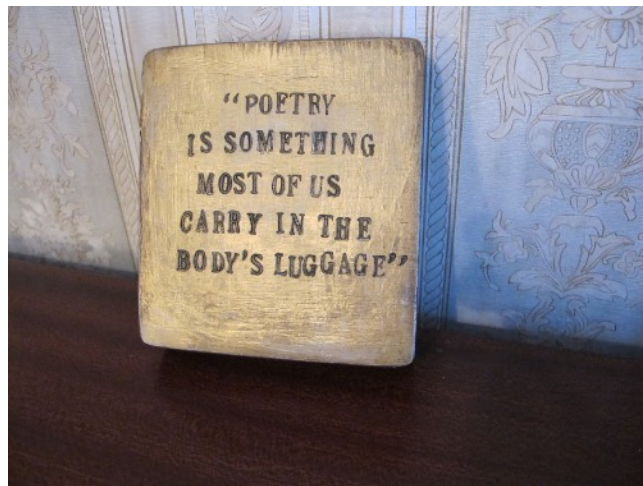


Small Acts of Attention

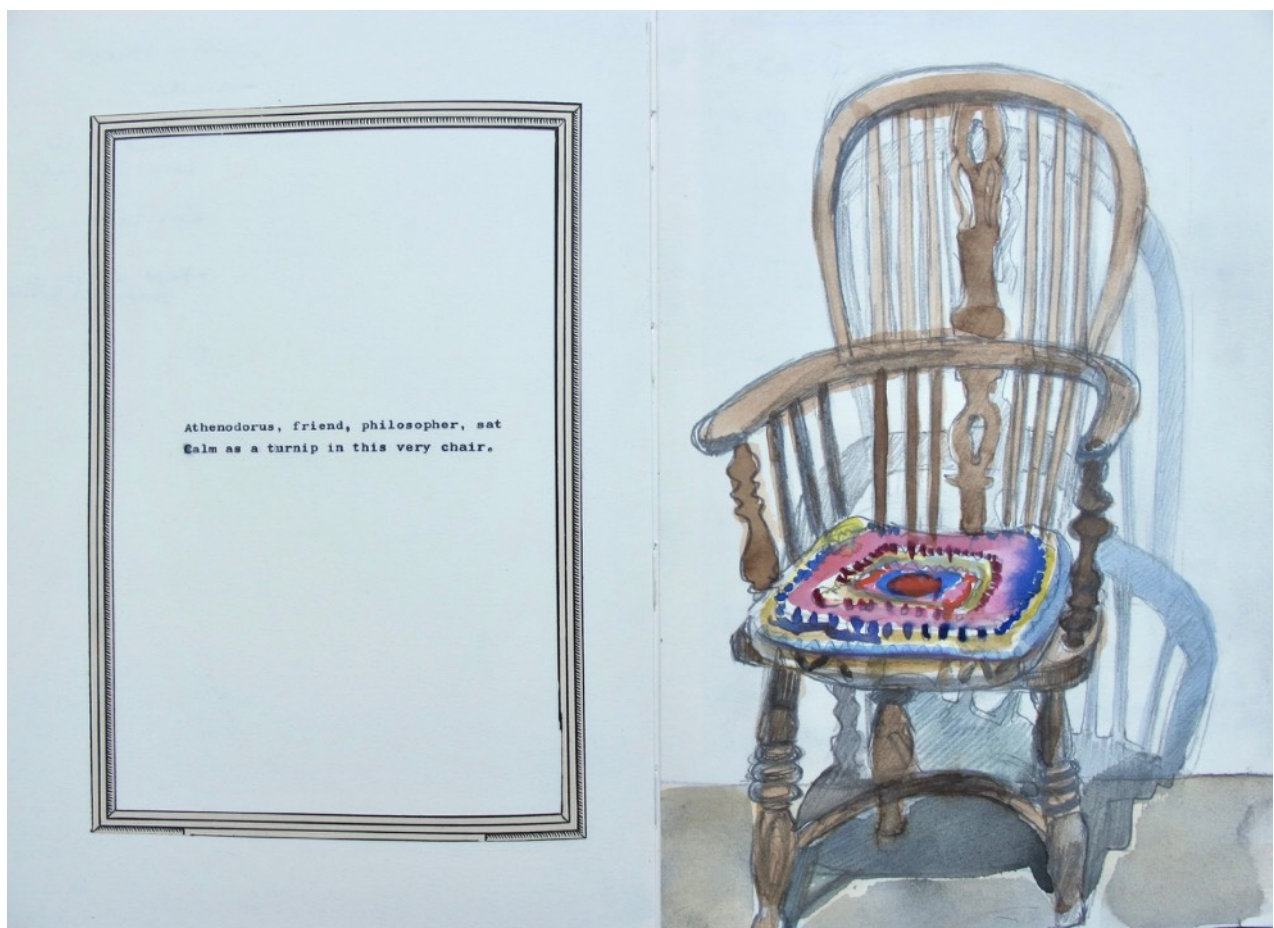


Karen Howse, artist in residence, spent 14 days at Cyprus Well during Charles Causley's 100th Birthday year and celebration on the 24th August. (16-28th August 2017)

Launceston has been my home for over 20 years, so living in Cyprus Well was an honour and a wonderful opportunity for me as an artist to explore the house and Charles Causley's poetry. Finding echoes within the house, within the poetry and within me.

Absence and Presence; Chairs

'Athenodorus, friend, philosopher, sat
Calm as a turnip in this very chair,'
Athenodorus. C.C.



My first drawing is of a chair in the study, 'The Welcoming Chair' as I call it. I certainly didn't set out to draw the chairs in the house. They chose me. They have a human dimension. I find myself measuring them as I would a human figure, checking proportions with a squinted eye and a pencil.

Charles's poetry for me builds presence and a vivid sense of people and their place, so then you feel their loss more keenly. Living in the house, drawing the empty chairs, there is a sense of absence but also of presence, paradoxically. The poetry peoples the house and the objects form a doorway into the poetry.

Shadows

'At last of night at first of day'

Sibard's Well C.C.



'Of all the literary arts poetry...is something most of us carry in the body's luggage from childhood, among much else an affirmation of joy and as a spell against the dark'

From Charles Causley's introduction for Poetry Please book '100 Popular Poems' from the BBC Radio 4 programmes 1985

Sitting in the new kitchen with the 'old house' at my back there is a real contrast of feeling. Darkness and light, the past and the new.

Some of Charles's poetry seems dark, but there is light in the shadows. And as I have found out when drawing the window at the top of the stairs, the edges are brightest.

Stillness

'We confuse knowing *about* with a deeper knowing that is non-conceptual. Knowing *about* and knowing are totally different modalities. One is concerned with form, the other with the formless. One operates through thought, and the other through stillness.'

Stillness Speaks, Eckhart Tolle

I am trying to operate through stillness. Difficult when words are involved. I am trying to



let them wash over me and not analyse too much. Finding the recording of Charles reading his poetry was really helpful, I could play it while working.

(Causley reads Causley, from his collected poems 1951-1975 Sentinel Records 1975)

Craft

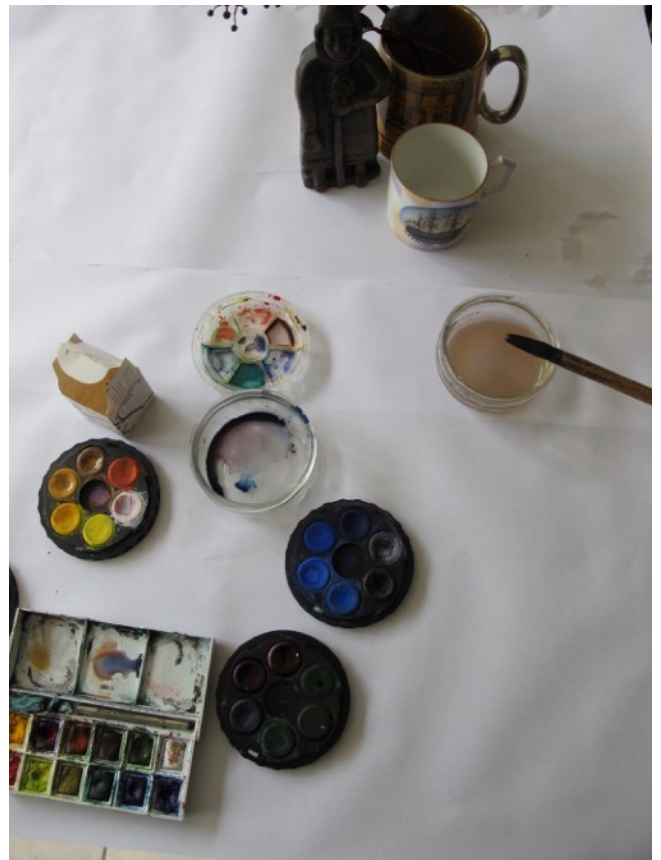
'Packing only his heart, a half - hewn stone'

A Short Life of Nevil Northey Burnard Cornish Sculptor, 1818 - 1878

C.C.

Studying the crafted things in the house as I draw them I realise the importance of proportion, care and balance. Skills I see in Charles Causley's poetry, knowing what to keep light and where to put in the dark, what to show and what to hide, what to cut and what to keep. There is a beauty and purity you see in good craft and art.

Charles has a lot of art and crafted objects in the house. I particularly like the self portrait by artist Stanley Spencer, who grew up in Cookham a small rural village in the area where I also grew up. I have often felt Charles Causley and Stanley Spencer had things in



common, they shared a rural small community upbringing, the war, the way the spiritual and the everyday meet in their art. It was lovely for me to find this at Cyprus Well.



Stanley Spencer Self Portrait 16/3/70

Tiny Acts of Attention



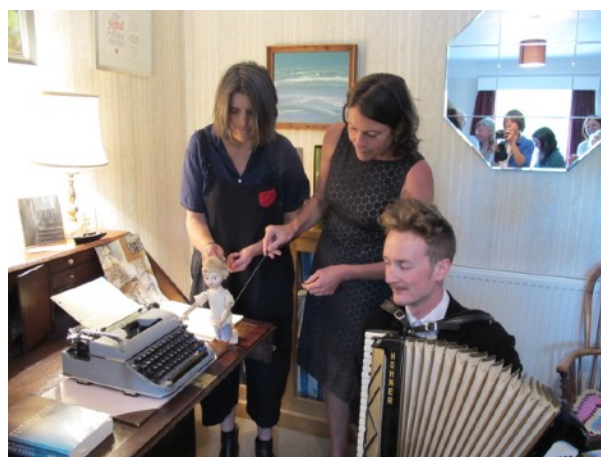
I started drawing the tiny things in the display cabinets. Charles has a lot of little things. I drew on small pieces of gessoed card to see what comes out of paying attention. (I even found a miniature chair!) I like the way the groups of drawings and objects speak to each other to make a sentence or a thought.



Perspex frame in the main bedroom with lead soldiers, tin whistle, war medals, icon, cat, small parcel addressed to C.C. small drawings of items from the front room display cabinets by K.H.

Birthday 24th August 2017

Open House and 'Causley on a Cart'



Clockwise from top left: Open house invite, Kneehigh's Causley on a Cart on the terrace of Cyprus Well, Kneehigh performers in study with Timothy Winters puppet, Sketchbooks displayed on the piano, Flowers kindly picked by Neil Burden from Trecarrell Manor, Sketches in the study, Icons in the front room.

The Bag of Parting



The other day Jen opened up the archive room to find some paperwork and we found all sorts of treasures. What I found exciting was Charles's kit bag from the navy and his coding days also a beautiful leather satchel full of editions of his books which I imagine Charles would have taken with him to readings. Somehow finding those bags and holders for the everyday part of Charles's life was really useful to me.

There is a book on the Exeter University shelf called 'Japanese Folk-plays. The Ink-Smeared lady and other Kyogen', one of the plays was called the Bag of Parting which I felt was very apt, although I have tried not to be too inky in the house.



It also gave me thoughts about how we package a person after they are gone, in our thoughts and remembering. I have chosen what I want to say about Charles Causley and his work by drawing what resonates with me personally.

During my residency at Cyprus Well I led a ‘drawing in Causley’s footsteps’ walk. People liked the fact the poems were read, (I used Charles’s recordings for some of the poems) and they made drawings in the places the poems spoke about. Participants said it woke them up to the place, so they could see it with different eyes. I valued the conversations that were opened up about the town and the place of poetry in people’s lives and how the act of drawing and walking helped with this. Maybe because I already live in the town my residency has felt like a participatory art work in itself. People that have come through the door of Cyprus Well have gently shaped how I work here. I can’t help but see the town differently now, and I can see the experience shaping the work I do from now on, it has been a rich source of enquiry and one I hope to return to.



View towards the castle on the walk along Ridggrove Lane

Thank you to Jen McDerra, The Charles Causley Trust, previous residents, and all who have helped make my residency such a transformative experience.

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Last drawing