

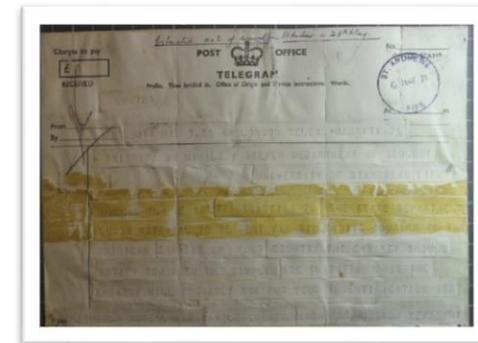
Expeditions

Four poems

by

Lynn Davidson
Stephen Keeler
Jeda Pearl
and Chris Powici

commissioned for StAnza 2020
responding to artefacts held by the
University of St Andrews' Museum



Lynn Davidson's poem responded to *Cidaris tubuloides*, a type of sea urchin. This was discovered off the coast of Bahia, Brazil during an expedition by The Challenger which took place from 1872 to 1876 and was key to the modern study of oceanography. The ship circumnavigated the globe and made many deep water dredgings to investigate ocean life on the seabed and the chemical nature of seabed deposits. Some of the dredgings are still used today for the study of climate change. The expedition took a sounding of the Challenger Deep area of the Marianas Trench, the deepest point on Earth, a discovery that has been key in our knowledge of the ocean.

From your unfathomed ocean
to the spirit jar

and now into poetry's
intertidal zone –

delicate stacked acrobats
oceanic tumbleweed

ruffling stars of the seabed

Lynn Davidson



Stephen Keeler's poem responded to Challenger specimens of *Pectinura maculate VII*. *Pectinura maculate VII* is also known as the snake star, a type of brittle star. They have tentacles with hooks on the underside, allowing them to grip corals or grab prey. This was collected at Queen Charlotte, British Columbia by Challenger.

Brittle Star

Could you be proud of what became of you
if you had understood? A specimen
to stand for the indifference of genes;
a senseless evolution written by
high-minded godless victors; a peep-show
coy in your nakedness; a brittle star
destroyed in flight, preserved in hubris and
commemorative brine and celluloid.



Stephen Keeler

Jeda Pearl's poem responded to a telegram from NASA. The telegram details the sending of lunar samples to the American Embassy in UK from NASA for research at St Andrews. Samples were estimated to arrive in St Andrews on 23 May 1971.

It reads "PRIORITY DR HARALD I DREVER DEPARTMENT OF GEOLOGY UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREW S FIFE UNLAS TL4 WE ARE TRANSMITTING TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT LUNAR MATERIAL TO BE SENT VIA DIPLOMATIC COURIER TO THE AMERICAN EMBASSY IN YOUR COUNTRY THE EMBASSY SHOULD NOTIFY YOU WHEN THE SAMPLES ARE IN THEIR HANDS THE EMBASSY WILL PROBABLY ASK FOR YOUR IDENTIFICATION SGD MICHAELS DUKE LUNAR SAMPLE CURATOR NASA MSC HOUSTON TEXAS"

Harald Drever studied the geology of Greenland and regularly visited the Arctic as part of his research. He also worked with the people of Igdlorssuit in Greenland. He worked with them to preserve some of their traditional crafts and lifestyles, including kayaking.

Wolf-white

Kayaking through Greenland's meltwaters
slicing, rolling, a patient hunt.
Later, fed and by the embers
lunar light cuts woven rug.

Mind on moonrocks flown safely hame
by Katherine Johnson's computations.
Calculate the dendrites dancing
throughout their igneous delta planes.

Jeda Pearl

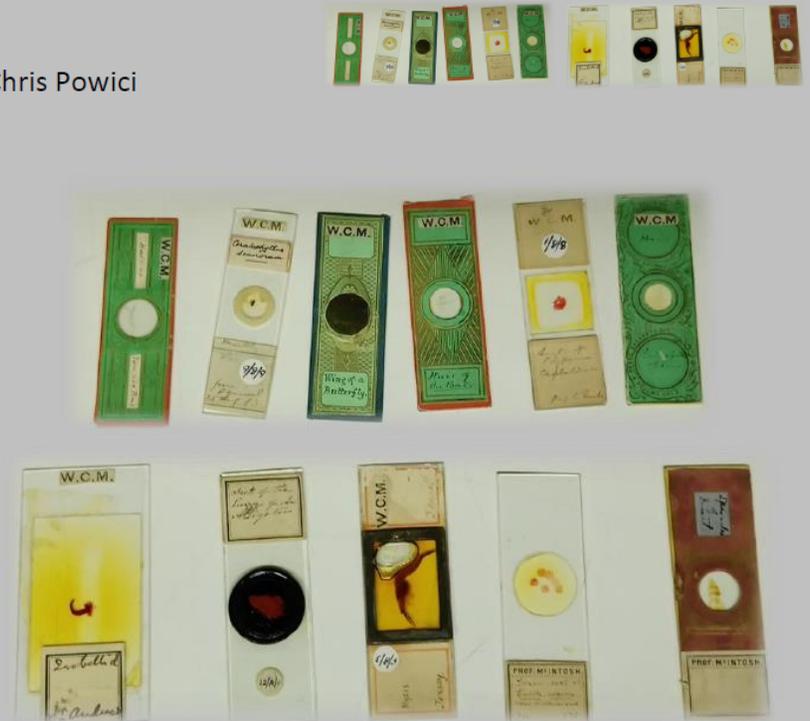


Chris Powici's poem responded to microscope slides collected by William Carmichael McIntosh (1838-1931), Professor of Natural History (1882-1917). McIntosh (also written M'Intosh) was a specialist in marine zoology and the fishing industry. He was director of the University museum and was the first director of the Gatty Marine Laboratory.

McIntosh wrote two significant works, *A Monograph of the British Annelids*, illustrated with watercolours by his sister Roberta, and *The Marine Invertebrates and Fishes of St Andrews*. He took part in the Challenger expedition. The Museums care for hundreds of his slides, which show a variety of microscopic creatures and insect parts. The ones in the photograph include butterfly wings and bat hair. McIntosh was a Christian and many of the slide papers (which cover the parts of the slide not viewed under the microscope) have Bible verses printed on them; one of the slides in the photograph includes Psalm 111:2 from the King James Version: "The works of the LORD are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein."

*He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered
water flea, bat hair, a butterfly's glimmering wing,
these scraps of creation – frail, holy, magnified – and still
the forests die, the cold seas rise;
a tapir chokes on Amazon ash
caribou stumble through a dead Alberta wood
and someday a narwhal will dive
beneath the thinning, arctic ice
beyond the sunlit floes and gleaming shoals
deeper and deeper, beyond the reach of faith
into that unimaginable dark
where everything is unremembered, everything unmade.*

Chris Powici



Each year StAnza commissions poets to respond to artefacts from the collections held by the museum of the University of St Andrews. With reference to this year's themes, poets will be responding to artefacts linked to scientific samples, including the Challenger Expedition in the 1870s and other sea and polar expeditions.

The six civilian staff and scientists aboard the Challenger were under the direction of Wyville Thomson, Professor of Natural History at the University of Edinburgh, who had proposed the expedition. Their discoveries laid the foundations for the science of oceanography and other expeditions and studies. A digital installation of images of the objects and resulting poems will be exhibited during the festival.

Lynn Davidson is a New Zealand writer living in Edinburgh. She writes poetry, essays and fiction. Lynn received a Hawthorden Fellowship in 2013 and a Bothy Project Residency in 2016. She was Visiting Artist at Massey University in 2012. *Islander*, her fifth poetry collection, was published in 2019 by Victoria University Press in New Zealand and Shearsman Books in the UK. Lynn is a freelance writer and teaches creative writing. She is a member of 12, a feminist poetry collective. lynn-davidson.com

Stephen Keeler was born in the northeast of England. After a thirty-year career in educational publishing and international education, in numerous countries, he moved to the northwest Highlands in 2010 to write and teach creative writing. He won the first Highland Literary Salon Poetry Competition in 2013 and a Scottish Book Trust New Writing Award in 2015. His work is widely published in magazines, online and in chapbooks and has been shortlisted for several prestigious poetry prizes.

Chris Powici's poems have been published in various magazines including *The Gutter*, *New Writing Scotland* and *The Dark Horse*. His latest collection is *This Weight of Light*, published by Red Squirrel. Chris edited *Northwords Now* magazine from 2010 until 2017. He reckons the natural world matters and that, with luck and hope and work, poetry can help wake us up to just how much it matters. Chris lives in Perthshire, Scotland and teaches creative writing for the University of Stirling and the Open University.

Jeda Pearl is a Scottish writer and poet. In 2019, she was awarded Cove Park's Scottish Emerging Writer Residency and was shortlisted for the Moniack Mohr Bridge Awards. She's a member of the Writers of Colour Group at the Scottish Poetry Library, committee member of the Scottish BAME Writers Network and contributing editor for *The Selkie*. Jeda's short fiction has been shortlisted for the Cambridge Prize, Momaya Press, Yellow Room and Words with Jam awards and her poems and short stories appear in anthologies published by TSS Publishing, Tapsalteerie and *Shoreline of Infinity*. Find her online @jedapearl or jedapearl.com.

In association with the Museum of the University of St Andrews