

My name is Heather Cox. I am asthmatic and prone to chest infections. I live in Cookley. My pen name is Heather Wastie. I was The Worcestershire Poet Laureate 2015/16. Next year I will be publishing my 9th poetry collection which is based on the year 2020 when Covid struck. It is full of references to, and photographs of, the public open space within walking distance of my house. Here's an extract from the first review of an advance copy of the book:

"This is a starkly beautiful artefact... The sense of isolation and longing is palpable in this work, as is the sense that nature and art are paramount to human well-being. A reminder, should we need one, of our strategies for staying sane."

I decided that the best way to express my feelings today was to write a new poem. Please join me as I walk along the path from the top of Castle Road towards Wolverley.

Here

As I walk across this green expanse of freedom, I am between roads, their busyness, journeying to schools, care homes, village shops, a factory, pubs, clubs, playing fields, homes, or just passing through. Castle Road, A449, Wolverley Road, the uncertainty of Lea Lane.

Though surrounded by roads, here, I am away from mid night worries, the world's troubles, the gridlock, that day I sat alone and frightened in my car when a young man lost his life, succumbing to the ever present danger of that frantic T-junction, when the main artery was completely blocked and the lanes were choked, unable to breathe.

Here, I leave the roar of traffic behind me, though I am near enough to hear it. Here is a tarmac-hemmed cushion where I saturate myself in green, look forward to poppies, feel the changing seasons, thread myself through the pattern of crops, marvel at the evergreen Wellingtonia which, like us, is standing firm.

I follow the path, and trees welcome me into a sanctuary, springtime bluebells, and birds: goldfinch, dunnock, robin, blackbird, chiff chaff, song thrush, whose silky songs soothe.

Where would they go - the great tit, the black cap, skylark, raven - when the rumbling started. Where would I go? Where would we all go?

Not here. Here would not be here. Ever again. And no amount of assurance from a man with 'ker-ching!' in his eyes will convince me otherwise.

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(Heather Wastie - former
Worcestershire Poet Laureate)
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