

Cumbria Wildlife Trust is the only voluntary organisation devoted solely to the conservation of the wildlife and wild places of Cumbria.

The Trust stands up for wildlife, creates wildlife havens, and seeks to raise environmental awareness.

Formed in 1962 and supported by over 15,000 members, the Trust cares for over 40 nature reserves, campaigns for the protection of endangered habitats and species such as limestone pavements and red squirrels, and works with adults and children to discover the importance of the natural world.



# Cumbria

Wildlife Trust

[www.cumbriawildlifetrust.org.uk](http://www.cumbriawildlifetrust.org.uk)  
Registered Charity No.218711



Yellow-rattle



Short-eared owl

# The Raspberry and the Rowan

A collection of writing inspired  
by Eycott Hill Nature Reserve

*Edited by Geraldine Green and Jody Ferguson*



**Cumbria**  
Wildlife Trust

Protecting **Wildlife** for the Future

# Eycott Hill Nature Reserve

**Eycott Hill Nature Reserve is a fantastic place, overlooked by the mighty peaks of Blencathra and the northern fells, and nationally important for both its geology and wetland habitats.**

Cumbria Wildlife Trust purchased Eycott Hill in April 2015 and a project to make it even better for wildlife and people began. Flower-rich meadows, hedgerows, and areas of woodland have been planted and work undertaken to block up artificial drainage channels and create areas of upland scrub heath. Pollinating insects, birds, and mammals will benefit from this intricate mosaic of habitats and a diverse range of species will be able to make the nature reserve their home.

In celebration of the new nature reserve people have been taking part in lots of events and responding in creative ways. This fabulous collection of writing is a result of two of those events; writing workshops that took place in May and July 2016 led by local poet and creative writing tutor Geraldine Green.

We hope you enjoy the anthology and if you feel inspired to visit and write something of your own - we'd love to see it.

[www.cumbriawildlifetrust.org.uk/eycott-hill](http://www.cumbriawildlifetrust.org.uk/eycott-hill)

 [cumbriawildlifetrust](https://www.facebook.com/cumbriawildlifetrust)  [@cumbriawildlife](https://twitter.com/cumbriawildlife)



*Small pearl-bordered fritillary*



*Creative writing*

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## On Eycott Hill

The field's nap rises,  
each blade bloody with light.  
Silence hides in the skylark's spool,  
the kestrel's beak,  
the vole's sweet flesh  
waiting to flower.  
A softness now;  
ghosts ride the fell,  
the valley splays like a hand.  
No one holds me.

*Catherine Ayres*



## The Grass of Parnassus

Elegant, from Holy lands this  
Ambrosia giving flower comes.  
Was it walked upon the sandal of a traveller  
Far from home?  
The ground seeded by opportunity?  
Was it driven here as a secret  
Within a sacred heifer –  
Legend springing from the lowly dung pile?  
The explanation is  
Ecological, geographical,  
Which offers naught to me in beauty, story, song.  
A practical people, we tether its imaginings  
And name it Bog Star.  
A scattered nebulae, still it shines.

*Susan Cartwright-Smith*





## Rhizaria and Gymnopus

Familiar dapplings of rock,  
Speckled like an egg –  
A hard nugget of history  
Hosting an unlikely marriage.  
Star-crossed lovers, two houses of plague,  
Algae and fungus,  
Find their common ground  
In lichen.  
A bloom of parti-coloured coupling  
While clinging to the immovable stone.  
Fragile, fragmented,  
The love story blossoms,  
Battered from all sides.  
Love endures

*Susan Cartwright-Smith*



## Sedge

Sedge calls to moss.

Meanwhile lichens form a bond of love on the crag above.

A crag that is a nursery and home to a shell cradled brood of new hunters.

They will gyre and then shiver to a hover when an incautious shrew gives away its place for a last and fatal time.

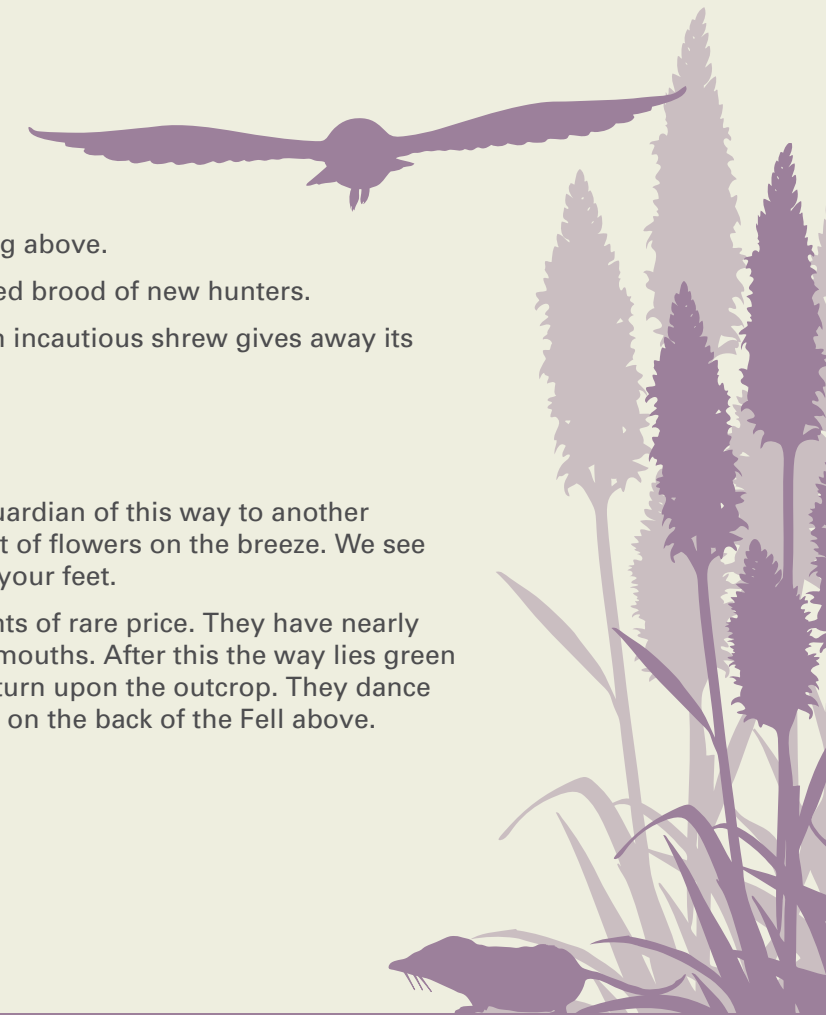
Sedge and moss pulsing with the breeze remain.

Gate.

What Danes have you seen pass by? You stone guardian of this way to another realm. A tir of song upon the air carried with scent of flowers on the breeze. We see the Mayflies dance and court among the grass at your feet.

Beyond you the quaking bog holds secrets of plants of rare price. They have nearly been ripped from this world by unthinking ovine mouths. After this the way lies green and clear to the hill where the fey folk dance and turn upon the outcrop. They dance in the Spring while Winter still lies white and cold on the back of the Fell above.

*John Grieve*





## Nature Reserve

We built a fence around Nature  
but Nature laughed at our ragged boundaries,  
scattered fistfuls of thistledown  
in wedding-day drifts.

Feel the thistles prickly at your feet  
as you pad the matted grass,  
the parachutes snagged on the barbs of wire  
we stretched to separate the Here from There.

When the thistles know  
when the butterwort knows  
when the sundew knows  
when the skylark tinkling the blue knows  
it is all Here.

*Norman Hadley*



*Round-leaved sundew*



*Common butterwort*



*Skylark*

## Getting to Know Eycott

Sitting on this outcrop  
listening to talk of sphagnum and sedges  
the air bright with skylarks, grass  
fizzing with bees and earth-brown

spiders that skitter over dung crusts  
left by Luings as they roam their pasture  
pasture that was once a bog  
bog that was once a lake

I'm deep in this landscape's volcanic past  
its lava flows, ridges, scarps and dips  
its hard black rock and feldspar crystals  
rock that knaps well for crafting tools

and how it has felt the tramp of feet -  
Angles, Vikings, Roman soldiers -  
and how it has known the song of wolves  
ravage of gales through long dead oak groves.

Strange this place should feel so soft  
clouds rainbow-edged and the sun  
warm on my back as I face Blencathra  
still dimpled with last week's snow.

*Barbara Hickson*



*Luing cattle*



## Seven seconds

A laverick's tongue embroiders trills  
in the grey silk above Eycott;  
a gyrocopter chunters into Doppler;  
the hill's breast oozes peat juice;  
Derrick's camera goes off like a cannon;  
a passing bee unzips sufficient breeze  
for seven heart beats.

*Jean Hill*



*Mountain pansy*



*Buff-tailed bumblebee*







## Moth, Eycott Hill

Today I held a moth on my hand  
No, a moth held me  
a place to rest for an instant.  
Today held me.  
Captured among bog asphodel  
germander speedwell and poets.

Among rowan splitting rock, wild raspberry  
among shifting wind and skies  
the place before and behind us  
among volcanics and eyebright  
I was held in a nest  
of shifting belonging.  
In a web of sphagnum  
and rough hawkbit  
in a cry of curlews above

a round sheepfold, held  
and caught  
to be fastened to the world again  
on a pin of spider grass,  
to be held intact like rockfastlichen  
in the curvetting of ravens,  
their *crawwking* cries  
in the language of flowers

horned message on red clover,  
green striped white petals  
on Grass of Parnassus,  
in the feeling of being held again and again  
in an embrace so wide it hurt.

Today a moth held me.  
Its embrace of soft clover,  
embrace of wild silver,  
embrace of sunlight  
spearing our eyes  
with lichen, echoing of meadows.

A baby's rattle, yellow and frail, shook its fist at me.  
I replied with no talk.  
All I asked for was given

in the listening of raven.  
In the cry of curlew,  
in the weaving of one colour into another  
purple into mauve into pink into yellow  
into white into greens and mosses

into fog of Yorkshire grasses  
plaited skies and voices of people  
into the meadow that grew from our fingertips  
into each of our molecules into rasps and snorts  
dark skies and the splendour of unknown moons.

Today a moth split me open.

Its soft dust on my right fleshed hand  
just below my forefinger between it and my thumb.  
It stayed there, the moth, bright and settled  
before flying off, its underwing orange.

**Geraldine Green**



## The Queen Under the Hill

*After Robert Duncan*

Now I fall backwards, down  
into layers of history. Silver  
the fructicose lichens that blanket me. Warm  
is the wind that nestles in gaps like a cloud  
of ants, spiders. The Volcanics  
protruding up from the mulch and the roots  
to the air –

and I sink down, deeper  
through millions of years of the past,  
and I'm here

singing songs of the underground hollows  
as volcanoes burst, their sparks transcending the stars –  
blue-orange red.  
Blood-crimson-dark.

Grey peaks turn calm. The mountains tumble.  
The cries of sheep: their centuries on the spindle  
our truth is here  
built into walls  
and I exist,  
I'm hearing it all:

the Dark Queen under the Hill.

**Maya Horton**



## Nature reserve

Eycott Hill is cold-crystallised  
and slow to start. This is where the rain lies,  
between the mudstones and slates,  
trickling from crevices to bog and mire.  
Blencathra's saddle is still trimmed with snow  
and Souter Fell is bland and bare of ghosts.  
An I-Ching of yarrow stalks,  
against pale sky, forecasts more winter.

The smooth green hump of Mell Fell  
glistens in spring sunshine.  
Forty years ago I climbed its breast  
with my shoes hanging round my neck;  
wore out the seat of my trousers  
sliding  
down  
in summer dusk; came  
in to work wearing last night's clothes.

I remember making hay.

A choir of flies  
sang in the bracken on the common;  
stems arched over me like a cathedral  
and my lover lay with me in green shade.

I struggle now  
with bog-slime stinking on my boots  
to cross today's slow-wintered land  
but memories run barefooted  
chasing summer.

**Sue Millard**



## Eycott Hill in May

Gates ungated, we are let through,  
intruders on intrusions, we gather on  
the gabbro, we gather in hawthorn, ash,  
as scents, sounds and illusions chase  
down our senses. While in the distance,  
doing words, are verbs of birds  
I must look up.

Tractor tracks are scratched on fields,  
twin fossils of ancient fern scribbled  
as if from the bony tip of a feather stem.  
A child's neat drawing of a farm  
is coloured in, and on, a folded brow.  
Somehow, a glance can conjure now  
the sudden origami of a pop-up book,  
and yet, look, though swept as all is swept,  
home is the only unbent,  
unyielding noun here.



Lilac layers of distant fells,  
are sliced by wings whose silhouette  
I used to know. A dot-dash of snow  
encodes the saddleback,  
mottled blond and black, as its leather  
blossoms with Spring.  
Wisps of everything, pale overlying grasses  
from last year, plaid the way.  
The path - a scar, an uncombed parting.

I see birds I knew but can't make out.  
On the wind, I hear my mother's blunted shout  
down the long shires of childhood.  
I feel the whisper pull of a daisy chain.  
I smell the sea rope, oil and grass  
of her thick uncoiling plait  
as it snakes forward off her back,  
while once again, she shakes out a blanket  
in the rain. I hear birds I can't identify.  
And all our plans are crossed by sky.

I'm trying to describe something close to,  
and small. A child's stash of beaks  
and bird skulls in a box, or the bare clutch  
of rib on a crow-cleaned fox.  
This unmade poem's match  
flaring somewhere in the night,  
that flume of light, this lisp of grass,  
a rip of skin, a shower so quick  
it's gone before you notice -  
dark flakes of dissolving silver,  
a sleet of mica in the rock.

We metamorphise, unspool, restock.  
The giant of me is stepping out,  
the morsels of me are left for birds  
whose names I can't recall. We all  
keep our heads down, destroying  
and disseminating worlds  
with our feet and hands.  
The glass turns round, I'm running through,  
relieved to hear a question  
that I have an answer to.

What rock are you? I'm sand.

*Jane Moss-Luffrum*



## The Gladness of the Rock of Eycott Hill

For many months  
White snow covers my grey  
And when that clears  
The lichen greens and grows  
Scaly on my skin  
In crusty patches, grey as I am now

But once upon a time  
I burned a deep and powerful red  
With heat from heart of earth  
And, yes, I moved, alive with fire  
And subterranean currents  
From hidden places you can never see or know

In old age I am visited  
By grass and beasts and people too  
They love my stillness  
And the shelter  
Of my ancient presence.

This is the gladness of the rock.

*Inspired by Ted Hughes, the line  
'the grass is happy', from the poem 'Hay'*

**Janet Ochil**



## Wayfarers' tree

She scrambles over rocks to where a solitary rowan survives – a rowan, shaped by the wind, spindly, struggling. She runs her hand down its smooth silvery bark, ties red thread to its branches and, between arriving and leaving, stops for a moment. The rowan doesn't see the mist, the fells covered in gauze, hear the skylark piercing the silence, smell the honey fragrance of bog star. It cannot name hawthorn, sundew, curlew, wheatear, discuss time, the seasons. It cannot see itself, compare itself to other rowans, know how it struggles.

But it doesn't question its existence, judge the woman leaning against its trunk. And the woman is listening, listening as the rowan whispers its secrets.

**Barbara Renel**



Grass of Pamassus  
'the bog star'



Wheatear



## Thank you God of Ash Trees. Thank you Goddess of Pastures

Thank you rain for not raining, - although I like the rain. Thank you wheatear for perching so perfectly on a post this morning at Eycott Hill.

Thank you kestrel for obliging us with your hover, catching “this morning morning’s-minion, dappled-dawn drawn-falcon” (GMHopkins).

Thank you rocks for hosting us so comfortably and to the snow pockets on Blaen Cathra. To the clouds for holding the umbrella above us and teasing us with: will it rain?

For the warmth of sunlight and writers. To the curlews: who can forget their ancient bubble of song, rising out of their curved beaks like something lost from a spring, forgotten, and found again?

Thank you, too, to the larks - all of you - for singing us into silence. (Thank you Catherine Ayres for your line about that!). Thank you to Jody Ferguson for saying ‘yeah ok’ to my suggesting an outdoor writing workshop for the day on Eycott/Aiket/Oakwood Hill.

Thanks to all the lichens and sphagnum. Thanks to the bogs for being so fozy and trampoline-like as we plodged our way across you. Thanks to all the writers who came on our journey today, through gates, looking at the small, the beetle pile of logs, the rocks ranging from volcanics through to gabbro and limestone....

Thanks to the here and to the now. To the back then and to our memories, to the songs and to our laughter, the photos - yet to be shared - but some are up there, posted.

And thanks to Cumbria Wildlife Trust for being brave enough to buy a hill and invite us writers to play on it. Thank you to the Heritage Lottery Fund... your money made it possible.

*Geraldine Green*



*Curlew*





## Biographies:

**Catherine Ayres** is a teacher from Northumberland. Her collection 'Amazon' is published by Indigo Dreams.

**Susan Cartwright-Smith** is a writer, costume creator, swimmer, mother, barista, clog dancer, WW2 re-enactor. Hates apathy. Enjoys seasons, wellies, jumpers, hares, gardening. Weaves tangled webs.

**Geraldine Green**, poet, tutor, writer-in-residence at Brantwood is widely anthologised in the UK and America. *Salt Road* was published by Indigo Dreams. She gained a PhD in Creative Writing from Lancaster University.  
[www.geraldinegreensaltroad.blogspot.co.uk](http://www.geraldinegreensaltroad.blogspot.co.uk)

**John Grieve**, quality engineer and now seemingly a writer. The words have been in his head and now it is time for them to be let out. He gained a BEng in Microstructural and Material Engineering from Sheffield Hallam University.  
[JohnRamsayGrieve@outlook.com](mailto:JohnRamsayGrieve@outlook.com)

**Norman Hadley** is an engineer who writes poetry, short fiction, children's fiction and nonfiction. He's produced five poetry collections so far with sufficient material for five more.  
[www.normanhadley.com](http://www.normanhadley.com)

**Barbara Hickson's** poems have been published in magazines, anthologies and on-line journals. She is currently studying for an MA in Creative Writing (Poetry) at Manchester Metropolitan University.

**Jean Hill** combines full time work in the NHS with musicianship, motherhood, wifeliness and writing. Long listed for a Jerwood Arvon award, published in Orbis and a number of anthologies.

**Maya Horton** is a Northumberland-based artist and writer. She has had poetry published in a variety of digital and print titles, including the Guardian. Her background is in natural sciences.

**Sue Millard's** published prose features horses, rural life, history, and occasional dragons. Her poems have been published by a variety of reputable journals including Prole who published her 2012 collection, ASH TREE.  
[www.jackdawebbooks.co.uk](http://www.jackdawebbooks.co.uk)

**Jane Moss-Luffrum**, former university teacher, hosts Wigton Writers, has lived in Cumbria for 34 years. Loves family, writing poetry, art, photography, fell-walking, and a little hill village in Andalusia.

**Janet Ochil** studied geography and geology and delights in writing about the landscapes of Cumbria and Scotland. The ever-changing natural world observed through the seasons is her constant inspiration.

**Barbara Renel**, writer of flash fiction, her work has won competitions and appeared in print and online. She originally trained as a dancer, has an MA in Creative Writing and five children.

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Common butterwort, Mountain pansy and Grass of Parnassus - Philip Precey

Kestrel - Steve Waterhouse

Wheatear - Richard Bowler

Curlew - Jon Hawkins

Three writers - Geraldine Green

Buff-tailed bumblebee - Penny Frith

## Visiting Eycott Hill Nature Reserve

We hope you enjoyed reading the work inspired by Eycott Hill Nature Reserve. If you'd like to visit and experience the wealth of wildlife it has to offer for yourself it is open to the public. There is free car parking at the nature reserve and a waymarked route to the summit of Eycott Hill, look for the white topped wooden posts. This follows the driest route but it is over uneven and sometimes very wet ground so wellington boots are recommended, particularly after heavy rain. Please keep dogs on a lead to avoid disturbing the wildlife and grazing animals that are on the reserve year round.

**Eycott Hill Nature Reserve** is near the hamlet of Berrier, just off the A66 between Penrith and Keswick.

Maps: OS Landranger sheet 90, Explorer Map OL5.  
GR: NY 394 301.

Size: 216 hectares. Status: Site of Special Scientific Interest (111ha).

GPS co-ordinates: 54.662272 (N), -2.941436 (W)

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