

'It brought a tear to my eye, lovely Charles.' Roger McGough.

'It's a delight. I can't imagine anyone not enjoying it.' Richard Carrington - The Poetry Archive.

'The affection for him and the work is palpable.' Andrew Motion.

A DARKE TEBBS PRODUCTION 2017

THE POET CHARLES CAUSLEY

Photograph copyright Carol Hughes



THE POET CHARLES CAUSLEY

A Documentary Film 59 mins

The film was made entirely by Jane Darke and Andrew Tebbs.

Director: Jane Darke

Editor: Andrew Tebbs

Music: Composed and performed by Jim Causley
with Julie Murphy and Ceri Owen Jones.
Additional music by the Boilerhouse Crew of Penzance.

Poets:

Phil Bowen
Simon Armitage
Andrew Motion
Roger McGough
Gillian Clarke
Helen Mort
Simon Parker

Friends of Charles Causley:

Michael Foreman – illustrator
Mike Shepherd – Kneehigh Theatre
Ian Tunbridge – former pupil
Glennis Tunbridge – fellow teacher
Anna Reade- fellow teacher
Father Anthony Maggs
Les Baker
Arthur Wills

Scholars:

Will Coleman - Golden Tree Productions
Michael Cooper
John Hurst – curator

Synopsis short:

Charles Causley was one of the great poets of his generation, respected by his peers. He lived his whole life in Cornwall except for the years he served in the Royal Navy during WW2. His father was gassed on WWI and he lost close friends in WW2.

He was one of very few war poets from the lower ranks and served as a coder on the aircraft carrier HMS Glory, witnessing the surrender of the Japanese commanders there. On his return he moved back in with his Mum and worked as a primary school teacher in Launceston.

Much of his work is autobiographical, when asked about his life he said, 'It's all in the poems.' He wrote about the people he lived and worked with and about both World Wars. His great friend was the poet Ted Hughes, they competed against each other for the job of Poet Laureate – Hughes won. This year is the 100th anniversary of his birth, the event has been much celebrated in Cornwall.

There is archive footage of Causley and interviews with poets who knew him or respect his work such as Simon Armitage, Oxford Professor of Poetry, Roger McGough and Andrew Motion, Poet Laureate 1999-2009. Mike Shepherd, of Kneehigh Theatre, talks about working with him and his poetry. Friends in his home town tell stories of his experiences during World War II while in the navy. He was one of the very few war poets who came from the lower ranks.





Synopsis Long:

Charles Causley was born in 1917 in Launceston, a small town in North Cornwall on the edge of Bodmin Moor. His father died when he was a boy as a result of a gas attack in the trenches of World War One. He lived the rest of his life in the same house as his mother, in the same town. He knew everyone and they knew him. The only time he left was for active service in the Second World War. He joined up reluctantly in 1940. 'I've always been afraid of the sea, and it's been something that's been always with me, since those early days. Nobody can live in Cornwall without being afraid of the sea.' Causley.

Charles had started writing poetry before he left but the war provided him with an education and a subject for the rest of his life. He served as a signal man on an aircraft carrier HMS Glory, sailing from Sierra Leone to the Mediterranean and on the South Pacific. He lost many shipmates during the war. He was present at the surrender of the Japanese General Imamura and Vice Admiral Kusaka on HMS Glory. He was one of very few war poets from the lower ranks.

On returning home he worked at the local primary school and stayed there until after his mother's death. Many have thought that was the end of his journeys but he continued to visit other parts of the world often travelling by bus. As his work became better known he was invited to poetry events, residencies and universities, as a respected guest, all over the world.

His work is published in many volumes of poetry. He was a close friend of Ted Hughes who beat him to the post of Poet Laureate. It seems that he was known and respected by all the poets of his generation. The poems can often be read in one way by adults and another by children, many have grown up with his work. His poetry can be tough but also fun, many of his poems are written in ballad form. Kneehigh Theatre performed his work towards the end of his life when he had moved to a care home in the town he was born in. He died aged 86.

He devoted his life to teaching and poetry and his Mum. He said that everything you needed to know about him was in the poetry. He wrote directly from experience about the people of Launceston and the changes in the town, both world wars, his shipmates, local history, myths, animals and God.



QUOTES FROM THE FILM

'Poems are written directly out of compulsion, they are written because one must. If you have a poem inside you and you don't write it you explode. You die of drink. You commit suicide. You go off the rails. You crash violently and vividly. And so in order to appease the angel and the demon that battles inside every poets head the poems have to be written. Mean time life, difficult and dangerous, goes on. And the complicated life of working with young children certainly taught me far more than ever I've taught them.' Charles Causley

'He was a deeply spiritual man. He didn't go to church much, in fact, he was a bit like Larkin, you know, he liked to go to churches when they were empty.' Father Anthony Maggs, a friend.

'Ah, CHARLES, be reassured! For you
Make lasting friends with all you do,
And all you write; your truth and sense
We count on as a sure defence
Against the trendy and the mad,
The feeble and the downright bad.'

Philip Larkin from 'A Birthday card' written for Causley's 70th birthday.

'He uses Celtic stories, the Cornish, the Welsh, the stories I associate with the Island of Britain, in a lovely way.' Gillian Clarke (National Poet of Wales 2008-2016)

'Causley's important because in the stepping stones and the human chain of literature he forms an important link, you know, he's a handover through Hardy, through Auden, through Betjeman and then it's his turn.' Simon Armitage, Oxford Professor of Poetry.



JANE DARKE – DIRECTOR

<http://www.janedarke.co.uk>

This is the third film directed and filmed by Jane to be shown on BBC FOUR. She also made the classic Cornish film THE WRECKING SEASON, about objects that drift onto Cornish beaches from the Americas. It was the first film to show plastic contamination of beaches but also connections between communities on the Atlantic fringe. She also made THE ART OF CATCHING LOBSTERS about life with her husband, playwright Nick Darke, and his death. She lives on the North Coast of Cornwall and paints and writes. Her book HELD BY THE SEA about the healing power of land and sea is published by Souvenir Press.

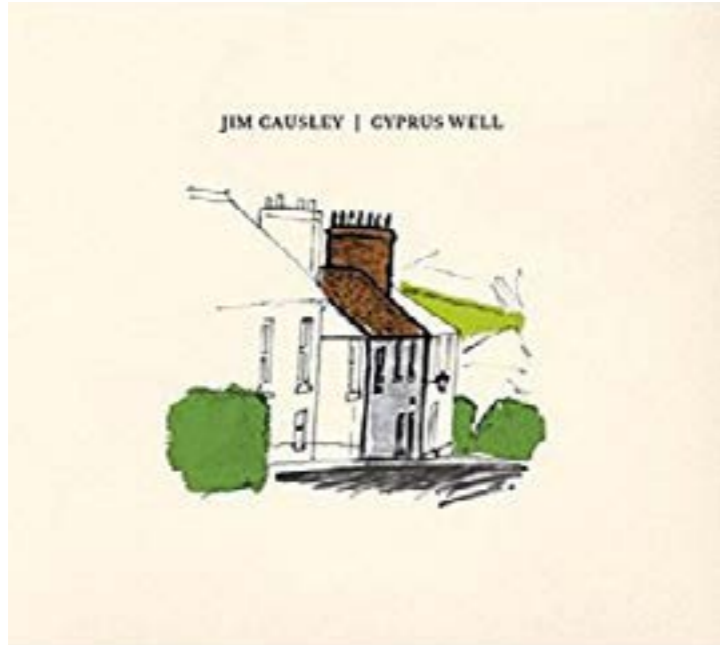
ANDREW TEBBS – EDITOR

<http://andrewtebbs.com/index.php/about/>

He is a sculpture who lives and works in Derbyshire. He and Jane have been working together recording Cornish voices for St Eval Archive and renovating Tregona Chapel as a meeting place for that community.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b06s871d>





JIM CAUSLEY - MUSIC

The film features many poems, some set to music by his distant relation Jim Causley on his successful CD CYPRUS WELL. <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2016/mar/09/jim-causley-review-west-country-folk-cecil-sharp-house-london>

Link to see 90 second promo

<https://vimeo.com/226157758>

Link to see 3 minute clip from the film

<https://vimeo.com/224853015>

<http://www.janedarke.co.uk/film-maker/>

<https://twitter.com/JaneDarkeWorks>

<http://andrewtebbs.com/index.php/about/>

<http://www.jimcausley.co.uk/>

<http://causleytrust.org/>

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