



Birdoswald Roman Fort
Sat 6 April - 2pm

Gilsland, Brampton, Carlisle,
Cumbria, CA8 7DD
T 016977 47602

NOX ET DIES

(Night and Day)



Poetry readings for
Writing on the Wall

Segedunum Roman Fort,
Baths & Museum
Thurs 11 April - 7.30pm

Buddle Street, Wallsend, NE28 6HR
T 0191 236 9347

HADRIAN'S WALL
WORLD HERITAGE SITE 

Writing on the Wall is an International Writing and Public Art Project for Hadrian's Wall, and links the local communities and people within an international writing context. The project runs from 2001 to 2006 as part of the Hadrian's Wall Tourism Partnership's Enrichment and Enterprise Scheme and is funded by One NorthEast through the Single Regeneration Budget and with match funding from local authorities and other partners.

There is a rich and active writing scene in the North, and this is being actively involved in the project. Writing on the Wall will commission writers from Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne & Wear and Scotland. It will also set up opportunities for writers from the countries that originally garrisoned the wall: Algeria, Belgium, Bulgaria, South West and Eastern France, North Germany and the Rhineland, Greece, Holland, Hungary, Iran, Iraq, Italy, Morocco, Romania, North and North West Spain, Switzerland, European Turkey, Syria, Tunisia and Wales.

The project was initiated by Steve Chettle, whose involvement and interest in writing led him to being inspired by both the Vindolanda texts, and Roman Wall Blues, by W.H. Auden – the absolute history and a 20th century response.

Educational and community based workshops are being organised along the route of the wall to involve people of all ages and abilities. These workshops will introduce a new audience to the work of high quality writers, and encourage & support new writing from the participants. The writers will also create new works about the wall, which will examine historical and contemporary aspects of the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site.

A series of public art commissions which use elements of, or respond to, the writings created will be placed within the varying urban and rural landscapes.

Introduction

NOX ET DIES is the first public event for the International Writing and Public Art Project, Writing on the Wall.

The readings will involve 6 UK writers: Kitty Fitzgerald, Robert Forsythe, Linda France, Bill Herbert, Peter Mortimer and Katrina Porteous – all established and well recognised writers from the counties along the wall.

Each will give an introduction to their educational and community based work, and then read a selection of their own work that is connected to Hadrian's Wall and some of the writing that has been created in the education and community workshops.

NOX ET DIES refers to the time of day that the two readings will take place. It also alludes to the various characteristics of the writers' own works and explorations – the light and dark qualities of the wall area, the simplicity and complexity of an iconic monument with World Heritage Status.

It is also a place where local people and communities live and develop, history is stopped and continues, Foot and Mouth first broke out and farming and tourism sit side by side.

The writers will be at:

Birdoswald Roman Fort

Kitty Fitzgerald, Robert Forsythe and Katrina Porteous

Segedunum Roman Fort, Baths & Museum

Linda France, Bill Herbert and Peter Mortimer

Places are limited, and booking is essential, via the venues.

Arrangements are currently being finalised for three international writers, who will be working where, historically, their ancestors were stationed.

All three writers will be working in educational and community settings and will also spend a concentrated period of time on creating works in response to Hadrian's Wall.

Hashem Shafiq – Iraq

Hashem will work with Carville Primary School, Wallsend, and Hadrian Primary School, South Shields, to introduce the pupils to his poetry.

Denisa Comanescu – Romania

Denisa will work at Birdoswald Roman Fort, and also in Haltwhistle with the Haltwhistle Partnership, local schools and other groups, such as Craftwrite, to introduce her poetry.

Hafsa Bekri-Lamrani – Morocco

Hafsa will work in Burgh by Sands and Bowness on Solway to introduce her writing into the two primary schools and the community, working with local parish councillors, community representatives and writers.

International Writers

Bill lives and works in North Shields, overlooking the mouth of the River Tyne and South Shields. He lectures at the Department of Creative Writing at Lancaster University, was Poetry Fellow for the Wordsworth Trust and worked on Sky-Lines, a writing and public art project in Cumbria. He has had a number of books published by Bloodaxe Books, and is currently working on *'The Big Bumper Book of Troy'*, to be published in 2002.



He has been working with Year 5 children in Hadrian Primary School, South Shields and in Carville Primary School, Wallsend. He thinks of poetry as a means of looking afresh at the world around us, and had been looking for a way of using the Roman forts to help the children examine their sense of place and history. It occurred to him on his research visits that these children's experiences of the forts being re-constructed had some parallels with those of the people living here at the time of the Romans' first settlements. He is encouraging them to look at the physical evidence on site both as moderns and as ancients, and this is enabling them to gain a new perspective on the contemporary world surrounding Arbeia and Segedunum.

This relates closely to his own creative work, which tends to focus quite closely on landscape and history, re-inhabiting and reinterpreting old verse structures or belief systems in search of personal and contemporary resonances. As a Scot now living in England, the notion of the wall as a created or arbitrary border is very engaging, and he has been writing a sequence called 'Over the Wall' about limitation and exile using specific locations as key points or modern fanes.

Bill Herbert

Kitty is an award-winning writer based in Newcastle. She has written for radio, film and theatre, as well as being a published novelist and poet. Her third novel, *'Small Acts of Treachery'*, will be published in Autumn 2002.

She is working in Wabberthwaite Infant & Junior School with three classes, extending vocabulary and sentence building around the theme of Ravensglass in Roman times and today. The children will be encouraged to use different forms of writing, verse, diaries, letters, emails. This work will also include the use of nouns, verbs and adjectives, acrostics, time, travel, lost artefacts and mysteries.

In the first session of the community writing workshop the participants will look at different ways to use research material as the basis for creative writing. For the follow up session participants will be asked to create a piece of work which they will submit beforehand or bring to the session for a reading and discussion.

Kitty is presently working on a piece inspired by the herbs the Romans probably used over here for culinary and health purposes. This will also influence a piece on the baths as she imagines they might have been. She has also started a piece on the landscape which the fort looked out upon, then and now.



Kitty Fitzgerald

Robert is a freelance writer, based in Northumberland, with a particular interest in W.H. Auden and his involvement with the North Pennines. He has an Industrial Archaeology and Theology background, which contributes to his investigations of the industrial and moral links to Hadrian's Wall. He has jointly written '*W.H. Auden: Pennine Poet*' with Alan Myers.



Robert is working with First School children at Heddon (whose petrol station entered Auden's Hadrian's Wall piece) to explore the notions of the importance of the ordinary and who is the barbarian via Auden's work. Part of the workshops will re-invigorate the pupils' interest in their locality, which played a role in Auden's work, but to which they have become familiar. He has made an extensive study of Auden's relationship to the Pennines. It is not always realised that the Pennine Moors from Brough to Hadrian's Wall were an intimate part of Auden's life. Auden had explored the Roman Wall area thoroughly, and in 1937 was commissioned by the BBC to write a radio programme called '*Hadrian's Wall – An Historical Survey*'.

Auden's attachment to the Wall was not slavish. He once wrote "a branch

line railroad is as important as a Roman Wall", and that branch line could have been the one to Alston, or many others. Auden's reflections on the Wall provide an evocative portrait down to everyday details and additionally introduce a strong moral dimension. He was concerned to understand what the Wall's existence revealed about barbarism, the Romans came, stole and stayed. This was called civilisation.

Robert is currently working with Radio 4 in the production of a new radio programme called '*Auden's Eden*'.

Robert Forsythe

Linda lives close to Hadrian's Wall at Stagshaw, Northumberland. She has a family connection with Wallsend, which she will be exploring in her work. Her work appears regularly on radio and television. She gives regular readings in the UK and abroad, and teaches creative writing with Adult Education and community groups. She has had three collections of poetry published by Bloodaxe Books, and has been involved in several text-based Public-Art commissions in the North East.

The writing group that Linda has been working with has been invited to respond to various exhibits in the Corbridge Museum. They will create their own contemporary version of 'The Corbridge Hoard'.

The original was discovered in 1964 – a wooden chest buried during the first half of the second century, containing a remarkable collection of objects. They will also be tracing the imagined origin of a selection of other 'found' objects.

Linda France is planning to follow two approaches in her own work: first, in response to the objects in the Museum, writing a sequence of prayers and promises, charms and curses: a contemporary version of Roman superstitions; then, taking a wider view of the Wall, looking at the remains around her home at Portgate and tracing the route from it, Dere Street and Corstopitum, across to Wallsend, Segedunum and The Green Nursing Home – her first return since her birth.



Photograph by Karen Melvin

Linda France

Peter is a poet, playwright and editor who writes for both adults and children, often confusing the two.

As well as his verse and drama, he has penned several restless 'external' books; *'The Last of the Hunters'* detailing his six months working as a fisherman in the North Sea, *'Broke Through Britain'* – an account of his 500 mile penniless trudge from Plymouth to Edinburgh, and – forthcoming in 2002, *'One Hundred Days on Holy Island'*, recording an entire winter spent on this isolated North-East coastal outpost. Also due in 2002 is his new poetry collection, *'I Married the Angel of the North'*.

Peter is researching and planning a play for Hadrian's Wall. Cloud Nine Troubadours will be a throwback

to a lost age, just as the Roman Wall is; a band of strolling players performing each evening, then moving on the next morning, carrying with them all that they need, calling down an audience from the hills and the farms of Cumbria and Northumberland. Arriving, performing, sleeping, then onwards, from Bowness in the West to Wallsend in the East, eleven days on the hoof, responding to the natural world around them, relating to the people of this sparsely populated landscape. Drama, and music, and no two performances the same, and everywhere they go some impression left, some impression gained. And with the actors, me, the writer, and my work, to entertain, to provoke, to shock, to involve, as we throw a band across the country.



Photograph by Sian Gamester

Peter Mortimer

Katrina's poetry is strongly rooted in the landscape and culture of Northumberland where she lives. Committed to bringing poetry into people's everyday lives, she has worked with both fishing and farming communities and is currently completing her second collection for Bloodaxe. She has written extensively for radio, and was recently commissioned by Radio 4 to write a long poem about Hadrian's Wall.

In a culture which is increasingly urban, we look to the countryside for renewal. But what sort of countryside? Nowhere is this question more acute, or the relationship between conservation, tourism and traditional farming methods more sensitive, than along Hadrian's Wall. Working with individual farming families and with groups such as Young Farmers and Over 60's in the Haltwhistle area of the Wall, Katrina Porteous aims to explore this delicate balance.

She will be working closely with local people, recording their own experiences and traditions, developing their writing, and writing poetry of her own. In particular, she will encourage individuals to express their experiences of how the Wall impacts on their lives; what problems it presents; what benefits they feel they get from it; and what particular challenges they face at the current time, in the aftermath of the epidemic which has so devastated this area.

Tourism along the Wall depends upon traditional hill farming methods. This land has been farmed continuously for over 4,000 years: the Roman occupation constituted only a tiny fraction of that time. Farming practices continue to shape the landscape today, and the future of the area depends upon finding ways for farming, tourism and conservation to work together. Both Katrina's work within the community and her own poetry will help to promote this understanding.

Katrina Porteous



Photograph by Trevor Ermiel



Arbeia Roman Fort



Segedunum Roman Fort



Castle Keep



West Road



Heddon on the Wall



The Vallum, Cawfield



Cawfield Crags



Birdoswald



View of Scotland



Bowness on Solway



Fortlet Site



Ravenglass Bath House

For more information, please contact:

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Kitty Fitzgerald working with pupils at Waberthwaite CE Primary School



Pupils from Heddon on the Wall CE Primary School giving a reading from W H Auden's *"Hadrians Wall - An Historical Survey."*

Right: Participant of Linda France's workshop studying a display on Roman writing at Corstopitum Museum, Corbridge.



Writing on the Wall is part of the Hadrian's Wall Tourism Partnership's Enrichment and Enterprise Scheme - a five year initiative funded by One NorthEast and other partners, comprising five projects that work together to benefit visitors and the region as a whole.

Writing on the Wall is an ARTS UK originated concept, which it is delivering on behalf of the Partnership by working closely with other public, private, voluntary and independent agencies in a series of educational and community based residencies and workshops.

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