outrageous beams
Better now a day that's helpful
than hair-free or concrete dreams

Jonathan Edwards

A China Mug

with the image of three chicks leech off to market
has travelled over miles of ocean
and sixty years, to land up in their hands.

A china mug. The lead chick bears a sister
and all those years ago your brother brought this
from a tiny Irish village -

a sixteen-year-old
stepping off onto a happy
English harbour. Behind her was family, home, a way

of living, in front of her
the future. A china mug
with the image of three chicks leech off to market;

now in this kitchen, decades later,
you raise it to your lips -
the ocean roars - and gently sips and sips.

Janet Edwards

Mystare

An elegant blueprint,
patient alchemist, she is.

She begins with the foundation;
subtle layers acne like powdered snow,
translating the cheek arches,
the lintels of the eyes.

Bottles line the countertop
like steps on a magnificent organ
or pots of glamour
in a sorcerer's laboratory.

black eyeliner, blue eyeliner,
identical bottles with golden caps.
Her gown is frozen waterfall,
weighed down with beading.

And fragrance, that elaborate capstone
I see upon her, now I am old enough,
that recreates the lost structure beneath,
the eternal blueprint.

The Little Girl Who Wrestled a Tiger

for Maria

Who'd have thought a little girl could wrestle
a tiger? Well, here she is, what, two years old
and here she looks it looks, the way
a baby does. Her occupations are

cooking, sleeping. And here she is
wrestling a tiger. True, the tiger itself is
inflatable, a piece of 200 merchandise
for this, her first day at a zoo,

standing in front of glass
that puts her in the lion's way back, grinning.
For weeks her father will show this on his phone
with anyone who'll watch it:

his little girl, an inflatable tiger.
It's no contest. And he'll tell her she
her smile may or may not make true -
I'd wrestle tigers, I'd stand with lions, for you.

Jonathan Edwards

WINSFORD LIBRARY



first house

That afternoon, when we visited friends
in their new house, it made our minds up.
We moved in the february -
not that we knew where we were going to,
or what to expect.

And we had nothing, back then.
But the house was warm and cosy.
There was central heating and a garden.
The two of us and the baby; I was homesick
we'd bundle her up in a blanket
and head up to Mum's.

Most of my life I've lived here,
but I still call Liverpool 'home'.

@x

Before the Dual Carriageway.

The old High Street ribboned
down the hill, past the shops -
real shops owned by real people.

Stollons for Sunday Best shoes

Mr Pyes furniture shop

and the Huntsman restaurant.

The market stall spread like a blanket -
people travelled for miles for that market,
going home with empty purses and full baskets

There were jobs then, and skilled men.

It was thriving then,

when the old High Street ribboned

down the hill

@x.

WINTER 1966

That winter it was bitter,
the busy little boat yard
behind Mr Smith's frozen over,
the small boats moored
at the Strand
dragged under by the weight of ice.

@f.

The Printers Shop.

The smell of printers ink
slips from the presses,
from my Granddad's stained fingers
it lingers in the stairwell,
siftles up to the flat
where I sit with my sister,
peering through the window
at the Regal Plaza.

Queues form outside in the rain,
people sheltering under brightly coloured awnings,
above their heads the posters
advertising the latest pictures -
posters printed on my Granddad's press.

@x

DRIVING WITH NIAMH.

The car is rocking her to sleep,

Dad behind the wheel,

the street lights casting shadows
across her fleece suit as she dozes,
strapped in her seat.

Back home, in their first house,
mum - who thought to catch forty winks -
cooks tea, puts on a wash
catches up on jobs

And in the garden Oscar the Apricot Cat
slips past the blue-washed shed,
and prowls among the flowers.

Tomorrow Granddad will come
and they'll walk to the Chinese restaurant
for stir fry and noodles and fortune cookies.

But for now the car slides
through the evening
and Niamh rocks in her dreams. @_

Mount Pleasant.

The bus rumbled up the High Street;
we were both young then, the town and me -
me on my way to hospital,
belly full of baby, swelling, growing
the shopping centre being built,
the town full of shops, swelling, growing.

And I settled there for a while,
a dozen years nested among
the flat roofs and the friendly people
of the Mowbray.

@x

