



poetry



PoetryKernow

Dominic Power performing Shakespearean comedy at one of the Caravanserai Fireside Sessions. One of the many poetry, performance, and art in the landscape events held at Treloan on the Roseland Peninsula. Our poetry editor got involved and inspired...

To some, the word 'caravan' means the summer is here and the roads are clogged with visitors trailing their homes down the A30 into Cornwall. Yet for the Caravanserai Project at Treloan Coastal Holidays on the Roseland, 'caravan' is used in its more historical meaning; that of a group of people or 'company of companions' that once travelled along ancient trade routes -like the 'silk road' between Asia and Europe. A 'caravanserai' is a place where such 'companies of people' would meet – a place of exchange, rest and conviviality.

The project was developed in partnership between the Walker Family who run the Treloan campsite, artist Annie Lovejoy with help from Cornish World's own poetry editor, Mac Dunlop.

It evolved through lots of conversations and simple activities that literally 'prepared the ground', like starting an allotment on site. From this has grown an exploration of ways in which creative arts might highlight the importance of sustainability and engage with the environmental, social and cultural fabrics of the Roseland, and in Cornwall generally.

Having writers and artists in residence on site triggered participation in workshops, poetry and artworks in the landscape - both on the caravan site and in the local village. A programme of activities took place, ranging from intimate fireside storytelling and music evenings to bigger festive celebrations. There were caravan 'awning' film screenings, local history talks around the campfire, wild food walks long the coastal path and hands on traditional skills sharing like willow coppicing and charcoal making; even raft building with Portscatho boat designer Si Holman for Portscatho's Regatta day. Caravanserai included events in the village like the open day at Gerrans Memorial Hall, that included a drop sewing session where

you could recycle your own clothes, spinning and knitting circles, demonstrations of traditional skills such as peg loom weaving with raw fleece and information displays about the future of local landscapes from Professor K Brace and the University of Exeter.

Poets Penelope Shuttle and Caroline Carver recited work, while the comic dramatist Dominic Power and composer Chris Gray of Falmouth's Troubadour Studios performed. Fireside audiences found out more about local history from Chris Pollard (author of *The Book of Gerrans and Portscatho*). There were sea shanty performances by Shout 'Du Hag Owr' (whose name means 'Black and Gold').

Alyson Hallett - whose poetry has featured in previous issues of *Cornish World* - left a legacy of her Caravanserai Writer's Residency in the landscape of Treloan itself, Alyson's carved slate stone sits permanently in the entrance garden. A simple quote from a poem by Keats, 'tread softly because you tread on my dreams', gives visitors a pause for reflection. Simple words that echo the inspiration of being in a beautiful place.

Ghost Ship

*There's a ghost ship in the bay
cargo of souls, skeleton crew
blue fading to mist-drizzle grey.*

*Cargo of souls, skeleton crew
the steel giant turns with the tide
old horizons slowly renewed.*



*The steel giant turns with the tide
like a clock, like a compass
marooned at sea, no place to hide.*

*Like a clock, like a compass
anchored in endless circles
things come, things go, but rarely pass*

*away. Anchored in endless circles
star of night, blaze of day
dusky seas all shades of purple.*

*Star of night, blaze of day
haunting seals and haunting waves –
there's a ghost ship in the bay.*

Alyson Hallett

It's not only the established writers who have left their mark - one family anonymously adorned the fireside with painted text on stones – phrases such as 'soliloquy on serpentine', 'syllables on slate' and 'grammar on granite'.

Yet Caravanserai was not just poetry and art, the project included scientists like Dr Harriet Hawkins a geographer, based at the University of Exeter.

He said: "Annie's and Mac's residencies, along with those of the other resident writers and artists weave the local community into larger networks. Drawing attention to what is on the doorstep, they enmesh local anecdotes and histories, revive dying craft techniques and instigate environmental practices and discourses in an organic interlacing of politics, history and poetics."

Work was undertaken by visual artists such as sculptor and skills historian Greg Humphries. Greg's enthusiasm is in researching and re-introducing the traditional knowledge and skills that communities can sometimes lose.

For Portscatho's RNLI Station Officer Allan Collins, the Caravanserai project is just a beginning.

"While working locally I met Greg and Annie. Thanks to them I have now made plans to go on a number of courses, one of these being willow crab pot making - an art sadly lost in the village. I will then teach and pass on these lost skills – and the gap will hopefully be bridged," he said.

Greg made a 'peg' loom from a willow that was used during the open day. People contributed to his artwork titled Patience and Perseverance through spinning and weaving with raw fleece on the peg loom for a future art exhibition.

There was an Open Caravan day, where local celebrity Robert Gray (actor, and avid collector whose TV appearances include Hotel Inspector and Cash in the Attic), welcomed visitors to his 1926 Eccles caravan called Tehidy sited at Treloan. Tehidy has appeared in many classic caravan shows. Caravan owners at Treloan were invited to open up their own caravans in return for a look into each other people's caravan 'world'. These including the ones in which the Caravanserai Project operates, two custom built examples of crafted coachbuilt design sourced from Martin Scarrett, a local collector and restorer.

Project organiser Annie Lovejoy said: "Caravanserai is still underway and the stories continue. They will be carried afar by locals and visitors through memories and shared experiences. It's been amazing to see how the invited writers and artists have responded to this unique place – and in turn how locals and visitors have become involved. This project has shown me the importance of 'being' in a place and just 'doing', getting on with what we all do best."

It's been a revelation to see poetry written fresh, talked about, recited, and off the page - in sculptures, in concrete, hung on the walls and windows, fire sculptures, sound sculptures - a poetry that is literally written on the landscape. The Walker family at Treloan have created a cosy, friendly atmosphere, and been enthusiastic about the creative side of inviting poets and writers.

It's often the simplest things that leave a lasting impact, and apart from the beauty of the Roseland coast, it has been sharing a fire and food with strangers and friends, listening to music, storytelling, and poetry - both old and new - as the day's work is done, and night draws in. There is something timeless in that, something that echoes back through our shared histories, cultures and languages. An experience we share with our ancestors, wherever we're from, something people have shared together long before words were ever written down to describe it.

for more information about Caravanserai in Cornwall,
visit www.fieldsite.wordpress.com

Poetry Kernow welcomes your poetry for consideration, please forward your items to:
poetry@cornishworldmagazine.co.uk or: Poetry Editor, Cornish World, Jennings
House, Jennings Street, Penzance, Kernow, TR18 2LU
(include an SAE as we cannot always guarantee returns or replies).

Our poetry editor Mac Dunlop's Unspoken Words radio and web broadcasts are now aired on the popular Wednesday 5pm 'drive-time' slot on The Source Fm 96.1 FM or internet radio at www.thesourcefm.co.uk while the Caravanserai project on the Roseland will be hosting writers residencies and workshops throughout August. Go to www.fieldsite.wordpress.com for more information.

