



Exeter  
Cathedral



# Green Words Poetry Anthology



# Dedication

*‘The groves burst with blossom, towns become fair,  
meadows grow green, the world revives’*

The Seafarer, translated by Kevin Crossley-Holland (p.54) \*

\*‘The Seafarer’ (MS 3501) is an Old English poem written down in The Exeter Book (970AD), which is preserved in Exeter Cathedral. Epigraph from *The Anglo-Saxon World: An Anthology*, edited and translated by Kevin Crossley Holland, Oxford University Press, 2009.

# Thanks and Acknowledgements

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Huge thanks to all our wonderful writers, printmakers and photographers who have contributed to this publication (in alphabetical order):

Amy Adkin, Swarnim Agrawal, Pip Barfield, Sarah Bartrum, Isabella Beckett-Smith, Kitty Carter, Canon Cate, Nathan Maxwell Cann, John Chrimes, Clare, Micha Colombo, Anabelle Denney, Si Egan, Catherine Flavelle, Theo French, Gabriel, Rebekah Horton, Chris Jackson, Emma Jackson, Lou Jones, Eleanor Konings, André de Mendonça, Leslie Moss, David Newman, Tom O’Connor, Canon Deborah Parsons, Tim Petridge, Anwen Phillips, P.J. Reed, Ven Nick Shutt, Simon, Riley Smallman, Rod Stacy-Marks, Srijani Rupsha Mitra, Carlin Steere, St Petrock’s ‘Wandering Words’ Group, Tim Toghil, Vasile, James Wilkes, Orianna Xu, Jules Young.

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Finally, we would like to thank everyone who supported the Green Words project, took part in our public creative sessions, contributed their stories, and shared their hopes and ideas for a greener future.

Cover image created by Sarah Furby

# Introduction by Lis Spencer

Welcome to this collection of poetry, curated by Exeter Cathedral Riddler in Residence Aly Stoneman. The Riddler in Residence is one of a series of projects, supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, welcoming all people to participate in creative heritage activities at the Cathedral and out in the local community. We have been particularly pleased to partner with St Petrock’s, our neighbours on Cathedral Green, on this project. St Petrock’s supported us to offer 10 weeks of creative writing sessions to people experiencing homelessness, giving them space to tell their own stories.

The title Riddler in Residence is inspired by the riddles contained in The Exeter Book, the oldest book of English Literature in the world, which has been in the Cathedral since the 11th Century. Alongside the (sometimes bawdy) riddles, the Exeter Book features epic poems like The Seafarer and The Wanderer with themes of loneliness, exile and the passage of time that are still resonant today, particularly for those without a home.

There will be four Riddler residencies over the course of the Heritage Fund project, each with a different theme. Nature and the environment are the themes for the current Riddler, linking in with the work the Cathedral is doing to increase biodiversity in our public and private spaces. The green spaces around Exeter Cathedral are used by thousands of people every year for solitude and socialising. It is here we gather to mark important national moments and small, personal ones. The rhythms of the year, marked inside the Cathedral by the liturgical calendar, are mirrored outside by the cycles of nature as the leaves bud and fall. These poems, created as part of the Riddler residency or submitted to our call out, highlight the abundance of nature in the green spaces around the Cathedral and beyond. They tell stories of beauty, murder, theft, growth, decay and more, each writer interpreting the theme with their own focus and in their own style.

We hope you enjoy this anthology. If you are inspired by what you read, then keep an eye on the Cathedral Events and Engaging Communities pages on our website for future Riddler residencies and other creative opportunities.

We are particularly grateful to the Heritage Fund for their support; to Bishop Robert Attwell, Sarah Ball and James O’Callaghan for facilitating access to the Bishop’s Palace Garden for creative writing workshops; to St Petrock’s staff and clients for their willingness to engage with this process and to the many writers who responded to the call and produced such thought provoking, wonderful words.

– **Lis Spencer, Community Outreach and Partnerships Officer at Exeter Cathedral**

# Foreword by Aly Stoneman

Exeter Cathedral Green Words Anthology and Map brings together and locates new poems, riddles and hand-made prints inspired by Exeter Cathedral's green spaces and the relationship between human culture and the natural world in Exeter and beyond, created by people from the local community and further afield.

Some of these poems germinated during weekly 'Wandering Words' sessions with service users at St Petrock's, who are experiencing homelessness; others sprouted during poetry workshops held both in and around Exeter Cathedral, and as part of Exeter Science Centre's 'Climate Exhibition', where participants examined ways in which people can have a positive impact for our planet in our time of climate crisis. Poems and riddles from The Exeter Book (written around 970AD), which is kept in Exeter Cathedral, offered a rich stimulus for new writing. Contributors also submitted work in response to an open call for new poems on the project theme. Prints were created in the Double Elephant print workshop by members, and also by some of the poets who made illustrations to accompany their poems.

Over the following pages, you may accompany people from all walks of life – gardeners, students, volunteers, teachers, clergy, scientists, printmakers and more – on a shared journey through The Bishop's Palace Garden (an enclosed 'secret' garden that is occasionally open to the public), the Cathedral Green (a popular open space where wildlife and human lives overlap), and Exeter Cathedral (with its superb nature-inspired carvings), then out into the city of Exeter and the world beyond – for everything explored in these poems is happening in a global context.

I hope that you will enjoy reading these poems, viewing the prints, and answering the riddles as much as I have done while editing and compiling this anthology. I am grateful to everyone involved in Green Words for welcoming me back home to Exeter and into the Riddler role, and for contributing to this project and supporting it with so much energy and enthusiasm.

**Aly Stoneman, Riddler-In-Residence, Exeter Cathedral (July–November 2023)**



Print created by Louise Neilson

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Squirrel prints created by Rod Stacy-Marks

# *The Bishop's Palace Garden*



Print created by Rod Stacy-Marks

## The Bishop's Magpie

Monochrome magpie, perched high in that tree,  
dressed like a nun, are you spying on me?  
As I walk through the garden you're lurking up there,  
beady black eyes looking down on me here.

You're cackling and bobbing your head up and down.  
What's so amusing, you black and white clown?  
Are you laughing at me as I examine these trees?  
Be an angel, fly off, leave me in peace!

I see a tree with a tempting ripe apple.  
You swoop down to the roof of the chapel.  
I reach for the fruit, stretching out my right arm,  
you start squawking like a burglar alarm.

Are you truly more saintly than me?  
Just turn a blind eye to my thievery.  
Mischievous, mythical, magical brute,  
stop screeching, come here and share this fruit.

– Rod Stacy-Marks



Print created by Rod Stacy-Marks

*Note from the poet: This poem came about following an encounter with a magpie that appeared to be acting as some sort of security guard for the Bishop's garden.*

## The Bishop's Garden

Pink and white confetti  
Litters the ground beneath a tree,  
Cyclamen marking that long ago wedding.  
A drunken bumble bee sways on a sprig of red flowers,  
Long rangy spines topped with purple hats wave a farewell.  
Lilac discs, dropped with yellow paint, look on,  
Gaping holes in leaves bely the feast that was,  
Crows curse from boughs in the beech.  
She is here, still,  
will always be,  
past the dripping bean pods  
and the three silent figures  
that wait eternally for her alms.  
She, trapped within the horse chestnut,  
Encased in the trunk, her forever home.

– Sarah Bartrum



Print created by Sarah Bartrum

*Note from the poet: This poem was inspired by plants and sculptures in the Bishop's garden.*

## Our Time

Our loving memory,  
gradually escapes with time.  
Clinging on for its treasured moments,  
striking light slices through the shadows.

The shining rays warm the mellow bees  
drunk on the sweet beauty of their food source.  
The colourful petals  
thrive in deep comfort,  
knowing their time is respected.

Observing the ever-changing winds  
which encourage the weary leaves to dance,  
unknowingly disturbing the elderly leaves  
pushing them to accept their time to rest.

The ageing tree roots  
prepare for another deep sleep.  
Stubborn peers refuse to let go  
as cold fear settles into winter.

Their silent pearl droplets slowly absorb,  
while gentle tree roots soothe the soil,  
watch the remarkable sunset with reassurance.

– Rebekah Horton

## Reflections On A Hidden Garden

Birdsong in the trees  
Counterpoint, call and response.  
Runways on the badly shaved lawn  
Hovered over by ghost-wasp-helicopters  
Grey muted skies muffle the sounds  
Of the city traffic.  
Children's voices; the chimes of innocence beyond the walls.

Wild poetry is hemmed in  
By word-bed boundaries,  
Superfluous punctuation mown away.  
Metaphors bloom at the base of the tree  
Unseeing eyes stare out from the bark.  
Boundaries restrict yet protect  
Creativity cannot be grown  
Where the feet of the inner critic trample.

– Si Egan



Print created by Cathy King



Print created by Simon Ripley

## *The Cathedral Green*

## The Green

The Green is more than green  
space shaped  
by old road-spokes.

Here, green grows  
between cobbles,  
and soothes souls  
more worn  
than the stone steps.

With winter's cool kiss,  
trees blush,  
and pigeons pouf,  
shedding like takeaway pastry flakes.

Here, we meet,  
perched with the birds,  
in this sacred amphitheatre  
of duelling gulls and chasing children.

Under the oaks,  
Over coffee and resting places,  
we rest and tell our tales.

– **Orianna Xu**

## Oblivious Observations

*why didn't i bring a book to read?*

sitting in front of the Cathedral, i feel...disconnected maybe?  
the Cathedral seems like just...a structure erected in the middle of the city

*i have travelled to so many places admiring similar architectures  
yet i haven't come here so often*

i was heading back to the house     *it's yet to become my home*  
but i got drifted towards the Cathedral Green  
i needed some quiet, while also watching others

friends lazing about   people taking photographs, selfies  
children running up and down mini-slopes   seagulls chasing after food  
students chattering away   lovers enjoying a peaceful rendezvous

me sitting cross-legged on the grass, the quintessential black bag leaning against my leg  
my off-white leather jacket resting in my lap, the mobile phone propped up on my jacket  
constantly clicking photographs and videos of the eminent edifice  
as the wind rustles through the glass blades  
and pigeons take flight in groups

i'm happy i didn't bring a book with me  
it's been quite a while since it was just the four of us...  
a blank page, words, my surroundings, and me.

– **Swarnim Agrawal**

## Cathedral Green

The wind sweeps leaves and a few straggling tourists  
Along paths and over grass  
Beneath the rusting great tree.  
Too soon for Autumn  
A sickness, perhaps, that burns the leaves brown.  
A blue-blond punk rests beneath  
grateful for the back rest  
but otherwise indifferent  
to the canopy waving and sighing above,  
or the spider that scuttles past  
disappears down the crack between the slabs.  
“All pathways by his feet are worn”  
It says on the ground.  
Has god been down this crack?  
Travelled along the web of roots and bones?  
Did he also scamper out again and hurry onto the grassy pasture?  
Where she sits, orange hood pulled up close  
technology in her hand  
mind in another web,  
beyond the tree  
and wind  
and crack.

– Sarah Bartrum



Print created by Lisa Dillon-Langhorn

*Note from the poet: This poem was inspired by the way nature and people intersect across the Cathedral Green, sometimes oblivious to each other or to the magnificence of the Cathedral.*

## You Bade Me Sit

How long have you waited  
Stood stock still and watched  
These gatherings and hollerings

Bits of lunches scattered  
Herring gulls haranguing  
Babies crawling in your shadows

I sit in peace  
And you throw your conkers at me  
Narrowly miss my head, three times

You could be a hundred - or two  
Ambitiously striving for the top  
Time not a measuring tool for you

Had the sandstone walls, the turrets and gargoyles  
Not been raised - or razed  
Would you have grown from the ground  
Or stood elsewhere, been an other

But you are here, Old Chestnut  
Unquestionable companion  
Befriended tree  
How I do worship thee

– Anabelle Denney



## The Pigeon Statue

The tired statue yawns and sits  
legs crossed under his flowing gown,  
a straining book spread on his lap.  
Ecumenical eyes wander as he reads  
his words and wonders whether time  
has passed or still ticks the same?  
He watches robins roost on Tudor  
timbers as insects march across  
squares of gently ungreening grass.  
Preening pigeons perch upon his hat  
and he settles back to sleep once more  
as collared doves coo their choral lullaby.

– **P.J. Reed**

*Note from the poet: The poem is about the statue of Richard Hooker (1553-1600) outside Exeter Cathedral and the wild birds he sees as he sits there reading his book and watching as the centuries pass.*

## Chestnut Tree

What have you seen, in all your years on Cathedral Green?  
Roots burrow into soil, while the city shifts and shapes around you.

What secrets have you heard and held,  
when your snow draped limbs felt heavy?

You've seen storms form and flames rise.  
Perhaps you have felt the girl's heartache in your shade  
and seen joy in the old man's eyes.

You have weathered seasons of love and seasons of war.  
Will you witness one hundred more?

Now, your leaves are speckled with autumn.  
Birdsong marks the rising of day.  
Rushed footsteps and gentle strolls.  
Seagulls and quarrelling siblings might pass your way.

Soon, Christmas lights will shine around you,  
like a starlit sky pulled down to the ground.

Some of us might have caught your words,  
whispered by the wind.  
I hope we can tell your tale.

– **Amy Adkin**

## Cathedral Close: October

A brisk North Wind blows tourists  
like the dead leaves through the Cathedral Close.  
Herding their flocks, Red-Coated Guides, full of facts,  
entertain with their tall-tales.  
People and pigeons potter about, linger and loiter,  
listen to buskers, sit on the wall, peck at their picnics.  
Meantime gulls lurk, unnoticed, skulking,  
waiting to pounce on distracted sight-seers,  
steal their sandwiches and souvenirs.  
Headphoned and earbudded locals  
glance at the Cathedral, take it for granted,  
oblivious to the trees sponsored by  
The Landfill Communities Trust,  
oblivious to the sounds, the birds, other people.  
Unaware, they stare at their little screens.

– **Rod Stacy-Marks**

## Death On The Green

It was early, still; I recall  
the quiet emptiness,  
just the usual eight-thirty peal of breakfast at The Ivy,  
a virger putting out the tour sign, the distant click-clack of high heels  
heading for work.  
Not the sort of morning for a death.

The police are hardly strangers here, even at this time of day.  
If I am asked, I will say, yes, a professional killer,  
judging from the slick perfection and pace of the attack;  
and pre-meditated:  
watching and waiting, then springing like some wild animal.  
Not a first offence.

It was over in seconds, didn't stand a chance.  
The killer saw me - was even proud, skulking off  
underneath the builders' hoarding, head held high,  
like nothing had happened.  
The shocked, jaw-locked body jerking and juddering,  
feathers hanging by a thread.  
Not quite dead.

– **Emma Jackson**

*Note from the poet: This poem is based on a true story.*

## Cathedral Green Haikus

“AAAAAARGH!”

Gulls dive bomb my head  
"Ice cream!" I scream! Those blighters  
Have eaten my treat!

– André de Mendonça

### Cathedral Green Haiku

Green with a Hooker  
Scripture, Reason, Tradition  
Inclusive for all.

– Ven Nick Shutt

### Haiku

Another record...  
sunning ourselves on the Green  
while the planet burns

From a bug's eye view  
the grass is riddled with weeds  
(if you call them that)

– Clare

## From Cathedral Green

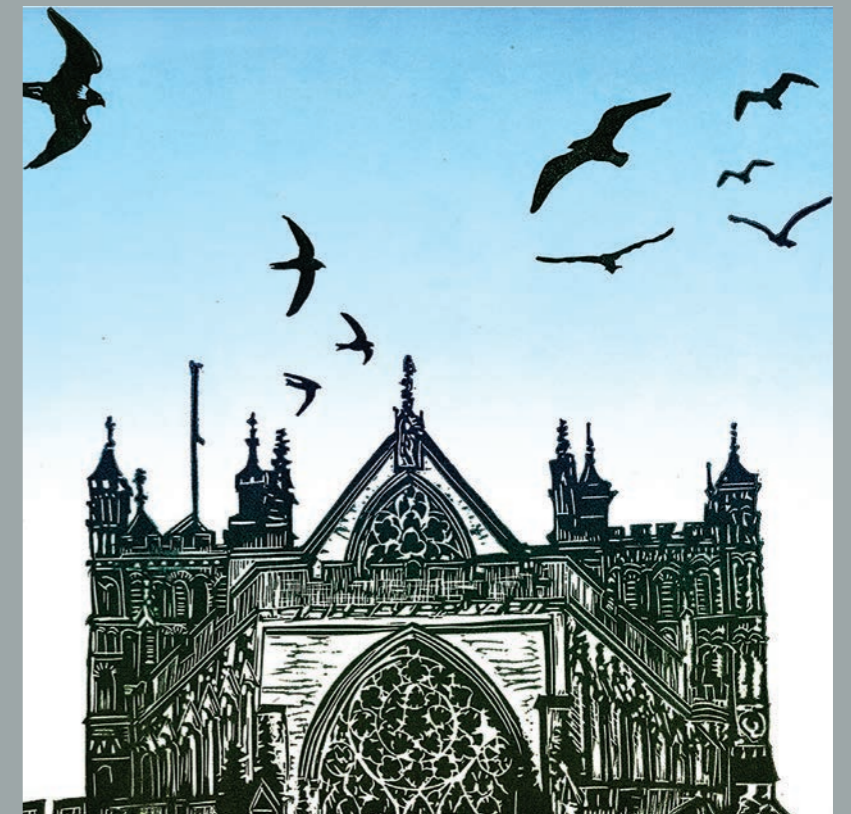
What can we see here?  
Squeezed for a space,  
squished at all corners:  
green stamps for the human race.

What can we feel here?  
Rough branches across the face,  
wise feet laced under ours.  
Carbon-catchers for us to embrace.

What can we hear here?  
Rooks above Southernhay place,  
elemental, beyond the cars.  
Time travellers, stay there safe.

What do we need here?  
Plants for an urgent case:  
extinction, and our pleasures.  
Nature's wand, for us to save.

– Lou Jones



Print created by Lynn Bailey

## After Thoughts

*After Ted Hughes, et al\**

As I sit on the Green having my lunch,  
I muse on the birds eyeing the sandwich that I munch.  
*Nothing but bounce and stab and a ravening second?*  
Those seconds crawl by, Thrush, and your domesday beckons.

*Gas! Gas! Quick Boys!* The CO<sub>2</sub> alarm.  
But still they do nothing, arms folded in silent calm.  
The bells have been sounding for more than fifty years  
And still they sit there smugly, hands over their ears.

*Come, friendly bombs, and fall on their heads!*  
Come quickly now, before we're all dead.  
Extinction is real, it's coming hither.  
Politicians are dumb. Why do they dither?

The gulls might say *Remember me when I am gone away [...]*  
*It will be late to counsel then or pray.*  
*Will we tell our children of the future that we planned?*  
Or leave no wildlife, just a barren land?

Maybe we'll *just fade away, not having faced the facts,*  
But the sun is shining now, not all the *world is black.*  
It's time to act, it's certainly not too late;  
We cannot change the past, but we can change our fate.

– **André de Mendonça**

\*Note from the poet: This poem uses lines from poems by John Betjeman (Slough), Wilfred Owen (Dulce et Decorum Est), Christina Rossetti (Remember), Ted Hughes (Thrushes), Mick Jagger and Keith Richards (Paint It Black).

## The Cathedral Green

I am here  
as the detritus of the night is swept away.  
Discarded bottles toppled in the gusts or kicked recalcitrantly  
splinter my belly with shards of glass.  
Takeaway cartons, their contents half eaten,  
lie on me like a dirty blanket and  
used needles nestle in my undergrowth,  
like glistening trinkets to an unsuspecting child.

I am here  
as the city breathes into life  
and workers sit and slough off sleep before the daily grind  
and students gather in a giggling heap,  
to share the stories of their day, while tourists gaze in awe, to marvel  
at the grandeur of the Cathedral, ancient and living, as time stands still.

I am here  
as Nature marks the changes in the seasons  
and trees which offered food to feathered friends  
prepare to shed their garments for another year, and moss and midge  
and worms and winged-ones weep at humanity's disrespect and cry out:

Will I be here?

– **Canon Deborah Parsons**



Print created by Joanne Roper

Note from the poet: I've written a poem called 'Cathedral Green' because the Cathedral Green is such an important green space for me. It's a hub. An intergenerational and inclusive community space, which is well-used but also abused. In my poem, I want to raise awareness of the importance of the Cathedral Green as shared space for all of creation, not just for human beings, and for the importance of good stewardship of all that we have been given.

## Growan

My growing fascination with green.

Green is related to the Old English verb, growan, meaning to grow.

Green places are natural and nurturing

Green symbolises environmental protection and social justice.

I love to walk in gardens and smell the herbs.

As a cook and a painter, the colour charts become endless recipes

For me to mix and stir as a child, painting by numbers.

Hope: Acorn Green 87, adds light to darkness.

Harmony: Pale Lime 70, gentle colour green.

Compassion: Citrine 71, north facing room with chocolate brown.

Generosity: Kitchen Green 85, happy transition to garden.

Calming: Pea Green 91, soft peaceful green.

Relaxing: Olive Oil 83, a beautiful classic green.

Healing: Sage Green 80, a restful quiet tone.

Durable: Green Verditer 92, favoured in Regency libraries.

Soothing: Boxington 84, relaxing backdrop for dining.

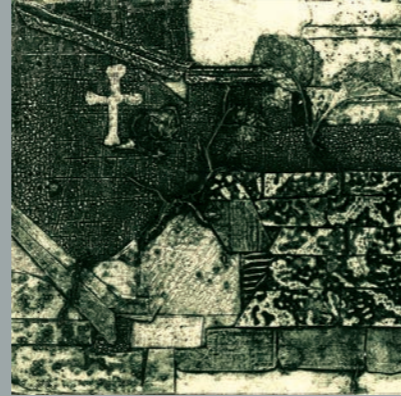
Purity: Woodbine 134, a neutral garden colour.

Renewal: Oak Apple 63, wet wood colour.

Fertility: Apple 137, a superb ground colour enhancing a myriad of soft furnishings.

My recipes for a colourful, compassionate and peaceful life – just add some green!

– Pip Barfield



Print created by Pip Barfield



Print created by Cathy King

# Exeter Cathedral

## The Overview Effect

It was never about whether God existed, but where—so we built skywards, spires and towers like hands reaching up to what we assumed was Heaven. Then, we breached the atmosphere, and Frank White tied a swing to the crescent moon and flew out to the black emptiness of outer space, in to the embrace of Eden, every act of kindness and every pact of peace alone in the place we call home, and he understood: we've been building to God from Her own stones. Here, behold, in the grass by the worn cathedral walls, my bare toes rest, returning to my roots. We always searched for God in the heavens when she was right at our fingertips. Here, our Creator, our Holy Ghost; here, our Lord and Savior, Mother Earth, right beneath the soles of our feet.

– Eleanor Konings



Print created by Sarah Furby

*Note from the poet : The Overview Effect is a scientific phenomeon first coined by Frank White in which astronauts see the Earth, all alone in space, for the first time. This experience is described as numinous or religious and has changed all astronauts who have felt the effect, regardless of beliefs before the experience, into some form of spiritualist.*

## Cathedral Thinking

*Within the Wall*

A new humanity is born from wild nature,  
Roots and branches tear down the walls  
Of division old humanity used to dominate the world.  
No more us and them. Just us.  
A continuous being, a global life,  
Multiplying, growing, adding new species,  
Subtracting selfishness and greed from the human equation.

In this new Eden, there are no gates,  
No fences, no flame-sword wielding cherubim,  
No forbidden fruit. Knowledge is hidden in plain sight:  
In the microcosmic life of a pine cone planet, in the silence of drowsy bees gathering  
The last dregs of the hot summer's nectar, and in the cracks between slabs where new life grows.

*Outwith the Wall*

Nature builds its own cathedrals of wood and water, leaf and wind.  
When stones have crumbled into dust, the oak and elm will cast their shadows on the ruins,  
Seedlings sprouting through mosaic floors, pigeons nesting in high bell towers.  
Requiem rain will fill the font and organ pipes be sounded by the wind's invisible breath,

As land shifts and seas rise the aisle becomes the beach, city seagulls swirl, now home again,  
And graves eject their passenger's remains, a final resurrection long awaited by the dead.

– Si Egan

## Celestial Grace

In Exeter's heart, in the cathedral tall,  
Stands proud my monument upon the wall,  
Where echoes of romance and Lorna fair  
Hang like shadows on the air.

From Blundell's School, my youth took flight,  
Through grassy fields, my dreams took height.  
I, who loved this gallant county,  
Wrote loving odes to it's beauteous bounty.

In words, I painted Exmoor's grace,  
Carved her beauty, and Lorna's face.  
And John Ridd's pure and hopeless love,  
As large as the skyward beams above.

Like the Cathedral's lofty towers,  
Wrote I of Love's unending powers,  
From moor to sky, from land to sea,  
Celestial grace, it flowed through me.

My legacy, it shines like light,  
Beneath the vaulted ceiling bright,  
The name of Blackmore stands forever,  
Amongst the Cathedral's precious treasure.

– **Catherine Flavelle**

*Note from the poet: As the school archivist for Blundell's School, as well as a history teacher, I'm lucky enough to be in charge of R.D. Blackmore's (1825–1900) doodled history school book – like many teenagers, he's written his name over and over – as well as a signed copy of his much-loved novel that he presented to the school. I've always had a soft spot for Lorna Doone, so this seemed an obvious inspiration.*

## The Woman Outside Of The Crypt

There is a woman in the earth who lives parallel  
to the crypt you explored. She too is as cold  
as the stone you trailed your fingers  
across, but unbound. She lives untamed,  
sometimes possessed by a rage that  
makes her reach out, silver hands distressing  
roots and causing whole trees to  
shiver. The silence of the crypt is disturbed  
by the hum of discontent in the winds,  
and the trembling reminds you of how the stone  
walls could not exist without the shaking  
branches: the two must coexist.  
Otherwise, the woman of the earth would  
not have any way to communicate, and would stay,  
entombed.

– **Kitty Carter**



Print created by Cathy King

## I Am Alive

I am alive  
So much freedom held in  
This frail body and  
Imperfect personality

I am alive  
Life is everywhere, even in  
The stones of the cathedral  
Silence is their wisdom

I am alive  
Jesus lives in me, not in  
The books or the rules of  
The cathedral or church

I am alive is all I know  
I know no future, past, birth  
Or death  
I am alive.

– **Chris Jackson**



Print created by Sarah Furby

## Haiku

Porcupines bristle  
Adorning St George's frieze  
A saint's prickly chums

– **Simon**

*Note from the poet: the Chapel of St George in Exeter Cathedral has a frieze depicting porcupines (although they look more like hedgehogs!).*



## The Owls Of Oldham Chantry

Toowit towoo they say I call,  
but you know that it is not all.  
I'm Tawney and I call hoo-hoo  
my friend Long-eared hoo-hoo too.  
But Short-eared friends have a long cry  
Hoo-hoo hoo-hoo hoo-hoo until they die.  
Barnie owl likes his piercing screech,  
he hits notes of a higher reach.  
We owls do call for all our might,  
to keep you awake all through the night.

– Canon Cate



Photo by Tim Pestridge

## Grape

Gathered together we make wine  
Red is one of our colours on the vine  
And green and white when grown are fine  
Pulped we become when ripe is the sign  
Eventually, in a glass, I'm truly divine!

– Canon Cate

## The Salcombe Stone Spider (Of The Cathedral Of Exeter)

A tourist is staring at me; transfixed by my glowing green eyes, bulbaceous.

This tower is my home; not yours.  
To think that I was created in the distant shadows of this ancient  
sea stone 70,000 million years ago;  
imbued with their magic and magnetisms!

Round and round go these human step-users  
Up, on up, spinning the cardinal points  
“Look, pinnacles!”, hollers a chattering guide  
Ball flowers crocketing celestially!

OOO-hing, AAA-hing, and gasping voices  
bouncing off Salcombe sounds of 1000 years.

Thou shall not fear me nor harm me.  
I belong to these quiet, hewed cool stones  
that nurture exoskeletons radiated.

Stones, all empowering, in the dark towers of human follies.

– Leslie Moss

*Note from the poet: My volunteering as a roof and floor guide inspired the poem as well as having benefitted from workshops presented by the ‘Riddler-in-Residence’.*

## Warm Roses Enter The Work

How's it below? asks a wolf, with spaniel ears and a mane of sad laurels lying flat on earth's grapes, on the hound's hard gripe. Where's the concealer, where now the earrings? Where are those tassels you hung from the doorhandles? Weird bracken for warm roses: warm roses for you. A cream cat falls on a cream bird, who pecks out her eye. Corpse cruel, jewel like, the centaur finds his mark. You are on one island, I on another. After days wrenched to the ground. Warm roses for you. I give you the earth where wolves have turned above. I give you rosemary bound in clean linen cloth. I give you the smell of washing hung outside. I give you warm roses.

– James Wilkes

*Note from the poet: This poem is an imaginative response to aspects of the Cathedral building and its library collections, ranging from the medieval carved bosses of the cathedral's ceiling, to the sounds of Old English poems such as those found in the 10th-century Exeter Book.*



# Exeter

## City Bats

Dusk closes in and brings  
city bats, tiny hunters  
swooping through cool night air,  
circling moth prey with electric precision.  
The silence chipped by their squeaks of joy  
at the invertebrate smorgasbord before them.  
Leathery wings outlined in moonlight,  
tiny bodies twist and turn to chase their  
fluttering meals and then vanish into  
the night like puffs of smoke.

– Jules Young

## Ears Of Exeter

Sun roasts our heads. Baked thoughts stumble  
over roots and rumbles. We listen with ears cupped and eyes shut,  
earnest acolytes. But you refuse, look your own way,  
tolerate with boredom these adults and their obscure play.

Discordant seagull pierces water weir and traffic roar for  
this is nature decomposing human noise.  
Sweaty leopards, we tense in silent fascination,  
while you toe the hot edge of my shadow.  
Later we sit where swing slacks over water, quiet as germs.  
Wendy scribbles. Lizzy leans. Emma remembers.  
Your jaws still clench and yet, my love, you hear it all,  
apple-crunch clear, nestled by nettle-kneeling cricket.

Shall we splash ahead like that defiant swimmer,  
brim bobbing, to first-second-third waves and hidden depths?  
No. Let's stay bathed in birds, cradled in leaf and muscling love.  
Rest on me and I will listen.  
This is our quiet space.

– Micha Colombo

*Note from the poet: This poem is inspired by one of Emma Welton's sound walks around Exeter together with my son.*

## An Exeter Meadow

In the grassy meadow grow  
a trunk, a forest, still and stone  
at the compass we shall meet  
in nature, a reminder, not alone.

Wander through the windy streets  
the wind whispers and she groans  
Hear my voice, let me speak  
my work here – still as stone.

Can all the people hear?  
a sound, a cry, help our home  
a new point we shall begin  
in worship, singing, divine tone.

Let the grassy meadows grow

– **Isabella Beckett-Smith**



Print created by Sarah Furby

## Apricity

The air is a little colder now —  
the kind of weather you'd gladly sink into your wool coats and scarves in—  
the kind of cool you savour your sunlight in, soaking up the light with fervour  
as the babbling of children and the cooing of birds echo around you.

Someone touches the stone near the city gates.  
You say a prayer with your hands clasped, then outstretched.  
Your limbs and mind whisper in unison  
as if they're the back-and-forth of adolescents or the seagulls overhead.

You're generating your own heat, with some aid from the sun.  
You're bundled up, with words murmured soft.

– **Carlin Steere**

*Note from the poet: 'Apricity' was written about the incoming months and the solitude found in visiting Exeter Cathedral, even during its busiest moments.*

## Exeter Is...

a pop video with Keith Allen and

a cat  
looking out of a window  
near the Bowling Green pub,  
master of its universe, and

lyrics by Goss: ‘everybody’s going down’ –  
*folie à plusieurs* (delusions of the many);  
shop’s closed, time to move on.

Sometimes, I find the city suffocating  
it used to be so quiet...  
rooted here, I know it since childhood  
so many changes, and opportunities...  
now a battleground  
teasels and bushes, brambles and briars  
waging war on bags and bottles,

and above our heads, the calls of seagulls  
wearing high heels.

– **St Petrock’s ‘Wandering Words’ group led by Aly Stoneman**

## Down By The River

It is hard, living in a tent,  
down by the river;  
it is hard to live in the street  
on your own.  
It is easy to get into trouble  
But hard to get out of trouble.  
You have friends, but  
friends are often temporary.  
You have to be strong.  
Faith is important.  
So is finding food and coffee,  
having a shower and  
charging my phone.  
People help, I don’t forget  
what they do; and I help  
others, when I can.  
It doesn’t matter  
where someone comes from.  
People survive together.

I go into the trees  
down by the river.  
Not everyone has the power  
to sleep in the forest,  
but if you can, the forest  
gives you everything.  
I learned this in the army.  
Before I go to sleep  
I pray.  
For the moment, it is safe.

When I put my head down,  
I hear foxes and squirrels  
searching for food.  
It is important to sleep  
because tomorrow  
I have a meeting at the job centre.  
Last week I didn’t get the job  
Because I don’t have a place.

A man who drives a big jeep  
asked how long we will be staying here –  
myself, my friend, and the old man.  
We don’t use drugs, we don’t bring alcohol  
We don’t do something wrong.  
Maybe a couple of days.  
Maybe a week, or more,  
If we stay quiet.

If in your heart  
you feel happy, there is hope.  
It is not a great distance  
from being in the street  
to living in a house.  
It is just a couple of steps  
along the river.

– **Vasile and Gabriel**

**(from St Petrock’s ‘Wandering Words’ Group)**

## The Reef

See, from Shillingford, a little ship  
Still amongst the whitecaps of the city.

Green waves fold and roll around the bark –  
Anchored, unmoved by the roiling world.

A heavy, cresting wave looms over Ide  
The shadow of a hare against its slope

Eyes bulge, long feet thrum the deep red clay  
Darting uphill, the salmon of the field.

Gold and greenfinch school from hedge to hedge  
Shimmering - the minnows in the lanes.

The swallows tease the kestrel for a lark –  
Porpoises and sharks against the sky.

Beneath a tarp a clutch of baby voles –  
Pink, blind plankton in the polytunnel.

Fungi bloom a coral reef around  
The harbour of the city and the ship;

A pulsating, living atoll, embraces her  
Barnacled hull and weathered masts.

Dark Haldon shelves and rises to the moor  
Roving giants rooting in the deep.

– **Tom O'Connor**

*Note from the poet: Musing on my day-to-day growing vegetables in the hills above Exeter which teem with life, above, around and below. I'm lucky to be able to stop regularly and admire the sweep of the city, which sits like a quiet reef in a sea of green, with the moored hulk of the cathedral at its centre.*

## Further Afield



## Lundy Sky

Big sky, big seas  
White clouds team into grey and black  
Menacing portents of rough weather

Sun glints through breaks in the cloud  
Warming with its touch  
Razorbills, Puffins and Gillimots frolic in slate seas

Granite cliffs loom above the scene  
Grey, crisp, glinting texture adds to the ominous panorama  
Oily dark waters reflect layers of grey strata

North Devon's coast is wreathed in curtains of rain  
Drenched horizon obscures Hartland Point and Bideford harbour  
Puffins in sea and skylarks in sky herald warmer days of spring.

– **Tim Toghil**

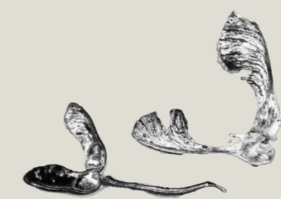
## The Sycamore Gap

She stood tall, just beyond the fence  
Serene over the petty boundary,  
Her bountiful limbs awash in leaves and buzzing insects  
Her multitudinous seeds flung so far,  
the whole road sprouted every Spring.  
A mature mother sycamore, casting shade  
and protection to us all

But today she is not there.  
It is the first thing I notice  
parking on the drive.  
Beyond the gate, above the garage  
that gap, the bare open sky.  
What is left, a length of trunk  
Like the leg of a man  
after an amputation.

My son complains of too much heat  
beating through his windows;  
The view from the kitchen, empty and barren,  
Outside there is no more shelter.  
No hum from the great body of insects,  
No birds to chirp their success as parents,  
No seedlings, no leaves, no shade,  
No sustenance, no protection,  
No farewell.  
She was taken,  
Our mother sycamore,  
And we are lost.

– **Sarah Bartum**



Print created by Aly Stoneman

*Note from the poet: Sometimes we don't notice the significance of someone or something until it is gone.*

## The Wonders Of Creation

The world is full of beauty and wonder  
So always we must ponder  
How to help the earth  
That gives us life and birth.  
God wants us to show it love  
From the ground to the skies up above.

Our world gives us life  
So we should empty it of strife.  
Let us be kind.

Our earth is wonderful  
From the ocean to the highest mountain,  
Life flows like water from a fountain.

So thank you, Lord,  
For this world.

– **Anwen Phillips (Age 11)**



Print created by Joanne Roper

## Acrostic Poems

### HOPE

Help won't arrive unless you make it yourself  
One person can make a difference, but more can change everything  
Planets exist far beyond our own, but this is our home  
Earth is our planet and our garden, it needs everyone to help it thrive  
– **David Newman**

### CROW

Creative problem-solving and playful learning  
Reacting to new discoveries and adapting behaviours  
Only taking what we need and re-using what we can  
Waste reduced, living as part of nature  
– **Riley Smallman**

### GRASS

Gee, I wish I looked at the nature, but I  
Rarely look down  
Although I am altogether amazed at the land  
Supposedly another wild temple, unspoiled, unheard and  
Saturated with grace and divinity.

– **Nathan Maxwell Cann**

*Note: Three acrostic poems from creative writing session participants at Exeter Science Centre's Climate Exhibition, and Exeter Cathedral poetry drop-in on National Poetry Day.*



## The Woods

Traipsing down the woods  
is a different feeling altogether.  
I am filled with desire and  
longing  
and the bougainvillea  
remind me further of purplish love  
Wounding and scarring further  
Like my knees.

I pluck fruits from the trees  
as the shivering leaves  
sway in the wind.  
I am wanting your touch in the woods  
all swishing and  
full of the scent of jasmine  
This desiring takes wings  
and sings  
like the song of the birds chirping,  
like the sing song breeze,  
like the churning within.

– Srijani Rupsha Mitra



Print created by Lynn Bailey

## Kitchen Garden (Croatia)

The only sound as I enter the village  
is my footsteps crunching on the gravel track.  
No dogs bark a warning.  
No noise of traffic or tractors in the fields.  
No tinkling of bells on goats.  
No laughter, shouts or screams, no voices.  
Nothing.  
Just my footsteps crunching on the gravel track.

It's hot. I check my watch. Time for a break.

The scent of herbs draws me through the broken  
wall  
into the kitchen garden.  
No parsley.  
I sing as I see savoury sage, rosemary and thyme.

I fire up my camping-stove. Put on a pan of water.  
Drop in a dozen leaves of sage,  
magical member of the mint family.  
Good for oral health, insect bites and stings;  
brings wisdom, peace, purification,  
protection from evil, heals grief,  
grants wishes written on its leaves.

Where's the gardener who tended these herbs?  
Where's the cook who picked them?  
Where are the children who played here?  
Where are the neighbours who swapped eggs,  
vegetables, fruit, stories and kindness?  
When did those helping-hands become clenched  
fists?

I sip my sage tea.

I look up.

I see my son writing "peace" on a sage leaf.

– Rod Stacy-Marks

*Note from the poet: This poem was inspired by the amazing ancient riddles and writing in the Exeter Book and other works in the Cathedral Library including guides to the medieval medicinal and culinary uses of herbs.*



Print Created by Karen Waterlow

# *Exeter Riddles*

## What I Be

One with the mulberry on Cathedral Green  
tall over market stalls,  
and the shady oak for wandering folk  
beside the Roman walls.

In Northernhay before the sun  
I follow foraging deer,  
and past godwits on Goosemoor Marsh  
I see salmon leap Trews Weir.

Hanged I heard three 'witches' high  
Poor Mary, Su and Temperance too,  
and below I know the Passages  
where spring waters run through.

At St Michael and All Angels' tower  
I watch as peregrines fall,  
and after dark under London planes  
I sleep where furze-pigs crawl.

Like any other this life I live  
is by way of flesh and tree,  
and if you can rede this riddle  
tell me who or what I be?

– John Chrimes

I'm really sweet but I've got something that's sometimes  
worse than a bite (my bark).  
There's no hair on my pectorals (chest) but I've got plenty of spikes.  
I have nothing to do with the cavalry or carriages except with their bolts.  
Cut me, drown me, burn me. I might kill you if you don't.  
(If you're bonkers for conkers you're barking up the wrong tree)

– **Rod Stacy-Marks**

Like a chameleon I can change the colour of my skin,  
Sometimes I stay in place or end up somewhere foreign,  
Birds use me as their home or humans make me pose for a photogenic picture,  
But the best part about me is the sounds I make when the wind pops by to say hello.

– **Theo**

Psychotic eye on the wing  
Gliding for a sudden swoop  
Blindsided  
Your food is gone.

– **Si Egan**

I fell with a bounce  
as I hardly weigh an ounce.  
My skin may be tough,  
but it's never rough.  
I've a middle that's white  
and can be holed with might.  
When hit I can shatter  
and my contents scatter.  
I can be a winner  
if others are thinner.  
What am I?

– **Canon Cate**

## Answers

- 1) Exeter
- 2) Sweet (not horse) chestnut
- 3) Leaves
- 4) Seagull
- 5) Conker

## Slow Path

This is my slow path to the centre...from *Haven*, from *Ship Canal Basin*, from ale hall and bakery...via chain ferry or footbridge...forever and ever up steep *Quay Lane* as far as ghost-marked *South Gate*, where Fireweed remembers blitzed ground...to cross roaring *Western Way*...and linger alongside scarred lava and red sandstone city walls, where birdsong spills, tantalising, from *The Bishop's Palace Garden*...and dawdle through *Cathedral Close* under square Norman towers and hissing gargoyles...past Glastonbury Thorn, Exeter Elm, dark-fruited Mulberry...then coast downhill in the snatched company of gulls...and return through *Watergate* to the *Exe* (*Uisc*, abounding in fish)...that kayak-busy river, rich in summer visitors and winter waders, which ebbs and flows and floods under motorway flyover, through wrecks and weirs, past sludge beds, mudflats and marshes...drawing our brief songs, our shimmering reflections, seaward through drowned river valley to the beery *English Channel* (*The Sleeve, The Narrow Sea, Oceanus Britannica*)...

– **Aly Stoneman**

*Note from the poet: After an early 11th century Old English document from Exeter Cathedral Archives, which describes the boundary of an area of land somewhere on the edge of Dartmoor, using rivers and trees as waymarkers. For me, a slow path is one to walk with all senses alert, taking time to notice...and imagine. This poem invites people to share one of my favourite slow paths from the Exe to the Cathedral and back again. With thanks to Ellie Jones, Exeter Cathedral Archivist.*

*'Fireweed' is also known as 'Rosebay Willowherb'. It will grow on previously burnt ground as the seeds and roots can remain viable deep in the soil.*

# Green Words Poetry Map

The Exeter Cathedral Green Words Poetry Map features nature-inspired poems written by people from the local community and curated by Riddler in Residence Aly Stoneman. The poems celebrate urban nature and wildlife in Exeter Cathedral's green spaces and beyond.

## Cathedral Thinking by Si Egan

### Within the Wall

A new humanity is born from wild nature,  
Roots and branches tear down the walls  
Of division old humanity used to dominate the world.  
No more us and them. Just us.  
A continuous being, a global life,  
Multiplying, growing, adding new species,  
Subtracting selfishness and greed from the human equation.

In this new Eden, there are no gates,  
No fences, no flame-sword wielding cherubim,  
No forbidden fruit. Knowledge is hidden in plain sight:  
In the microcosmic life of a pine cone planet, in the silence of drowsy bees gathering  
The last dregs of the hot summer's nectar, and in the cracks between slabs where new life grows.

### Outwith the Wall

Nature builds its own cathedrals of wood and water, leaf and wind.  
When stones have crumbled into dust, the oak and elm will cast their shadows on the ruins,  
Seedlings sprouting through mosaic floors, pigeons nesting in high bell towers.  
Requiem rain will fill the font and organ pipes be sounded by the wind's invisible breath,

As land shifts and seas rise the aisle becomes the beach, city seagulls swirl, now home again,  
And graves eject their passenger's remains, a final resurrection long awaited by the dead.

Prints created by Cathy King, Lynn Bailey and Double Elephant Print Workshop. Curated by Aly Stoneman.

## The Green by Orianna Xu

The Green is more than green  
space shaped  
by old road-spokes.

Here, green grows  
between cobbles,  
and soothes souls  
more worn  
than the stone steps.

With winter's cool kiss,  
trees blush,  
and pigeons pouf,  
shedding like takeaway pastry flakes.

Here, we meet,  
perched with the birds,  
in this sacred amphitheatre  
of duelling gulls and chasing children.

Under the oaks,  
Over coffee and resting places,  
we rest and tell our tales.

## The Bishop's Garden by Sarah Bartrum

Pink and white confetti  
Litters the ground beneath a tree,  
Cyclamen marking that long ago wedding.  
A drunken bumble bee sways on a sprig of red flowers,  
Long rangy spines topped with purple hats wave a farewell.  
Lilac discs, dropped with yellow paint, look on,  
Gaping holes in leaves bely the feast that was,  
Crows curse from boughs in the beech.  
She is here, still,  
will always be,  
past the dripping bean pods  
and the three silent figures  
that wait eternally for her alms.  
She, trapped within the horse chestnut,  
Encased in the trunk, her forever home.

(Inspired by plants and sculptures in the Bishop's garden.)

## City Bats by Jules Young

Dusk closes in and brings  
city bats, tiny hunters  
swooping through cool night air,  
circling moth prey with electric precision.  
The silence chipped by their squeaks of joy  
at the invertebrate smorgasbord before them.  
Leathery wings outlined in moonlight,  
tiny bodies twist and turn to chase their  
fluttering meals and then vanish into  
the night like puffs of smoke.

## The Bishop's Palace Garden

## The Bishop's Magpie by Rod Stacy-Marks

Monochrome magpie, perched high in that tree,  
dressed like a nun, are you spying on me?  
As I walk through the garden you're lurking up there,  
beady black eyes looking down on me here.

You're cackling and bobbing your head up and down.  
What's so amusing, you black and white clown?  
Are you laughing at me as I examine these trees?  
Be an angel, fly off, leave me in peace!

I see a tree with a tempting ripe apple.  
You swoop down to the roof of the chapel.  
I reach for the fruit, stretching out my right arm,  
you start squawking like a burglar alarm.

Are you truly more saintly than me?  
Just turn a blind eye to my thievery.  
Mischievous, mythical, magical brute,  
stop screeching, come here and share this fruit.

