

# Sideways

poetry magazine



Issue 12 - Spring 2026

# Sideways Poetry Magazine

London & Manchester, UK

*Issue Twelve, Spring 2026*

Founders/Editors:

Richard Gilbert-Cross

&

Richy Campbell

\* \* \* \* \*

At *Sideways*, we don't believe poetry should exclusively live behind a paywall. It belongs in hands, hearts and conversations, from small villages to huge cities.

If a poem has moved you, pass it along. Print it out, leave it at a bus stop for others.

All rights remain with the poets... but the words? They're already floating out into the world. Let them go.

**“I don't want just words. If that's all you have for me, you'd better go”**

— F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Beautiful and Damned*

# Poems

Wendy Westley – *Time Travel*

James Croal Jackson – *January Sunlight*

Kamil Zaskowski – *Hibernation*

Victoria Mendes – *Stars & Sanctuary*

Andrew Barnes – *Smoke.*

Peter Donnelly – *Some Day*

Tom Phillips – *Real Winter & In the Mountain Pines*

Yucheng Tao – *Snow*

John Grey – *Happenstance*

Alan Hardy - *Exhaustion*

Annie Forbes – *Archaeopteryx & Absolution*

# Wendy Westley

Wendy Westley was a successful nurse and midwife for many years in the NHS. She now writes short stories and poetry in retirement. She belongs to a creative writing group and has had her poetry published in poetry journals and magazines: Pulsar Poetry webzine, Amethyst Review, Spirit Fire Review. Underbelly Magazine, The Seventh Quarry Press. Her first book *Sun Hats & Staying Home* was launched on March 1st 2025 by Brewin Books.

## ***Time Travel***

Time to wake up, shrill sounds battle soft duvet.  
Time for bitter dark coffee, to cut through night fogs.  
Time to battle on crowded train, closed eyes with iPhone armour.  
Time to work, to earn your wage and label.  
Time to age, to travel from birth to portioned life.  
No time to deeply think or question  
or breathe softly still air, quiet peace or savour seconds.  
Time there to seize, to mark,  
to waste, to deeply unappreciate.  
Just travelling unthinkingly through  
the uncharted map of time.

# James Croal Jackson

James Croal Jackson is a Filipino-American poet working in film production. His latest chapbook is *A God You Believed In* (Pinhole Poetry, 2023). Recent poems are in *ITERANT*, *Stirring*, and *The Indianapolis Review*. He edits *The Mantle Poetry* from Nashville, Tennessee. (jamescroaljackson.com)

## ***January Sunlight***

A lack of snow in Pittsburgh—  
brightness fills my usual

emptiness, which is what  
this is, this cold world,

this missing piece: grief  
without articulation.

# Kamil Zaskowski

Kamil Zaskowski was born in 1978 in Poland. He's published in his native language in literary magazines and newspapers. Author of poetry collections: *Oscillations* (Oscylacje/2014), *Visions* (Przywidzenia/2019), *On the Brink of Twilight* (Na krawędzi mroku/2020) and a prose book titled *Inner Man* (Człowiek wewnętrzny/2023). He currently lives in the UK.

## ***Hibernation***

The reflections in the windowpanes  
grow darker.

Spectres drift upon the wind,  
spiralling around the windowsills.

The bright moon bursts from inky depths.  
It watches, like silent cliffs that guard  
the crashing ocean waves at their feet.

I weigh down an otherwise inviting  
mattress with nothing but my  
cooling spirit.

On streets that pause for breath, a black  
fog descends.  
dappled in heavy, glassy star-drops.

# Victoria Mendes

Victoria Abdias Mendes, a 25-year-old Brazilian writer, holds a degree in Language and French Literature from the Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte. She is passionate about exploring themes related to the female figure in contemporary society, frequently infusing her work with elements of the lyrical genre.

## ***Stars***

I sat there eating French fries when you said you were leaving.  
It's not about you, you said.  
It's not about love, you said.  
I'm leaving because I have to.  
That night when you took me home I stood on the sidewalk looking up at the sky.  
Looking at the stars that shone above my head,  
They were holding on forever still,  
Even though most of them were dead.

## ***Sanctuary***

You kept your bedroom the same way I left it.

With my kisses still hanging on your wall,

and our perfume on the sheets.

That's the bed where I've seen paradise,

in the same shade of green as your eyes.

That's the place we hid from the world.

So I think I understand,

you tried to save what was left of us.

A sanctuary.

But when I saw that place, after all this time,

It felt like a grave.

# Andrew Barnes

Andrew Barnes is steadily building a reputation in the UK Midlands poetry scene through performance (eg. BBC upload, Happy Heart), and through publication (including Orbis #207, The Cannon's Mouth, The Recusant, Solihull Sonnets, Pushing out the boat, Dark Poets club). He can be reached at: <https://www.facebook.com/andrew.barnes.35>

## **Smoke.**

Recollection of a sleepless night  
spent on a put-you-up in the lounge,  
staring at a magnolia ceiling of a shade  
chosen to obscure cigarette stains,  
trying not to add to the general discord  
by panicking over the gradual but relentless  
swelling of grief beneath my breastbone.

A few days of pencil notes and 'phone calls,  
of sorting affairs, when nothing fell into place,  
yet everything happened, seemingly in spite of me.  
Conversations of obligation, and inadequacy,  
not knowing what to say but not daring silence,  
relatives and other strangers constant  
in reassurance that 'it was a fitting send off'.

An over-catering of sandwiches and cakes,  
a supply of small beer and weak tea,  
offered more than anything to keep me occupied,  
nods and limp handshakes, sympathies,  
with apologies that 'we must be going',  
vague promises that 'we ought to keep in touch',  
less of a wake than a petering out.

*(continued on next page)*

*(continued)*

After a week, papers roughly sorted  
into box files never to be viewed again,  
ornaments and rings chosen as keepsakes,  
bags of clothing donated, house clearance booked,  
keys re-cut and passed to estate agents,  
I 'pulled the door to' one final time,  
desperate to get home, but reluctant to leave.

# Peter Donnelly

Peter J Donnelly was born in Middlesbrough and grew up in North Yorkshire. He was educated in York before taking a degree in English Literature at the University of Wales Lampeter, followed by a MA in Creative Writing. His poetry has appeared in various magazines and anthologies including *The Starbeck Orion*, *The Broken Spine*, *Dreich*, *High Wolds Poetry Festival*, *Obsessed with Pipework*, *Ripon Poetry Festival*, *Lothlorien*, *York Literary Review*, *Dust*, *Black Nore Review*, *High Window*, *Hornblower Press*, *Tap into Poetry* and *The Fig Tree*. He was a joint runner up in the Buzzwords open poetry competition in 2020 and won second prize in the Ripon Poetry Festival competition in 2021. He is the author of three books: *The Second of August*, *Solving the Puzzle*, and *Bloom and Grow*, all published by Alien Buddha Press. He lives in York.

## ***Some Day***

I will clear out  
the oak chest of drawers  
in the lounge.

There are letters in there  
from Jean, a scraperboard  
I've lost the scraper for,  
a scart lead for the old telly,  
an iPad with a cracked screen.

Various blank tapes, a Kodak  
video cassette I can't play  
of *The Railway Children*  
which I know, though I can't prove it  
also has a thirty-year old  
episode of *Neighbours* on the end.

*(continued on next page)*

*(continued)*

Newspapers from when  
Margaret Thatcher died,  
a ball of string,  
an old key-ring  
and in a tin that once  
contained sweets -  
wrapped in black tissue paper,  
a tiny ancient ammonite fossil  
bought at a shop in Whitby,  
concealed like the mouse  
in the dark dark house.

# Tom Phillips

Tom Phillips is a writer, translator and lecturer living in Bulgaria where he teaches creative writing and translation. His poetry has been widely published in magazines, anthologies, pamphlets and three full-length collections: *Unknown Translations* (Scalino, 2016), *Recreation Ground* (Two Rivers Press, 2013) and *Burning Omaha* (Firewater, 2003). His translations of contemporary Bulgarian poetry have also been widely published. His own work has been translated and published in more than a dozen languages.

## ***Real Winter***

Snow glints as it sticks.  
Slush shucks our boots.

“Winter, real winter,” he smirks,  
my temporary compadre,  
as we drag on cigarettes  
that thicken steamy breath.

He recalls kids’ joy  
shushing the slopes  
on homemade sleds –  
years, years ago, he says.

I set out for home  
as snow sheds its excess  
from the rooftops  
and announces itself  
with small bleak explosions.

The ice like iron  
begins its temporary reign.

## ***In the Mountain Pines***

The sky's not behaving.  
It's not keeping its promise.  
The forecasters are puzzled  
but it's done this before.  
The crucial thing is to spot  
when it's serious  
and when it's playing a game.

For example here's a handful  
of clouds that take delight  
in their own reflections,  
but which have somehow  
got lost behind the mountains.  
They float from peak to peak  
and look for lakes and windows,  
skiers with thick dark glasses.

Beneath these vain water-bearers,  
we have our own cares.  
These old jackets and boots  
that no longer fit us  
and a dictionary from which words fall  
like the snow that's starting to disguise  
the path to the hut. For us  
the choice remains clear  
and as if according to a schedule  
an old man appears in the forest  
and warns us to follow  
his directions and not get confused  
in the pine scrub under the clouds.

# Yucheng Tao

Yucheng Tao is a Chinese poet based in Los Angeles, currently pursuing a B.A. in Songwriting at the Musicians Institute. His work has appeared in over 30 journals internationally, including Wild Court (King's College London), NonBinary Review, The Arcanist, Red Ogre Review and more.

## **Snow**

Snow in early spring,  
still dreaming,  
awakened by the mountain's call.  
Mist dances around the ski fields of Hokkaido,  
curling softly through her long hair,  
like golden fuming smoke.  
She falls —  
a clumsy dancer,  
her face sinking into snow-soaked earth,  
like wet white petals kissing snow.  
Her red lips turn toward the soil,  
playing with the early spring.  
Wind  
in the silence of snow,  
and in the fierce, breathless moment she rises;  
Wind  
in her face leaves tears,  
turning snow into a widening river,  
urging early spring to grow,  
just like her tender, blushing youth.

# John Grey

John Grey is an Australian poet, US resident, most recently published in New World Writing, River And South and The Alembic. His latest books, *Bittersweet*, *Subject Matters* and *Between Two Fires* are available through Amazon. Work upcoming in Rush, White Wall Review and Flights.

## ***Happenstance***

A bite

just above the ankle –  
two tiny vampire holes  
and a trickle of blood.

A snake –

some are poisonous  
and some or not.

It wasn't just that reptile.  
It was the vagaries of life  
that nipped you.

Someone else could  
have been walking this path  
at the very same instant.

Why did it have to be you?

It's not as if a voice in your head said,  
"Take the trail that's almost overgrown  
with tall grass.

Be two hundred yards into the field  
at exactly 3.33 p.m."

It was happenstance.

But is happenstance venomous?

Damned if you know.

*(continued on next page)*

*(continued)*

“I didn’t see it,”  
you tell the emergency room doctor.  
It could have been brown, green,  
lavender or orange for all you know.  
He gives you a shot of something  
and keeps you in for observation.

At the hospital,  
all is in order.  
Everything is so well-planned.  
There’s nothing random  
about the anti-venom  
or the watchful eye of the nurse.  
No tall grass.  
No snakes.  
If only life was...  
you fear the end of the sentence.

Finally, they discharge you.  
Happenstance awaits.

# Alan Hardy

Alan Hardy has for many years run a language school for foreign students. He's also been published in Ink Sweat & Tears, Envoi, Iota, Poetry Salzburg, The Interpreter's House, Littoral, Orbis, South, Pulsar, Lothlorien, 100subtexts, Fixator, and Suburban Witchcraft. He's also released two poetry pamphlets: *Wasted Leaves* (1996) and *I Went with Her* (2007).

## ***Exhaustion***

I'm tired of tramping through near-deserted towns,  
familiar thoroughfares, lanes, alleyways,  
dark, grimy, damp, destroying my soul,  
in the concave shape of the lens of my eye.

I'm tired of the shock of scratches on my face,  
and blood coagulating on my skin like a warm caress.

I'm sick of those moments I linger in rooms,  
on stairways, behind doorways,  
waiting, to move from one part of the day to another,  
like a dog for the nod from its master  
to follow, unsure of my place  
in the universe I walk up and down in, and pause in,  
whether to flee, show myself, or remain,  
unmoving, undecided, on hold.

I yearn for the moments that surprise, herald change,  
and hope, let me sidestep being held  
on the outside of places and the people within,  
obliged to fling out my arms and yell like a madman  
for an hour or two of salvation, to let me stutter through  
to the next cluster of crises on which depends the survival  
of the world on which it is determined  
I breathe, and for how long.  
I'm sick of all that.

# Annie Forbes

Originally from Edinburgh, Annie has spent time living in Cornwall and Ireland. She holds an MLitt in Creative Writing from the University of St Andrews. Her poetry has featured in The High Window, Ink Sweat and Tears, South Bank Poetry, The Fortnightly Review, Stand Magazine and Lighthouse Magazine. She was longlisted for the Trim Poetry Prize, and was the 2020 winner of the Jane Martin Prize for Poetry.

## *Archaeopteryx*

I saw it first in pictures torn from books.  
In flickering lecture slides it was described:  
an image preternaturally charged  
with beauty, ghostly and unfixable.  
They told me seeing its imprint in the flesh  
contained within the measures of a case  
would drive its shifting presence from my mind.  
But stood before the thing in quiet horror  
unmoored by its unearthly pinioned form  
I could not comprehend what might compel  
scales to split to feathers, let alone  
the type of forces that conspired to press  
those insubstantial feathers into stone.

## ***Absolution***

Above the quarry, a rain cloud shifts.  
Scoured against the sky, its body  
gradually disintegrates—trailing itself out  
in long wisps  
which drift towards the earth  
like hundreds of delicate limbs.

Blindly, it feels its way  
over the desolate land.  
Immune to hidden hazards—  
sidestepping telegraph poles  
dodging the husks of burnt-out cars,  
it passes, miraculously unscathed.

## Thank you

If you're here, thank you for staying with us until the end.

To our writers: thank you for giving us something real, human and worth slowing down for.

Time is precious, not “a great deadener” - as Jeanette Winterson once wrote.

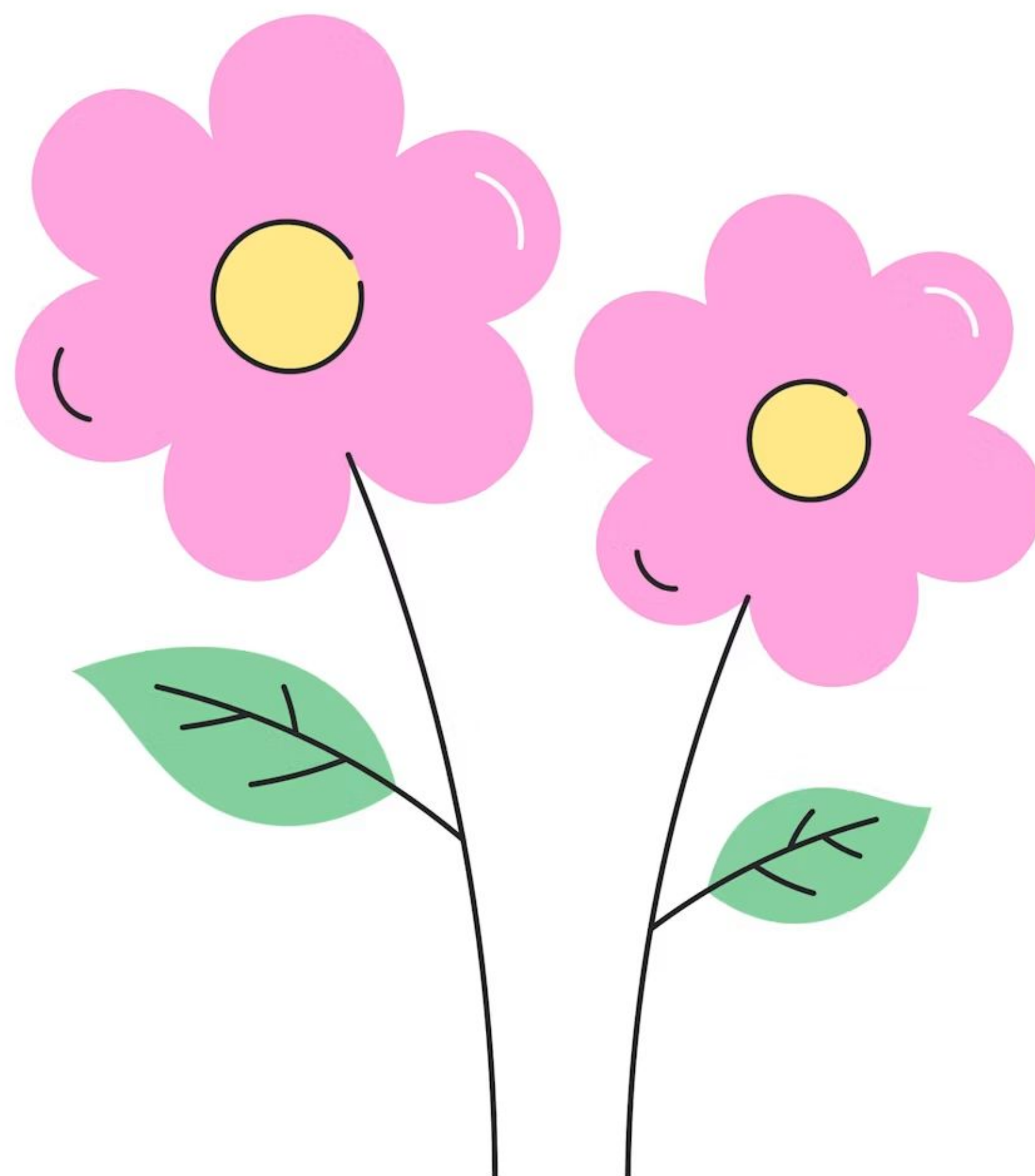
“People forget, get bored, grow old, go away.”

But for a moment they are here, leaving traces of themselves behind.

This issue is made of those moments.

We're grateful you shared them with us.

*This issue is dedicated to G.S.*



**Have something to say?**

*We'd love to read it.*

**Sideways**  
poetry magazine

We're deeply grateful to the poets featured in this issue.

Submissions for the next issue are now open, and we're eager to welcome new voices from our readers.

We accept poems on any topic and in any style. Please keep your submission to a maximum of five A4 pages.

Whether you're published or just starting out, we'd love to read your work. Please note that all submissions must be previously unpublished.

Don't forget to include a short biography or publication history with your poem.

The deadline for submissions is 30th September 2026.

**Please email submissions to: [sidewayspoetry@gmail.com](mailto:sidewayspoetry@gmail.com)**

**So many thanks to our wonderful contributors:**

Wendy Westley, James Croal Jackson, Kamil Zaszowski,  
Victoria Mendes, Robin Wilson, Andrew Barnes, Peter  
Donnelly, Tom Phillips, Yucheng Tao, John Grey, Alan Hardy,  
Annie Forbes

Illustrations by Gbolahan Gbodiyan (@aduratheartist) and  
Yobany (yob\_any\_thing) on Unsplash.

*Sideways* is a free online poetry magazine.

We publish bold new voices &  
award-winning poets from around the  
world.

Read, discover, or submit your work today.

*Sideways*

poetry magazine

London & Manchester, UK  
sidewayspoetry.com  
sidewayspoetry@gmail.com