

ACROSS THE WORLD (HALFWAY)

England poet to perform at FisherPoets Gathering

BY CAITLIN SEYFRIED

Halfway around the world in Northumberland, England, poet Katrina Porteous looks out her window to the North Sea. Porteous, whose work centers around sense of place, has spent decades exploring the lives and culture of fishers.

"I am a poet by profession ... I do a little bit of teaching, some journalism and I write local history books, mostly about fishing because that's the culture around here," she said.

Porteous' writing career led her to learn about the FisherPoets Gathering. In 2014, she traveled to Astoria to read poetry and to develop a BBC radio story with producer Julian May about the gathering.

Porteous will be returning to the FisherPoets Gathering virtually to read poetry alongside dozens of veteran and "green horn" nautical storytellers. The virtual gathering this year will allow presenters like Porteous to participate easily from home. Her Saturday night time slot (Pacific Time) will start around 4 a.m. her local time.

"Proper fisherman's hour! I'll be drinking coffee," Porteous said.

Fishing as a way of life

Her journey into the world of fishing culture began with a move to the Northumberland coast.

"Because I write about place, I wanted to write about the sea. How do I write about the sea? Talk to fisherman and go fishing. They're the ones that know. I'd been to university, but I didn't know anything," Porteous said.

She considers herself privileged to have spent time out at sea with some of the few remaining fishing families in the village.

"It became apparent to me then that this was something really special. The community, the outlook, the relationship



The Astorian

Katrina Porteous performs during a previous FisherPoets Gathering.

to place, the tradition of it, it's very old," Porteous said.

The Northumberland coast carries a rich history and culture of fishing. However, similar to the North Coast, there are also challenges to that way of life in the form of development, larger commercial competition, and regulations that make small-scale and traditional forms of fishing often impractical and unprofitable. In the '90s, Porteous learned from fishermen that still fished, "not all that

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A poem by Porteous

Porteous' piece is written in the Northumbrian dialect. It is about salmon fishing (now banned on the Northumberland Coast) and the tension between recreational and small-scale traditional fishing.

Plenty Lang a Winter

By Katrina Porteous

Howway doon the harbour.

Gan off afore the dawn –

Plenty lang a winter

T' lay abed aa' morn.

Plenty lang a winter,

Naen salmon i' the Bay,

An' lang enough asleep, lad,

When your livin's rived away;

When your livin's rived away, lad,

An' the big man greeds your keep.

Plenty lang a winter.

Lang enough asleep.



Trevor Ermel

Porteous with a Northumbrian coble, a traditional fishing boat.

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