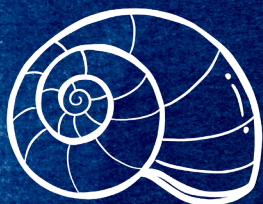
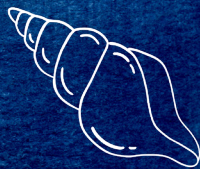


LETTERS



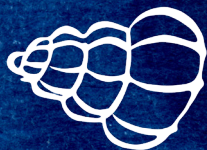
to

the

SEA



Digital



Anthology

Edited by Dr Rosemarie Corlett

Plymouth Laureate of Words 2023-25

Letters to the Sea

Digital Anthology

Edited by Dr Rosemarie Corlett

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**PLYMOUTH
CULTURE**
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LiteratureWorks



Published 2026 by Literature Works.

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Illustrations and design by Beth Pratt.

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Supported using public funding by

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Literature Works

We are a charity in South West England driven by the belief that everyone has a story to tell. We support people to use their own words for creative self-expression that supports wellbeing and nurtures talent. We connect communities, break down barriers and amplify new voices. We work closely with library services and local communities to build vibrant, connected and sustainable cultures of stories and words, where inclusion is prioritised, diversity celebrated and opportunity available to all. This ranges from co-created opportunities with community groups, to training local poets to deliver interactive poetry sessions in dementia care settings. Much of our participatory work is free of charge and where there is a charge, we offer concessions and bursaries. Our main website is www.literatureworks.org.uk

Plymouth Laureate of Words

Plymouth Laureate of Words is a creative partnership between Literature Works, Plymouth Culture and The Box. The Laureate represents their city in words, illuminating its life, culture and stories through a combination of creative writing commissions and public events. The locally based Laureate meets the Plymouth community to inspire and encourage the sharing of stories; reflecting the voices at the heart of the city.



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Introduction

If you could write a letter to the sea, what would it say?

As I began my tenure as Plymouth Laureate of Words in 2023, I didn't know how this question might resonate, or where the invitation might travel. *Letters to the Sea* began as an installation as part of the *Planet Ocean* exhibit at The Box Museum and Art Gallery, where members of the public would write a letter to the sea and display it in the gallery. Garnering around 4,000 letters over the course of the exhibition, it was clear that many people connected with the invitation, and so the project began to evolve organically into a programme of events.

Over the course of two years, through installations, workshops, readings, wellness days and community events, letters to the sea arrived from across Plymouth and beyond. Participants gathered, wrote and read at Ernesettle Creek, Theatre Royal, Poole Farm, The Box, with Plymouth Sound National Marine Park, Plymouth Centre for Cultural Diversity, KARST gallery and Plymouth Culture. Some contributors arrived as experienced writers; others had never shared a piece of writing before. Yet, again and again, the sea and the letter-writing form proved to be a generative meeting place.

Participants included poets, students, sailors, sea-swimmers, environmentalists, teachers, carers and people who simply happened upon a workshop and decided to give writing a try. They ranged from teenagers to self-proclaimed 'janners' in their 90s. Some wrote from a clear environmental standpoint, others with a nostalgic affection for the beach, some from climate anxiety, and many with a strong internalised memory of a particular blue space at a specific age. What emerges from the pages of this anthology is a collage of complex emotional relationships to the sea, formed through memory, labour, family history, recreation, and, of course, imagination.

Plymouth is uniquely placed for these conversations — a location where the sea functions as landscape and scenery, and is also embedded in our infrastructure, our livelihoods and our history. Here, the sea

shapes the city's cultural imagination as surely as it shapes its shoreline. At a time when Plymouth is investing in new ways of understanding and caring for its marine environment, these creative responses feel particularly significant.

I have loved listening to people speak about their lives and their relationships with the sea, and facilitating workshops where boundaries between facilitator and participant, writer and reader, often felt porous. The project became less about collecting letters and more about creating the conditions in which they could be shared.

Letters to the Sea continues to evolve through new partnerships and collaborations, and this anthology captures a key moment within that ongoing conversation. I'm grateful for all the support, kindness and interest in this project, and thankful to Literature Works, Exeter University, and our fantastic designer Beth Pratt for giving these letters such a radiant platform through the creation of a digital anthology. I hope you enjoy the beautiful voices in this collection, and I invite you to write your very own 'letter to the sea.'

Dr Rosemarie Corlett
July 2026

Drake's Island Adventure

Devil's Point keeps vigil,
for the sailors
 who never made it
 home.

Seabed reefs of
 broken vessels.

Drake calls you
 to his island.

Close enough to touch.
Close to this ocean city.

River and sea rush beneath
 your summer-painted toes.

Seagulls tempt waves
 to claim their wings.

Your wings reflect in the shadow
 of the spray.
As your board floats static
 between will and
 nature.

Giving up was never an option.
Head bowed,
your blade slices tide's
 greed.

Cut
after cut,
after cut.

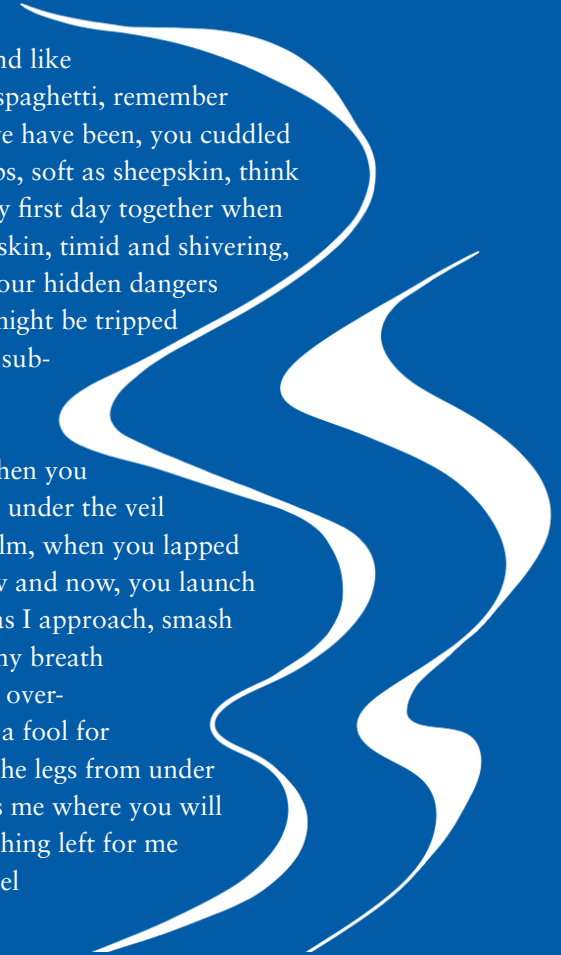
You dance on water.



Samantha Carr

Letter to the Sea at Batten Beach

dear
friend, don't
throw me around like
a string of wet spaghetti, remember
how peaceful we have been, you cuddled
around my limbs, soft as sheepskin, think
back to our very first day together when
I touched your skin, timid and shivering,
unsure where your hidden dangers
lay, whether I might be tripped
up, rolled over, sub-
sumed,
oh think how
sweet it was, when you
held me captive under the veil
of morning's calm, when you lapped
me up, and now and now, you launch
yourself at me as I approach, smash
my core, steal my breath
away, and I am over-
come, a wreck, a fool for
you, who flips the legs from under
me, who carries me where you will
and there is nothing left for me
but sky, the cruel
rocks and
you



Lesley Curwen

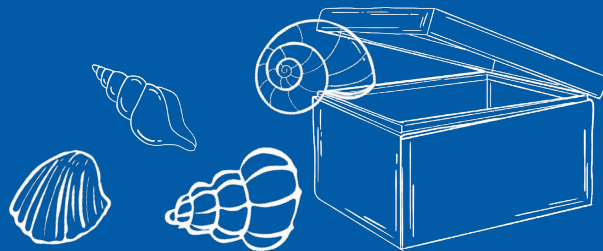
Dear Plymouth Sound,



In 1982, I surfed on waves of cheap plastic British flags inside Devonport Dockyard as jingoistic fumes pumped up sailors on their way to the Falklands War. We would repeat this circus throughout the eighties, skipping back to Keyham as my Mum's shoulders unfolded. It was a time for dancing in front of Top of the Pops and day trips out.

Your salty breeze would gargle in my throat on the ferry to Mount Edgecumbe as you prickled the bow of the boat. My Mum would bring a box, so me and my sister could stuff it full of cockles and winkles. The boiling treasure would stink the house out at night as Mum picked out your gifts. Sometimes, my Mum's best friend, Auntie Pam, would join us and they would sneak swigs of Cinzano, while laughing at fragments of freedom whispering on your waves. Mum would make grated cheese and salad cream sandwiches, which dribbled down my chin as bits of sand grated at the back of my throat.

If we didn't wave to you as the boat sailed from Admiral's Hard (as a teenager I would titter like Kenneth Williams when we walked past the sign) and the Sun dehydrated a battered decade, we would head towards Mount Wise swimming pool. I'm not a strong swimmer; I've only swum in you a few times. I think the sea should be looked at and not waded in – especially when unethical money makers pump their waste into you. I would sit on the side of the pool, get lost in the pages of Smash Hits magazine, and dream of being friends with Mel and Kim, Five Star, and my queen, Madonna, while Morten Harket, or Nathan from Brother Beyond, peaked waves of curious fruit.



When I was thirteen, I was forced to do a week of work experience in the navy. My only escape was in the pages of Smash Hits. Madonna was on the front, her prayers a new manifesto away from the violence scarred on to this city. As I stood on the deck of the Ark Royal I saw Plymouth from your viewpoint. When we arrived in Portsmouth, any thought on me becoming a sailor was thrown overboard as my body twisted like a row of tents on a windy day and my seaman traits fired blanks.

The world's walls started to crack as the eighties fell into the nineties and claimed teenage hormones. I began to stomp around town all in black and suede buckled boots as misery filled my Walkman-encrusted ears. Baby goth realness would swish up to The Hoe and dream of falling off your horizon – things like going abroad weren't for kids like me.

I failed school and got out of there just before turning sixteen and soon discovered raves and nightclubs – friends would carry on the party on The Hoe as your night waves soothed the synthetic love disco dollying around our veins. Most nights, my lone eyes would look out to the dark while men's feet ate promises like melted ice cream.

Endless days turned into decades. I watch you, sometimes from the Blockhouse. Your mouth opening and closing into the Tamar, as past Janner chatter wipes an Ivor Dewdney's from my chin. I hear the Monday morning siren spitting out, I feel weirdly comforted but rage at the tsunami of money wasted so this country can be a bossy boy. You always soothe the rage, the space in-between as you ingrain yourself in my ever spider web of wrinkles.

Thank you, Love, Paul.

Paul Soren

My Dear Friend



Giver of all life, you are a constant inspiration. For over eighty years I have lived beside you, first as a fearful small boy, then close engagement as I grew, and now as a frequent observer of your tranquillity and sometimes angry turmoil.

In The Sound, I have witnessed a great armada prepare for freedom's fight, giant seaplanes come and go, pageants and displays through the years. Nowadays, it is almost empty, yet below your surface common nature lives and dies, and many wrecks lie, caused by storms or human hand. I have this notion that Neptune sits on a throne atop Drake's Island, waving his trident to protect us.

So much history has been witnessed here, great sea captains, Drake, Raleigh, etc.; great endeavours, the Pilgrims, Darwin and many others. How many knights and knaves you must have seen! You, my dear friend, have seen it all since the dawn of time. Now, I sit here watching the morning sun glistening on your wavelets and recalling your many contributions, I can only apologise for the way you have been treated. Growth in population and technology has flooded you with the waste of the world, because humankind can only embrace progress, and profit, without considering the future. I remind young people, who are inclined to accuse earlier generations, that I bought milk and soft drinks in returnable glass bottles!

As my own departure looms, I wish you health, in the hope that good people out there are able to help, although the 'selfish gene' of the majority may still resist. I have hope but not expectation.

Until our atoms meet again in the great cataclysm that will end our solar system, I remain, your friend and admirer,
James

James Warwick

To the Sea

when I was eight, I lost my sock in the waves and I still feel bad about it –

when I was nineteen, I went swimming with friends from school but the tide turned and kept dragging me over towards the knuckles of rocks and I had to swim with shoulders screeching to get back to the shore and when I did, legs loose of bones, my friends said they were worried about me and I said *why? I can swim, can't I?* trying to cover up how lost for breath I was –

when I was twenty-three, I got stung by a jellyfish and my friend's boyfriend said he didn't know if I had been lying because that just is something I would lie about then I walked away from him and I learnt from the NHS website that I don't need somebody to wee on my wrist which is good because I don't want wee on me nor do I have someone who would wee on me –

when I was fourteen I dreaded going in because I was bleeding but when I said I didn't want to go in the sea everyone said it must be because I was bleeding –

when I was twenty I didn't want to go in because the waves were too tall and my brother had a new paddleboard that couldn't stay at home and he managed to battle over the top of the waves without fear and expected me to do the same so I said *I'll go in without my board*, meaning I still had to brave the waves, let them do what they want with me, and that was enough for him as long as I was close enough to see, to shout and then when we went back to your beach Mum had Magnums ready for us, sea drops landing on the sand making dimples that you'd come back for later –

when I was nineteen I wrote a poem about the sea, awash with cliché, about how I felt like she was me –



when I was five, immune to cold and forgetful of discomfort, my brother and I spent hours jumping over the waves again and again and again, confused why people would be sitting on their towels on the sand when there were so many waves to jump over and with our backs to them we jumped and we jumped and we jumped –

when I was twenty-one, I moved away from you and spent the summer on trains trying to get back –

when I was sixteen, I was anxious to let the waves go above my thighs because I didn't have a towel and didn't want to sit on the sand in my wet bikini –

when I was a week younger, swimming during a yellow weather warning I felt how the sea pulled around my kneecaps, the hollows of my ribcage, how you could break me but didn't –

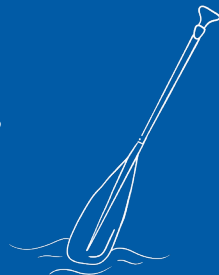
when I was eighteen I spent every day of the stretched summer craving the droplets from the kayak paddle on sunburnt thighs, the oar pushing through your clear body –

when I was six, how easy to swim with a buoyancy aid refusing to let you sink, flippers like wings for my size three feet –

when I was twenty-two, licking the salt from my lips,

when I was seven I went out on the bodyboard, Bovisand, waiting to become the wave,
gasping because it's so cold,
gasping because I'm so alive
but I don't need to remind you of that,

remind you of any of this –



Holly Peters

Dear Sea,

Why
does
salt meet sweet?
High kiss low?
Ebb and flow?
Why do you... rage?
How do you find tranquillity?
Don't you get pissed off by the pull of the Moon
entanglement of shit-waders of people waders
waders waders of people think about the seals and
the kelp and the seagrass reeds
I am
I am
I am
in awe of you
humble before you
I lay out my towel as a prayer mat
And give you peace and love and gratitude
Love
Eva



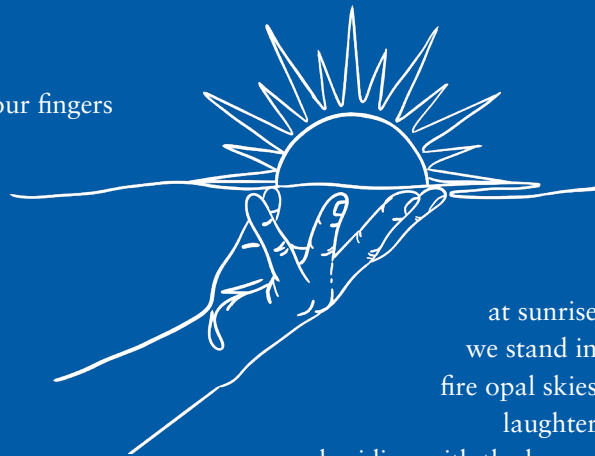
Eva McGrath

A Calm Beneath

you remind me
of my dearest friends
salt-sweet
wide-hearted
unafraid to be wild

we gather
like gulls at the edge
of something ancient
bare feet
sun-warmed skin
stories flowing
like sand through our fingers

we have held
grief in one hand
joy in the other
and called it living



at sunrise
we stand in
fire opal skies
laughter
braiding with the breeze

we rise fierce
not in spite of our softness
but because of it

each of us
a wave
a storm
a calm beneath

Heather Davey

To the Sea, in Gratitude

I make time, every day to pause and find something to be thankful for. This big old life becomes overwhelming with the pressures of bills, work, family, friends, cooking, cleaning, washing-up, shopping, feeding the cat, matching socks... This endless repeating cycle of drudgery can be remedied by small, simple things that, once noticed, bring wonder and peace. It might be finding a fiver in an old handbag or something more profound like the way trees shimmer when the wind blows through them, disturbing the leaves and revealing their hidden colours. Rather than the grand, I find joy in the microscopic.

I'm a seaside who loves being at the beach. I lived in the countryside for several years and admit that it is beautiful. As I write this, sitting on a train from Birmingham to Plymouth, the May is out. Snow-white bushes contrast velvet-green hills adorned by grazing horses, cows and sheep, all with their newborns close by. Verdant. Lush. Idyllic.

And yet...

In all this magic unfolding in front of me, I see borders. Limits. The hedgerows, gates, fences, and walls leave me feeling penned in. Trapped. I yearn for the sea. Its smell. Its texture. Its spirit. Its freedom. Now I've moved back, I'm never leaving the coast again. I love a day at the beach, me. Anywhere in the world. That tang of brine and abandoned seaweed hits a pleasure centre in my brain and I can't help but close my eyes and breathe it in. The big stuff. The marvellous. The sea meeting the sky; the miles of beach meeting the sea. Plains of mud when the tide is out. Viewing it from a distance ignores the joy that comes from observation and immersion. Ignores the wonder. Ignores the microscopic.

I find joy sitting at the water's edge with the water folding around me. Minute sand-coloured fish dart and butt and nibble at my foreign feet invading their space. Being so close, I discern not golden sand, but a composite of tiny grains of red, blue, green, black, white, orange and

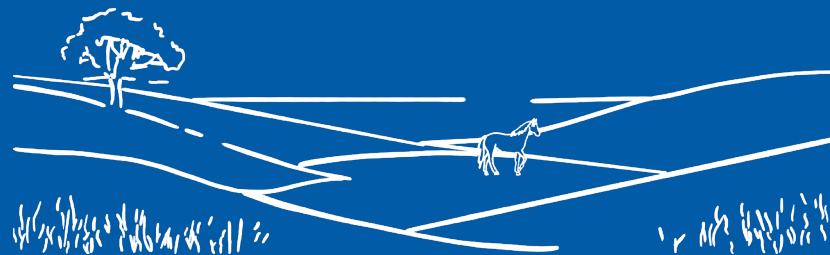
yellow. These grains are neither a uniform size, nor tone, nor material, but pearlescent, marbled, rough and smooth. Sharp shells and polished glass meet with mottled pebbles and clatter over each other, drawn in by the sea as it inhales.

The gleaming shingle goads,

‘What’s the time Mr Wolf?’ and the sea roars in reply,

‘Dinner time!’ Exhaling a deep ‘woo ha ha!’ its foamy fingers lunge at the stones. In an imagined game of chase, the pebbles shriek and giggle and scatter to avoid the tide’s tickles; their tumbling shifts the sand beneath me, scratches at my backside and breaks my reverie as I struggle to remain upright. I don’t know how long I’ve sat there, but a clump of sand has accumulated in my swimming costume and my pruning skin tells me I’ve outstayed my welcome.

I always do my best to leave the beach as I found it, but a good dose of it is in my clothes, shoes, bag and hair, and remains in my car, the carpet, the bathroom floor and the bath for days, weeks and months after my visit. But when I see it, I pause. The joy of sitting in the sea returns. That feeling of there being nothing but possibilities, nothing stopping me, makes me smile. And I thank the sea.



Jo Walton

Dear Oceans,

Please forgive us if you are able to, for dumping our rubbish into your beauty; for overfishing from your larder; for not providing safe passages for those unfortunate young people who are only looking for a better life, free from tyranny and strife, and have perished in your waters. You are so important for our survival but we will, if we are not careful, cause our demise.

Rosamunde Campbell-Crocker

Dear Sea,

The last time I talked to Amanda was on Facebook Messenger. She was in hospital and couldn't sleep. I was tired but didn't want to close the chat. She asked whether I believed in God, asked if you believed. She shared a dream she hoped I could interpret: she'd parked up by the lighthouse on The Hoe at nighttime. And just like the yurt she built in her garden — she put up a side-awning like a cocoon. She'd climbed inside the tower, fell asleep in this little chrysalis, and glowed radiant like a beacon. I knew what it meant — it reminded me of Jung's *in ecstasis*. But I didn't say. The same as I didn't tell her when I dreamt her hair had grown back. I'm sorry I didn't tell you until after her funeral. I didn't know if you would understand. You said she couldn't die because she was too nice, and her cooking was better than mine. You cried every night for a year. Cried so much I shouted at you. I just wanted you to go to sleep so I could cry. Walking home from school, you tell me you learned about Lazarus in assembly, and how miracles happen more in the Bible than our lives.

Samantha Carr

You Called Me Here.

To the sea,
You called me here.
To this place my feet chose
for my holdfast to root
in the ebb and the flow
of all my life's tides.

You called me here.
Drawn by mysteries of the deep,
of those who brave the vast expanse,
a living laboratory beneath my feet
full of brine-soaked wonders.

You called me here.
Suspended in your gentle sway,
swimming under full moon rising
and at the dawn of solstice day
emerging Selkie-skin renewed.

You called me here.
Sandy companion of childhood times,
witness to clifftop wedding vows,
rediscovered through my daughter's eyes
as she marvels at gulls and crashing waves.

You called me here.
My muse for words that spill from my soul,
a source of wisdom to share with those
drawn to your shore like magnetic poles
to return to our deep ancestral womb.

You called me here.
You called me home.



Lizzie Elliot-Klein

Dear Sea/Muse,

When we humans feel as if we know each other like an unfortunate mariner knows the inside of the whale, that's when we need a clifftop car park and the dependable variable of weather.

When – at the hairdressers – we find a magazine featuring 'Poetry of the Sea,' and photography of locations referred to in poetry of the sea, and fashion spreads inspired by poetry of the sea, and find that none of it's for us – there's too much slate grey and too much awestruck majesty – that's when we need our tartan rugs and cable-knit jumpers: clothes that don't resist the very notion of hugging, that take no part in the anti-contact dreams of couture.

On the cliff, half-in, half-out of the car, is where we realise that all our best threats come from shanties. We've sworn to ship each other off to Australia, condemned brothers and sisters to be stalked around the globe by improbable flat-faced winged and/or tentacled creatures, wished our elders to be over-preserved by salt, our youth to be misled by the sun, offered to everyone again and again the doom of getting first wondrous drunk then spitting sick on repetition.

There's a moment of doubt when we wonder if perhaps the land is where we ought to be looking. Maybe love and other happinesses work best landlocked, delivered by a small van in bland daytime, in an environment best titled 'aspirational suburban', away from your wild and countless transitions.

But when we lose faith in all our mirrors – which is often – that's when we come to stare at you. We know the best we can do is whisper little incantations for transformation, or listen for the same in the clicking of pebbles withdrawing, offer up our arrogance to be taken and tumbled, for shattering and smoothing. That's when we come to relish the whole catalogue of movements between waving and drowning.

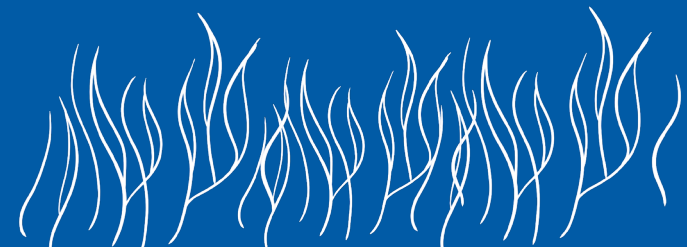
Yours gratefully,
Human/Poet



David Rutherford

Incident

it is a lazy narrative to gift water agency
the depths did not desire that thin gold band
the sea did not take the ring of my mother
let me offer this instead
that I had decided on one final dip
as October ran towards winter
the intense cold triggered biological responses
blood retreated to maintain my core
capillaries contracted
and the ring always a loose fit
was gone before I knew it
so that when I searched
the view was murk and weed
my numb fingers read the rocks
sieved the sand
hunted for that familiar
the autumn tide was high and wild
and if I could have ladled it all away
spoon by spoonful I would
I waited it out
returned each day to search the empty beach
I still feel the loss



Paul Tobin

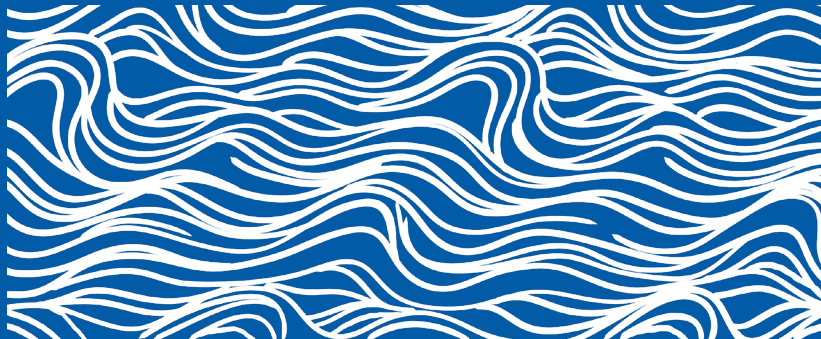
Midnight Letter

A midnight letter to the sea
With babe in arms, awake with me
The forecaster whispers soft and low
Rockall, Malin, Hebrides, Faroes

Strong winds, rough seas, occasionally poor
Batten the hatches, shut the door
From coastal stations far away
A lullaby of salt and spray

Barometer in hand; we gurgle low
My words whirl as the tempest blows
Losing identity, Irish Sea
Low pressure brings a milky plea

The rain gushes; winds aloft
Hammering on our nest-like croft
From Viking Bank to Stornoway
We hold our course through the midnight fray



The sea, a canvas to our life
Squalling showers in German Bight
My babe and I, here, lagooned
An ancient bond, hungry, attuned

Fastnet, Lundy, Shannon, Sole
Wintering gales, feeling alone
A kaleidoscope of dreaming,
Feeding and awakening.

Liminal.

*I wonder if there are men in those seas?
Whilst I woman in this wilderness.*

The forecast, punctuates my thoughts
I was lost in inky seas hard wrought
Chest rising, falling slowly
A deep breath veering westerly

Still, the wind howls tales, both brave and old
Plymouth Sound, North Utsire's hold
We sail away, sail away, sail away
Until the dawn of a new day

Morning seeps as the curtains yawn
A chink of light from the house next door
As this seaside town slowly wakes
I ponder when the storm will break?

Lara Snowden

E
r
o
s
i
o
n

Jon Nash

(To The Sea)

I take the dark in me
Down to your
edge

Where its voice
Makes the pebbles
tremble

It is heavy
And hot to the touch
And has been
Pressed against my chest
For so long

You open your mouth
Wide as the whole
world

And your voice
Answers like a
prayer

You are sky blue
And deep as my heart
And accept
My gift, without pause
With softness

Eroding
Against the chalk cliffs
And waves crash
In my rough hand
And it dries
solid

Light as the air
Carrying it home
memory

Wet with your tides
I take a smooth pebble

And cleanses
My bloodstream runs free
White foam in
Before I float up
As I sink
ripple

Makes our skins
Carrying your voice
breath

And the east wind's
Salt water stings my eyes

You Move Me

Your endless tides stir my depths
stir my depths

Your intimate affair with the Moon puls on the pulse in my blood
You

keep
me
feral

alive
In every cell
Your embrace is a return
Your salt the echo of my grief at separation
You touch
me
deep

The scent of you whispers in the winds on the river
and you thrill my senses alive to the foreign shores in your embrace

As you caress every curve of earth

The sight of you sparkles in the cells of my eyes, lighting each neuron
in my brain as you dance with the sunlight, sway in the moonlight
touch the shore

You move me

Helen Jacoby

Dear Sea,

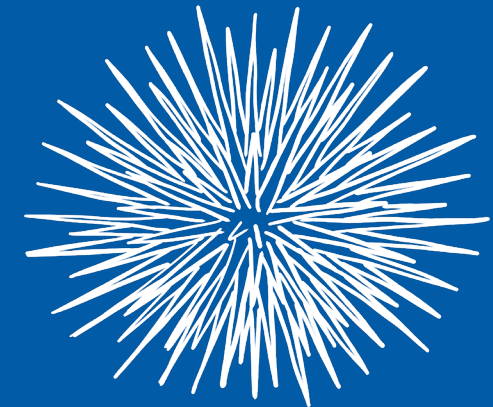
Your waves, white-capped, like soaring angels,
Buffeted me.

I bobbed in your brine.

Armbands blown up on shore,
Stopped me from being swept away.

Your waves flung themselves against rocks
Like salmon, another one comes leaping,
Determined.

Sun-streamed and salt-sung
I crawled,
Avoiding urchins, from your water
Into my mother's arms.



Tracey Fuller

Dearest Ocean,

I do hope I am correct in addressing you as The Ocean.

Human beings, well scientists found out that you have five ocean basins: the Pacific, Atlantic, Indian, Arctic and Antarctic and within these ocean basins you are full of different seas!

If I am wrong, I sincerely apologise on behalf of myself and my race.

But there is one thing I am sure of, you cover the Earth's surface by 71%, which contains 97% of all Earth's water!

Resulting in both lives being born as well as ecosystems being formed. One of the most powerful elements on Earth can bring the most precious gift on Earth, life as well as living.

Every two breaths I take out of three comes directly from you, ocean. At least 50% of the oxygen on Earth is produced by you! Utterly inspirational.

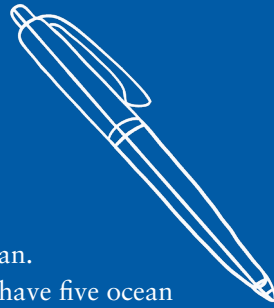
My body is made of 70% water; saline, fresh maybe even brackish who knows? But on a very personal feeling I know, I think some way I am intertwined with you.

You are my lifeline and my only reason for existing. An existing ocean pioneer in the human race who is a true advocate for protecting, well, yourself: his name is Sir David Attenborough. A true hero as well as a treasure to our race, who stated that we have been given a second chance by yourself, Ocean.

This man has been on planet Earth for nearly 100 years! He has seen and been to places that I have never been nor heard of.

Understanding that the most important place on Earth isn't the land, but the ocean and it always has been.

You are our greatest ally against climate change, yet we are at a



crossroads. My race and I are draining the very life of your ocean.

You are in poor health because of us but by giving you time and space that you so rightly deserve. It enables you to bounce back let alone thrive again more so than ever before.

A statement that fills me with salty tears of both joy and despair. Unsure of your future, I must stay optimistic.

In all of your existence, Ocean, you have written our stories and have very much sustained them. Now, it is our turn as a species to return the favour, Ocean, and write your next chapter!

For if we save the sea, we save our world.

This is of the upmost importance. Saving you as you have always done for us.

Decades, let alone centuries of exploitation. Well enough is enough!

Rather than greenwashing the world with such terms, sustainability being the most common one, let's approach this at a practical level on a day-to-day basis.

Ocean, I shall never ask you for your forgiveness, I would never expect you to forgive our race and how we have treated you let alone used you like you were our property.

Well, I shall make this promise to you, Ocean, in my time left on this Earth I shall do my very best to protect you! I love you more than I will ever love a fellow being. That I have been given a true purpose, let alone my own second chance at life – for that I shall be forever grateful.

This is my letter to you, Ocean.

All my love.

Daisy May Harris

Letter to the Sea

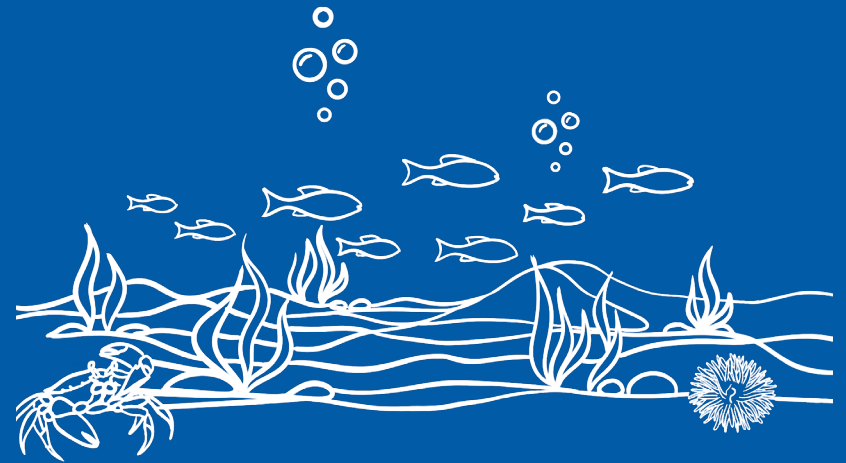
We had planned our rendezvous
But I was late, this morning
I'm sorry, I was dreaming of bears
The pink had already infused above you
The stones told the story of the tides
You, by then, had rolled into a murmur
This was the place
Damp sand like a perfect horseshoe
But not the time
You tried to trick me
To tell me that all of the time had culminated to the tip of a grain of sand
'Come in,' said the waves
I was strong
Not today, I won't leave

Eloise Dumwell

They Said — We Are

Said the sand to the Selkie skin:
I kiss you, I kiss you, I kiss you, I kiss you.
Said each crab claw to the scrumbling, popping, seabed floor,
I feel you, I feel you, I feel you.
Said each scale, sliding up against the wavering seaweed, (swaying in the tide),
I love you, I love you, I love you, I love you.
Said each fin and bubble and atom and burst, and anemone-sprout to the other:
I am you, I am you, I am you, I am you.

Francesca Pompili



Kate of the Isles

Well, the snow was falling fast,
When Kate of the Isles came calling
'Can I stay with you kind sir?' She said
For I fear for the snow that's falling

Chorus

*Oh, oh. Ye can, ye can, ye can, ye can.
My home is your salvation.
But I am a man of needs fair Kate,
And I fear for your reputation.*

He bid her through his own front door,
When Kate of the Isles came calling.
Beside his big soft bed she cried.
'Can you hold my hand I'm falling?'

Chorus

*Oh, oh, I can, I can, I can, I can.
My home is your salvation.
But I am a man of needs fair Kate,
And I fear for your reputation.*



Slip you beneath my bright white sheets
No one shall see you undressing
I'll lock the door and pull the blinds
Enjoy it with my blessing

Chorus

*Oh, oh. I will, I will, I will, I will.
Your home is my salvation.
But slip you in beside of me sir,
Don't fear for my reputation.*

Three days, three nights the snow did fall
And when it all was over
He offered her a ring of gold
Her head upon his shoulder

Chorus

*Oh, oh. I can't, I can't, I can't, I can't.
Your home's been my salvation.
But my husband's out inside your barn,
And I fear for my reputation.*

My husband's out inside your barn
And I fear for my reputation.



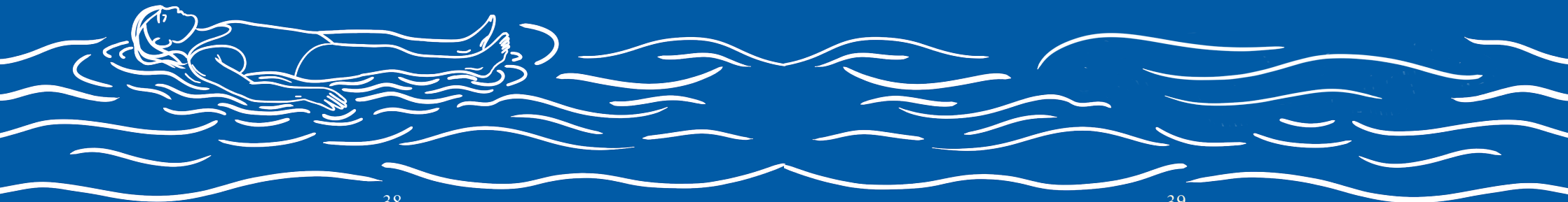
Richard Taylor

The Elemental Life Within the Water

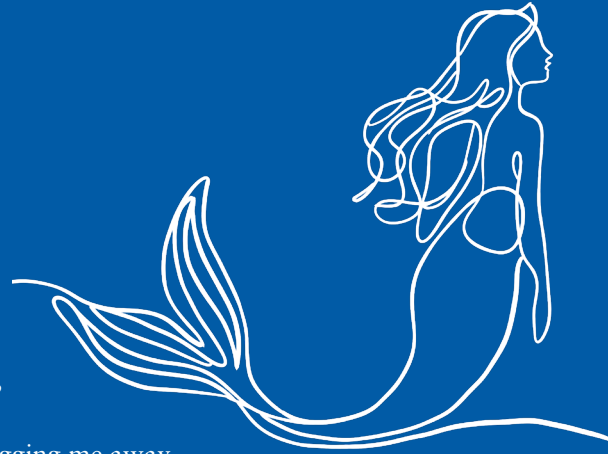
Her weary and aching body slips slowly and purposefully into the icy, cold, still and salty sea,
She deeply inhales as senses are awakened, her pain dulled by the cold and relaxes into this place where she is home.
Here she is gently rekindled by the gentle caress and motion of the sea,
Here in this watery sanctuary her senses are heightened, and here she feels truly alive.
Here in this watery abyss, she awakens to all that concealed, to all that lies within her heart, her subconscious and her cellular body,
Here with each stroke, arms propel her forwards and legs effortlessly follow,
Here with each breath, she relaxes and releases in submission to the gentle hold of the sea.
Here, once again, she is free to greet her authentic and elemental self.
Here in this element of water movements are slow and rhythmical.
Here each are in perfect alignment with the beat of her heart, the ebb and flow of the tides, and the cycles of Sun and Moon.
Here she is in solitude, in perfect alignment.
Here she is vulnerable yet strong.
Here in this sacred place, she bears full witness to all sensations, all emotions, all seasons.

Here thoughts gently emerge, are paused, then released in synchronicity with the waves that break upon the shore.
Here in this most ethereal and primordial of spaces, there is no time, there is no reality, no boundaries, only the infinite space existing below the celestial skies above.
Here she is one, one with all that has passed, all that is present and to all future possibilities.
Here in this elemental space from which she was conceived, created, nurtured and born she is at peace. She is complete.
Here she experiences all of divinity, above, below and within.
Here she is fully present, fully alive.
Here she is awakened from her daily toil to be reborn.
Here she will continue to return until her moment of death when she will draw one last breath, pause, release and wait patiently until the next cycle begins.
Here in the water, she is eternally home, a sea gypsy who just blew in the winds, with the ebb and flow of the tides to gently land upon these shores of Kernow.

Lorraine England



Dearest Sea,



You've saved me over and over,
I hoped for the end,
Sweet saviour of salty tears dragging me away,
Echoes of shipwrecks and sailors who never returned,
Entangled in mermaid's silken hair,
Selkie finding her way home.
Gone, remaining only in memories and in the song of the sea.
I found other ways you could save me,
Simply by breathing you in,
Gazing at the glittering light,
Feeling the warmth lapping at sandy toes,
Dipping and submerging,
That first icy step,
Shoulders under without the urge to disappear completely,
Sun's rays reflecting and scattering kisses upon my face,
Lusting after wild waves enveloping me, not swallowing me,
Enabling my return to the shore.
For now, I will always return,
You remain my constant and because of that, I remain.

Anonymous

Letter to the Sea

You hold onto my tears like driftwood
– a single moment of regret
folding into the rhythm of salt and foam.

I write to you in emotions standing at your coastline,
each tear slipping
beneath
a burial of water lost
but still visual.

You reply with the quiet shift of a *murmur of waves*
a constellation of fractured echoes
mirroring the spine of my sadness.

You gather my tears, binding
them to sea glass and driftwood,
letting them wash ashore, softened,
reshaped, unrecognisable,

Wavering, stitched together
into a collage of feelings,
transforming everything
I felt into a stillness,

a stillness
reflecting the blankness of life.



Andy N



Living Sea

You lurk beneath water's definition.
Glass ceiling above.
Glass bottom below.
Glass on your left and right.
You drown in a gin.
You drown in a rum.
It is liquid for lunch
with no smell of spirits.
You form water's vertebrae and its shape.
Bending light above.
Bending light below.
Bending chemical sense.
You reach a surface.
You swim to the depths.
Looking for perfect blue
in the visible range.
You hold back from wetting the world of dry.
Thirsts look for you here.

Thirsts look for you there.
Thirsts are what you live for.
You rinse this cosmos.
You rinse these atoms.
You wear colourless coats
like molecular ghosts.
You are at ease with Earth, wind, and fire.
Waves inside others.
Waves outside others.
Waves and cubes of water.
You form the concave.
You form the convex.
You soak up lots of heat
when the Sun goes all grill.
You surge through water.

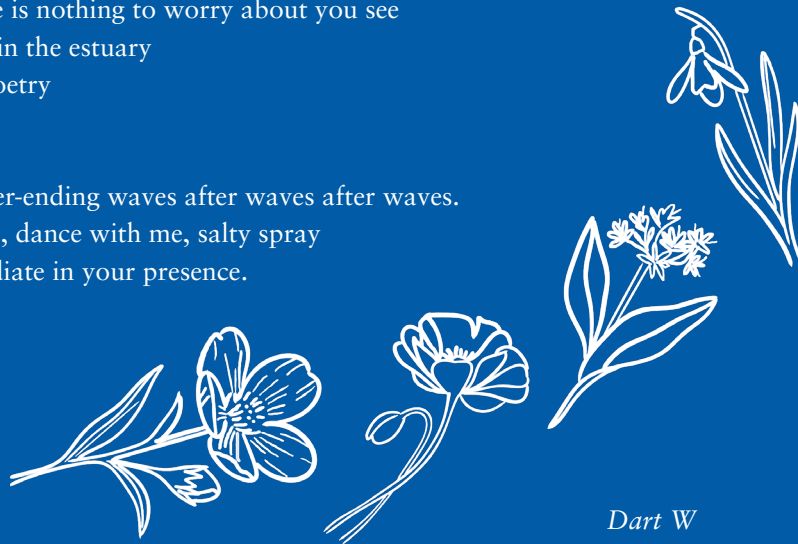
The waves touch your voice.
Am I right, dear Sea?

Stephen Paul Wren

I Miss the Sea in Springtime

The flush of wildflowers
Red campion
Gorse in flower
Thrift digging in
I miss the sea air
That clears your lungs
The smell, the fact it releases the chemical crashing of the waves –
Oxytocin, endorphins, release
I miss bathing in your holy, buoyant water
I miss flapping out my prayer-mat towel to welcome in the rays of light
I miss the smell of seaweed and the call of the oystercatcher,
The quiet presence of the heron, cormorant, wading birds, shelducks.
Now we're entering more into the estuary.

If I am a river and you are the sea,
Then there is nothing to worry about you see
For we're in the estuary
Making poetry
History
Infinity
These never-ending waves after waves after waves.
Sing to me, dance with me, salty spray
Let me radiate in your presence.



Dart W

Letter to the Sea

Inspired by a photograph by Carol Ballenger

The whole idea of your wave is green,
is constructed out of eagerness,
needs no driving force,
only wind to drink in.

You are magnificent and moved
by any direction of wind into free flow,
fall about, tumbling beautiful,
trembling and shattering into a lather

when you meet anything less mobile,
less empathetic than yourself;
when you meet things locked to the ground,
less volatile than air.

The whole idea is green,
one simple single momentum like love
— one unstoppable solution pulling
from deep beyond any sense of the sensible.

This is green
as new as that sensation before beginning,
shaped from the shape of never quite belonging,
yet being the shape of all things beyond.

Susan Taylor

Acknowledgements

The Plymouth Laureate of Words programme is made possible by our cultural partnership with Plymouth Culture and The Box; we are hugely grateful for their support. We also extend our thanks to Arts Council England, whose regular funding helps to support this programme as a National Portfolio Organisation. We acknowledge and thank all those who wrote a letter to the sea over the course of Rosemarie's tenure as Laureate; it was wonderful to read your writing. Big thanks are due, of course, to Rosemarie herself, for being a fantastic laureate for Plymouth, and the careful curator of these missives.

A big thanks to the University of Exeter MA Publishing Programme Directors, Dr Kate Wallis and Dr D-M Withers, who supported a collaboration with one of their students, Beth Pratt, to design and edit this anthology. And, of course, thanks to Beth herself.

Literature Works
2026

*If you could write a letter to the sea, what
would it say?*

In this captivating collection of poetic and epistolary entries, intimate reflections meet lyrical observations, offering deeply personal portraits of the many ways we connect with the ocean that shapes life in the South West – not only as a place of beauty and belonging, but as a witness to our lives and a shared responsibility for our future.

Richly illustrated and thoughtfully curated, *Letters to the Sea* is both a celebration of Plymouth's blue spaces and a lasting legacy of the people who call them home. It champions the creativity of writers across the South West, inviting readers to pause, reflect and rediscover their own relationship with the sea.



The sea has always held our stories.
Here, at last, we write back.



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