



# A poet's view.

a CHART Scarborough trail.

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Start at:

**Railway Station. [Grid ref G8]** Scarborough has welcomed many travellers over the centuries. In 1724, author of Robinson Crusoe, Daniel Defoe, described the town so:

*Scarborough now presents itself, a place formerly famous for the strong castle, situate on a rock, as it were hanging over the sea, but now demolish'd, being ruined in the last wars. The town is well built, populous and pleasant, and we found a great deal of good company here drinking the waters, who came not only from all the north of England, but even from Scotland. It is hard to describe the taste of the waters; they are apparently ting'd with a collection of mineral salts, as of vitriol, allom, iron and perhaps sulphur, and taste evidently of the allom. Here is such a plenty of all sorts of fish, that I have hardly seen the like.*

*A Tour through the whole Island of Great Britain.*

Walk down Valley Bridge Road, turning right onto Somerset Terrace before taking another right onto The Crescent. Follow the curved terrace until you reach...

**Woodend Creative Industries Centre. [Grid ref G10]** This is the birth place of the poet Edith Sitwell (7th September 1887 to 9th December 1964) and the home where she with her brothers, Osbert and Sacheverell, spent parts of their childhood.

By the time I became a lover of poetry, Edith Sitwell had fallen out of fashion. I thought of her, if I thought of her at all, as a posh, rather eccentric woman, divorced from any reality I

understood. Moving to Scarborough, led me to search out her poetry and what I discovered surprised and enchanted me. Awkward, witty, a genius, talent-less, hyper-sensitive, bitter, loyal, generous - all these words have been used to describe this complex woman. An unwanted child, bullied by her spoilt mother and undermined by her depressive father, Edith spent most of her life searching for love in unsuitable relationships. She managed to carve a writer's life for herself in a time when the main career option for women was still marriage. She did so despite facing relative penury (most of the family money being either dissipated by her father and mother or given to her brothers).

The poems which make up Façade are probably her most well-known. She also wrote prose, including literary criticism and biography. Her biography of Elizabeth I was even optioned by Hollywood, though the film was never made. But it is the dreamy, sad quality of much of her other work which attracts me.

*But Dagobert and Peregrine and I  
Were children then; we walked like shy gazelles  
Among the music of the thin flower-bells.  
And life still held some promise, - never ask  
Of what, - but life seemed less a stranger, then  
Than ever after in this cold existence.  
I always was a little outside life, -  
And so the things we touch could comfort me;  
I loved the shy dreams we could hear and see -  
For I was like one dead, like a small ghost,  
A little cold air wandering and lost.*

Extract from *Colonel Fantock*

And her *Still Falls the Rain, The raids, 1940. Night and dawn*, is still a powerful reminder of the heartlessness of war.

*Still falls the Rain -  
Dark as the world of man, black as our loss -  
Blind as the nineteen hundred and forty nails  
Upon the Cross.*

*Still falls the Rain  
With a sound like the pulse of the heart that is changed to  
the hammer-beat  
In the Potter's Field, and the sound of the impious feet*

*On the Tomb:*

Or her *Dirge for the New Sunrise (Eighteen minutes past eight o'clock, on the morning of Monday the 6th of August 1945)*

*And watch the phantom Sun in Famine Street  
- The ghost of the heart of Man ... red Cain  
And the more murderous brain  
Of Man, still redder Nero that conceived the death  
Of his mother Earth, and tore  
Her womb, to know the place where he was conceived.*

*But no eyes grieved -  
For none were left for tears:  
They were blinded as the years  
Since Christ was born.*

Here is my poem in homage to Edith:

### **After Edith**

Once we moved through hazes,  
warm and golden,  
Dagobert and I;  
caught in a tapestry of silken threaded creatures -  
birds with custard tails,  
unicorns and lions with torn faces,  
parrots with stuffing for a soul,  
dead but riveted  
to our progress in rose gardens by the sea.

And silly girls laughed  
to have their hats picked by the wind  
and rescued by men twice their age.  
Colonel Fantock and Peregrine  
are gone now,  
replaced by over-done trippers  
dreaming of Spain,  
and I am the lost ghost  
I always imagined myself to be.

Kate Evans, 2006

Follow the path through **Crescent Gardens [Grid ref G10]**  
crossing the small bridge over Vernon Road. Pass the top of  
the **Rotunda Museum [Grid ref G11]**, before you lies the  
imposing figure of...

**The Grand Hotel. [Grid ref H11]** Anne Brontë (17th January 1820 -  
May 28th 1849), the youngest of the three Brontë sisters died in  
the boarding house which was on the site where the Grand  
Hotel now stands. Anne, like her sisters Charlotte and Emily,  
wrote poetry as well as prose. She spent a lot of time in  
Scarborough when she was a governess and loved the  
surroundings. Her novel Agnes Grey, published in 1847, has  
scenes which are obviously set in the town. Her other novel, The  
Tenant of Wildfell Hall, was published in 1848

Anne asked to be brought to Scarborough after the death of  
Emily, when she knew she herself was gravely ill. Charlotte  
believed the sea air might benefit her sister's health. It was not  
to be.

Charlotte, who outlived all her siblings by many years wrote:

*Life, believe, is not a dream  
So dark as sages say;  
Oft a little morning rain  
Foretells a pleasant day.  
Sometimes there are clouds of gloom,  
But these are transient all;  
If the shower will make the roses bloom,  
Oh why lament its fall?*

Extraordinary, given the tragedies she lived through.

Walk up towards the **Town Hall [Grid ref I11]**. Take the  
swooping paths through **St. Nicholas Gardens [Grid ref I12]**,  
below the stern figure of **Queen Victoria [Grid ref I11]**. Emerge  
from the gardens onto the bustling foreshore, turn left and  
stroll amongst the amusements and ice cream parlours until  
you reach...

**The Lifeboat Station. [Grid ref K14]** Poetry has a musicality  
which attests to its closeness to song. Many a sea faring story  
has been captured in a shanty written by the famous "anon"  
which has the lilt and cadence of poetry. As we look at our  
modern lifeboat, we may wonder at the heroics of rescuers both  
of today and yesteryear.

*Methinks I see a host of craft spreading their sails to lea,  
As down the Humber they do glide, all bound for the  
Northern Sea.*

*Methinks I see on each small craft a crew  
with hearts so brave*

*Going out to earn their daily bread upon the restless waves.*

(Chorus)

*And it's three score and ten boys and men were lost from  
Grimsby town.*

*From Yarmouth down to Scarborough many hundreds more  
were drowned.*

*Our herring crafts, our trawlers, our fishing smacks as well,  
They long defied that bitter night and battled with the swell.*

*Methinks I see them yet again as they leave the land behind,  
Casting their nets into the sea the fishing shoals to find.  
Methinks I see them yet again and all on boards alight  
With sails close reefed and the decks cleared up and the  
side-lights burning bright.*

(Chorus)

*October's night left such a sight was never seen before,  
There were spars and shafts and broken yards come floating  
to the shore.*

*There was many a heart of sorrow, there was many  
a heart so brave,  
There was many a hearty fisher-lad did find a watery grave.*

(Chorus)

*Methinks I hear the skipper say, come lads come  
shorten sail;*

*For the sky to appearances looks like an approaching gale.  
Methinks I see them yet again and the midnight hour is past,  
Their tiny crafts a battling there against the icy blast.*

*And it's three score and ten boys and men were lost from  
Grimsby town.*

*From Yarmouth down to Scarborough many hundreds more  
were drowned.*

*Our herring crafts, our trawlers, our fishing smacks as well  
They long defied that bitter night and battled with the swell.*

Continue your foreshore wander, past the harbour with its  
drying fish nets, to the **Coastguard Station [Grid ref K17]** before  
taking the steps up towards...

**Castle Hill to Anne Bronte's grave. [Grid ref L16 - M14]** Walking  
up past the entrance to the castle we come to the little walled  
graveyard where Anne Brontë is buried. Having so recently laid  
to rest her other sister Emily, Charlotte could not bear to carry  
Anne's remains home to the family vault in Haworth. The  
gravestone still carries its original error, Anne was 29 when  
she died, not 28.

Crossing the road takes you through a narrow street, the home  
of the **Castle by the Sea [Grid ref N15]**, with it's spectacular  
location perched...

**Looking over North Bay. [Grid ref N14]** From Queens Parade, we are suddenly exposed to the rocky North Bay and the cliffs which lead up to Ravenscar, Robin Hoods Bay and Whitby. Here we can take some time to contemplate the sea in all its moods. Perhaps compose some poetry of our own inspired by the ever shifting scene.

*I must go down to the seas again, for the call of the running tide  
Is a wild call and clear call that may not be denied;  
And all I ask is a windy day with the white clouds flying,  
And the flung spray and the blown spume,  
and the sea-gulls crying.*

Extract from *Sea-Fever* by John Masefield, 1878-1967.  
Poet Laureate, 1930-1967.

### **The Day the Sea Froze Over at Scarborough**

*I walked to the shore as usual  
and all was silent,  
the scream of the seagull froze  
above the un-pounding waves.*

*The crystal curve caught in mid-plunge,  
surely the weight of it will crack  
the prism, release what lies beneath:  
the crab, the weed, the worm?*

*People stand and stare  
at the roar-less sea, there's ice enough  
to burn a thousand tongues,  
cold enough to ache.*

*The swallows fly and drop  
and reform once more, our comma,  
our full-stop, our question mark  
punctuating the sky.*

*Even as I walk, the thaw begins.  
Water droplets blindingly glitter,  
slush edges the beach,  
the dregs of souring ice cream Sundaes.*

*And we who have seen  
turn to comfort one another  
from the glare of others'  
gleaming disbelief.*

Kate Evans, 2006.

*This exposed path takes you along the cliff top, heading downhill towards...*

**The Clifton Hotel. [Grid ref O9]** At far corner of Queens Parade stands The Clifton Hotel, once the Clarence Gardens Hotel. In late 1917 Owen was posted to a reserve battalion based here. He was almost certainly recovering from shell shock and wrote, 'In truth I am very comforted in Scarborough'. He was able to take time away from his clerical duties, to escape to his turret bedroom and work on his poetry, including *Miners*, the first of his poems to be published. He did return to France and was killed in action a week before Armistice.

*Gas! GAS! Quick, boys! - An ecstasy of fumbling,  
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time;  
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling,  
And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime...  
Dim, through the misty panes and thick green light,  
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.*

Extract from *Dulce Et Decorum Est* by Wilfred Owen  
(1893-1918)

Pass the **Alexandra Bowls Centre [Grid ref P8]** on your right and follow the main road until stands before you **Peasholm Pagoda [Grid ref Q6]** on the island at...

**Peasholm Park. [Grid ref P6]** Scarborough Borough bought the land for Peasholm Park in 1911 and it was designed and constructed under the auspices of Harry W Smith, the Borough Engineer. It was officially opened on the 19th June 1912. The Pagoda and the cascade on the island, designed by architect George W. Alderson, were added in 1929.

Harry Smith chose the Japanese/oriental theme because that was what was in vogue at the time. Haikus are Japanese forms of poetry which use a strong image, usually taken from nature, to connect with a universal truth. They do not use rhyme, but rather image and word sounds to hold their form together. Generally they are only three lines long, the first and last lines consisting of five syllables each, the middle line having seven syllables. Perfect for composing on a park bench with a warming or cooling beverage (depending on the season) in hand.

Here are a few examples from me:

*To write a Haiku:  
pick the gem out of the dust,  
polish with vigour.*

*Fragile pink blossoms  
too eagerly froth and bloom  
soon scatter the ground.*

*Grant me a cloud's grace,  
a slow imperceptible  
metamorphosis.*

*To return to the Railway Station simply follow Columbus Ravine.  
There are far more interesting ways to get there though, maybe taking in **Peasholm Glen [Grid ref O5]**.*