

# PoetryKernow



Three women poets from Falmouth, Kernow, are travelling to Toronto, Niagara, New York and Long Island on an Arts Council/Lottery-funded tour.

All three draw on Cornwall in their work and represent a cross-section of contemporary writing in Cornwall today.

Sample poems are below along with the schedule – further details of readings are online on [www.poetrypf.co.uk](http://www.poetrypf.co.uk)

Les Merton will be back to edit Poetry Kernow in the next issue of Cornish World.

## POEM

A poem stays awake long after midnight  
talking you from room to room,

does not care that walls have ears,  
*las paredes oyen*

A poem prefers tin to silver,  
silver to gold,  
gold to platinum

Every year  
a poem tosses a young woman from the cliffs  
to the rocky sea below

A poem accidentally sends the entire letter f  
off to Florence

but keeps the letter t  
in a matchbox, like a tiny contraband tortoise

Sometimes  
a poem is your only daughter

busy and happy in the world,  
China or Spain,  
*abundancia de riqueza*

Like the partial Angel Gabriel  
in Santa Sophia  
a poem is half-gold, half -invisible

A poem will do things in England  
she'll never do in France

It will take more than the ten thousand lakes  
for which Minnesota is famous  
to drown a poem

The poem pauses now and then  
to look at nothing-much-in-particular

A poem likes scraping and burnishing  
the prepared surface of the copper,  
is frequently found note-taking copiously  
from *The Fantastic Historia Animalium of  
the Rain*

A poem makes herself tiny as a waterbear  
or a tardigrade,  
a mite able to survive freezing, boiling

able to go into suspended animation  
for one hundred years, if need be

**Penelope Shuttle from 'Redgrove's Wife'  
(Bloodaxe)**

---

## IN CORNISH

Owl is Ula  
Star is Steren

Pyscador is a fisherman  
Morrab is his coast  
His rainbow is carneves  
His door is darras  
Mor is his sea  
Lor is his moon  
His ear is scovarn  
His eye is lagas  
His eyes are dewlagas  
Blejen is his flower  
His summer is haf  
Hunros is his dream

There is more to his lost language  
than can fit on a tourist teatowel

**Penelope Shuttle from 'Redgrove's Wife'  
(Bloodaxe)**

## Going Up-Country

I imagine the end of my life as  
being on the London train from Truro  
saying farewell to Cornwall's high sky  
leaving behind her complicated water  
and all the things I couldn't say -  
the cathedral will still be floating  
at the head of her river -  
three spires will be pointing the way.

**Victoria Field from  
'Many Waters' (fal)**

## Petition

In Cornwall, the saints are sleeping  
under billowing dunes. Sand blew in  
and blanketed the churches,  
silenced the oratories and stilled the bell.

These are saints without armies,  
drifting in on leaves or shells or stones,  
their voices soft and strong and long as wind,  
hearts smooth and white as bone.

There's no Augustinian turning  
from the world -  
no need when world is a muddy path  
with primroses, squat trees, deep creeks,  
clefts in the cliffs and running surf.

Here, bracken censures the holy wells  
and pilgrims bring their private fears.  
Torn rags hanging from the twigs  
are damp with moss and prayers and tears.

Winds get ready to blow away the sand  
and toll the bell for the limbless child.  
The saints will rise and arm themselves  
with gentleness, seek out the wells,

surprised to see, shimmering in dark water,  
their half-forgotten face again  
and there, among the heavy fronds,  
miracles trickling with the rain.

**Victoria Field –  
from Olga's Dreams (fal)**

## Sedna the Sea Goddess

The bird turned into a man  
so beautiful  
snow lay on his shoulders  
like ermine

was he petrel or fulmar?  
he didn't say

At first he came  
only in dreams  
one summer night  
lay with her

at dawn she left her house  
to marry him

Who could explain  
her father's rage?  
His storms reached  
across oceans

she knew full joy  
only six days before

he killed her husband  
threw her in his umiak -  
pushed her overboard  
when winds frightened him

she wouldn't give in  
gripped the boat so hard

he had to chop her fingers off  
one by one  
did not know  
as she sank into her new Kingdom

they would transform  
become whales narwhals seals walruses ...

Among those she loves best  
Singing Midshipmen  
fish which like humpback whales  
sing to the seabirds

make sailors who hear them  
believe in mermaids

**Caroline Carver – first published in  
Acumen**

## shoreline

I like campsites by freshwater  
mixing metaphors of landscape ...

standing in a lake washing up  
rinsing cutlery in the world's biggest basin

watching plastic plates float to shore  
like fishing boats at the end of the day

more romantically  
I like swimming with my clothes on

waiting till they float round me  
as they do in commercials

when models are washed by shampoos  
of unbelievable cleanliness

I like lying in my tent beside small fresh rivers  
cushioned by water primroses

pretending I'm floating on water -  
a rescue-able version of Ophelia

I like smoking a hookah  
bubbling my way through in-between worlds

to that most important  
of all thought spaces

the moveable pencil-thin line  
between land and water

where it's like knocking at a door in the  
ozone layer  
to ask "how long it take to change the  
aqua lung?"

## Caroline Carver

Cornwall Poets - Canada and US Tour,  
October 2007  
(Penelope Shuttle, Caroline Carver and  
Victoria Field)  
October 9: Arts and Letters Club,  
14 Elm Street, Toronto.  
October 10: Niagara-on-the-Lake Public  
Library, 10 Anderson Lane,  
Niagara-on-the-Lake.  
October 11: Toronto (details tbc)  
October 16: The New School,  
440 Riverside Dr. #38, New York.  
October 17: The National Arts Club,  
15 Gramercy Park South, New York.  
October 18: Bowery Poetry Club,  
308 Bowery, New York.  
October 19: Poetry Barn, High Street and  
New York Avenue, Huntington, Long Island.  
October 22: The Colony Cafe, Colony Arts Centre,  
22 Rock City Road, Woodstock, New York.