

The present house was built in 1554, though an older structure, once the stronghold of the Douglas dynasty and first recorded in the 12th century, existed nearby. The dungeons, the only part remaining from this period, can be seen beside the river from the 'Leader Water' path and also from the 'Jubilee' path (both signposted).



Those wishing to walk to Rhymer's Stone from here, please note that the 'Leader Water' path is less strenuous than the 'Jubilee' path.

The curse Thomas the Rhymer bestowed on the inhabitants of 'Coldingknowe' is perpetual:

"Vengeance, Vengeance, when and where, on the house of Coldingknowe, now and evermair".

The house is privately owned and not open to the public.

BEMERSYDE: A few miles drive from Earlston, between Scott's View and Dryburgh Abbey, is the home of Earl Haig of Bemersyde. Petrus de Haga, originally from Normandy, inhabited Bemersyde House in the 12th century. The signature of Thome Rynior de Ercildune, alongside others of note, is contained in the 'Bemersyde Charter'. The prophecy of 'The Rhymer' regarding Bemersyde is true to this day: *'Tyde what may, whate'er betide, Haig will be Haig o' Bemersyde'*. 'Tyde What May' is the Haig family motto.

Bemersyde House is not open to the public.



RHYMER'S STONE: Situated near Melrose, the Rhymer's Stone can be reached from Earlston on foot by continuing on the 'Leader Water' or 'Jubilee' paths. Upon reaching Leaderfoot, near to the viaduct, you will find a display board depicting a network of paths, several of which lead to Rhymer's Stone. (Please note that the safest route is by continuing uphill under the viaduct, past Trimontium and into Newstead. Distance from Earlston approx. 5 miles). The site can also be reached by car by taking the A68 south to Ravenswood roundabout, then following the A6091 to the sign for 'Rhymer's Stone'.



The stone, erected in 1929 by the Melrose Literary Society, replaced the original whinstone boulder that marked the site of the 'Eildon Tree'. The documented account, in early manuscript form, of the meeting of Thomas and the Faery Queen at this spot, and its consequences, formed the basis of 'The Romance of Thomas of Ercildoune', from which was derived the more popular "Ballad of Thomas the Rhymer". The following prophecy is attributed to the Eildon Tree:

'At Eldon tree if you shall be, a brigg ower Tweed you there may see'. Three bridges now span the river Tweed.

To this day, the prophecies of Thomas the Rhymer of Ercildoune ring true. His legend continues to inspire poets, authors and artists alike, while capturing the imagination of followers of folklore and fantasy.

Thanks are hereby conveyed by the group to those who have given their support to the project, also to those who have given consent to the use of the wall, thus allowing the Thorn Tree plaque to be erected.

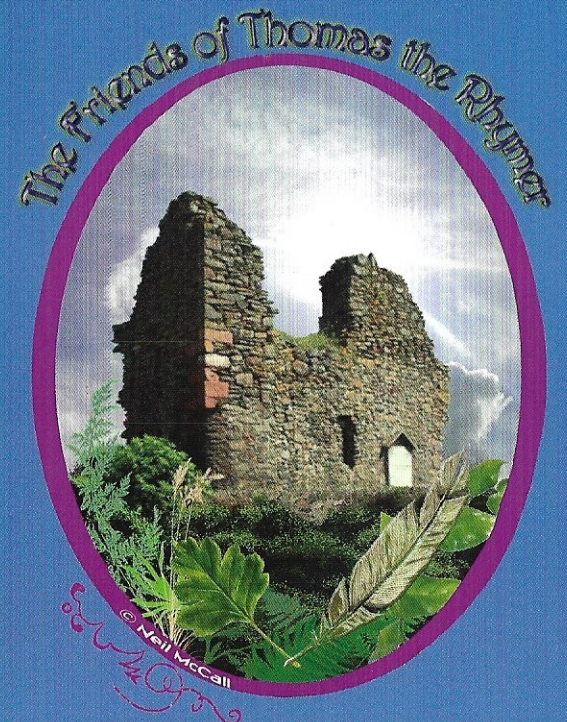
*This project has been funded by
'The Friends of Thomas the Rhymer Group', Earlston.*

*For further information, or to become a member,
visit our website: www.thomastherhymer.co.uk*

Or find us on Facebook at: Friends of Thomas the Rhymer

Thomas The Rhymer

Earlston Trail



Sir Thomas Learmonth, aka Thomas the Rhymer, lived in Ercildoune between c1210 and c1299. He is best known for his prophecies; allegedly gifted by the Queen of Fair Elfland.

Today, Ercildoune is known as Earlston due to its merger with 'The Earl's Toun', a hamlet situated to the east and so named because of a castle located there and inhabited by the Earls of Dunbar in medieval times.

Several connections to our famous prophet remain in and around Earlston and this leaflet will guide you to them.

THE SQUARE: Overlooking the flower beds and towards the home of his ancestors, is the bust of the Russian poet, Mikhail Lermontov. The Lermontov family are descended from George Learmonth, a 'soldier of fortune' who left Scotland in 1613 and fought on the side of Tsar Mikhail Fedorovich Romanov. George was rewarded by being given lands in Russia, where he settled, raised a family and remained until his death on the battlefield in 1634. His descendants subsequently changed the name to Lermontov, son of Learmonth.



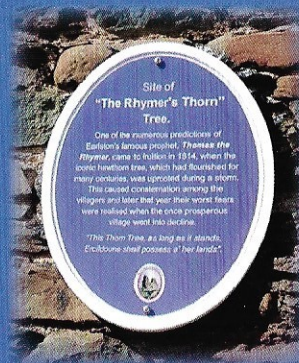
Eight generations later, in 1814, Mikhail Yurievich Lermontov was born. His literary genius lives on to this day and is supposedly inherited from his Scottish forebear, Thomas (The Rhymer) Learmonth.



The bust was gifted in 2014 by present Lermontov family.

RHYMER'S THORN: From the square, proceed down the high street towards the junction with the A68. West of the Black Bull Inn you will find a blue plaque inscribed with one of Thomas' prophecies: *"This thorn tree, as long as it stands, Ercildoune shall possess a' her lands"*.

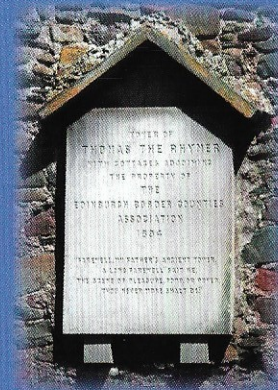
The iconic thorn tree, "Its trunk as thick as a man's waist and its blossom scenting the whole of the west end", according to one local in the early 19th century, existed in Thomas' time. It flourished until the year 1814, when, after being pruned by an over-zealous amateur gardener, it succumbed to a severe westerly gale. It is documented by a local of the time that the villagers were distraught and tried to replant the tree, even pouring whisky over its roots, but to no avail. Mindful of the accuracy of 'The Rhymer's' prophecies, they awaited repercussions with bated breath. Later that year, Ercildoune lost most of her common lands and several of the local merchants went bankrupt. The names of several nearby streets and properties are derived from the thorn tree of Rhymer's prophecy.



RHYMER'S TOWER: The fundamental link to Thomas the Rhymer is undoubtedly the remains of his ancestral home. These can be seen by proceeding south on the A68 and, just before the boundary signs, on the right, is the Rhymer's Tower café. The fragmented ruin is situated behind the café. Closer viewing of the ruin can be obtained by entering the café and proceeding downstairs and out onto the decking. Please note, this is the only access to the tower and has been sanctioned by the café owner.



A plaque on the west wall bears the inscription: *"Farewell my father's ancient tower, a long farewell", said he. "The scene of pleasure pomp or power, thou never more shalt be."* The words are contained in 'The Ballad of Thomas the Rhymer' (Part Third) by Sir Walter Scott and included in 'The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border'. The plaque was erected in 1894 to celebrate the ownership, and salvation of the tower, by 'The Edinburgh and Border Counties Association'.



THE CHURCH: The parish church is situated at the east end of the town, a short walk or drive from the square. On the east wall you will find an inscribed stone protected by glass. The inscription reads: *"Auld Rymr race lyees in this place"*. Five churches have been sited here, the earliest dating from the 11th century. The present church was built in 1892 and the stone moved here from the previous church built in 1736. Its origin however, similar to the true tale of Thomas the Rhymer, is lost in the mists of time.



An 1842 plan of the churchyard shows five graves bearing the Learmonth name, all of which were in a row; the oldest being dated 1564. In the 19th century, a 'right of sepulture', the right to be buried in a particular area of the cemetery, was still claimed by Learmonth families.

COWDENKNOWES: On the outskirts of the town, and within walking distance, is the haunted and historic mansion of Cowdenknowes; formerly known as Coldingknowe.

From the square, follow Station Road and then Halcombe Crescent to the town's boundary signs. On the right are steps leading to 'Speedy's Path'. From here, follow the path and signage for 'Leader Water' and 'Jubilee' paths.