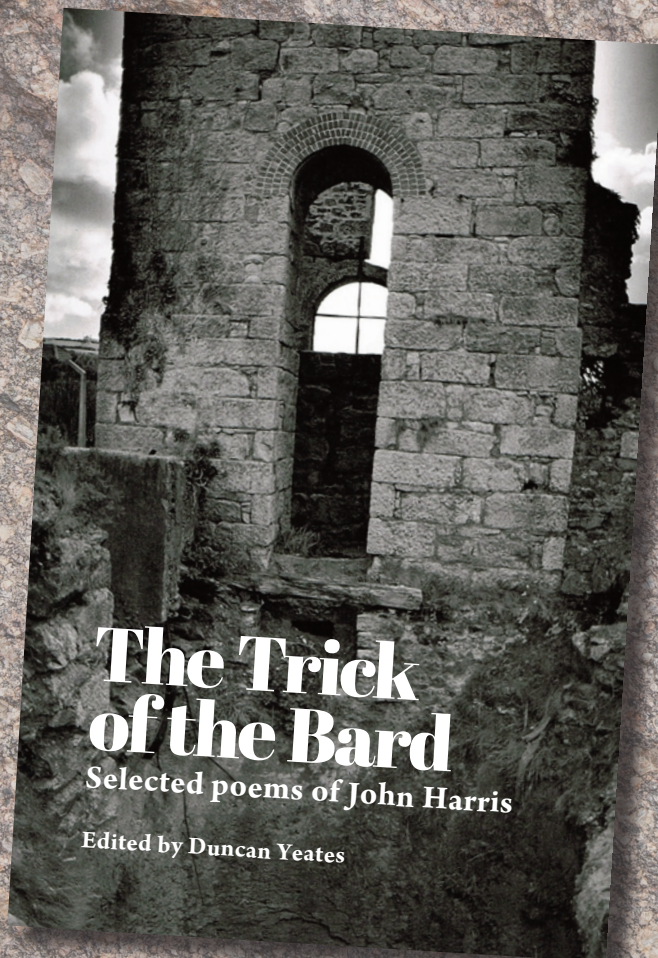


NEWS FROM THE JOHN HARRIS SOCIETY

# *Bardh*

AUTUMN 2026 No. 79



## **The Trick of the Bard**

Selected poems of John Harris

Edited by Duncan Yeates

CELEBRATING THE MINER, POET & PREACHER

## CHAIRMAN'S *Ramblings*



Adrian Mitchell

WEBSITE  
www.johnharrisociety.org.uk  
FACEBOOK  
www.facebook.com/johnharrisociety

A warm welcome to this new edition of the *Bardh*. Whether you are a new member of the John Harris Society or an existing member, we would like to thank you for your interest in the works and writing of John Harris, Cornish Miner, Poet and Preacher.

His works are a wonderful collection of writings consisting of his poetry on religious faith, family life, local people, his industrial mine working and the sublime natural Cornish environment.

I strongly encourage you to attend our birthday celebrations for John Harris on the weekend of 10 and 11 October this year. We have an outing to Cornwall Gold in Redruth, a service at Troon Methodist Church, led by the Rev Dr David Hart, and a celebration meal at Tehidy Golf Club. All are welcome.

Here at the Society we continue to promote and highlight the works of John Harris all over the county and throughout the year; I encourage you to join us at any of our planned events, or take a look at our website.

I also have exciting news! *The Trick of the Bard: Selected poems of John Harris*, written by Dr Duncan Yeates, is now available to pre-order.

It is always a privilege to be the guardians and promoters of John Harris' literary works and my heartfelt thanks go to all of the society volunteers who make this activity so pleasing and possible.

Until we meet again, may I wish you all every blessing.

Adrian

## 'Bold and expansive' brand new book of Harris poems

The picture on the front page shows the striking cover of a new book, compiled in a dedicated mission by John Harris Society committee member Duncan Yeates, who put in a gigantic amount of time and hard work to bring his ambitious vision into reality. You now have the opportunity to obtain a copy of the book, details of which are outlined below. But hurry - Duncan reports the book is selling steadily and it is a limited edition of 200 copies, of which 100 are numbered. Numbered copies are being allocated on a first come first served basis.

*The Trick of the Bard: Selected poems of John Harris* is now available to pre-order, direct from the publisher, at a price of £30, on the weblink below:

<https://francisboutle.co.uk/products/the-trick-of-the-bard/>

*The Trick of the Bard* is the first extensive selection of the poetry of John Harris since the late 19th century.

Luke Thompson says of *The Trick of the Bard*: "What a bold, expansive gathering of John Harris's poetry this collection is. Many know Harris's work for its dramatic depictions of the tin and copper mines, but we're given so much more here and for me the real treasure is in the intimate observations of life: watching the grief of a widow at prayer, or the poet reading a draft of a new poem to his wife, who pauses her evening work to listen. A terrific and thorough celebration of an often overlooked poet."

## Contacts

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Subscription fee - £15 per year  
(and other cheques) to:  
Hon treasurer  
Paul Langford  
Durlston, Penance Lane,  
Lanner, Redruth, TR16 5TL  
Or by PayPal to:  
pandglangford@gmail.com

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# Celebrating the poet's birthday in grand style

*Tony Langford*

This year's John Harris Birthday Celebrations are not far away.

They begin on Saturday, 10 October, with an afternoon at Cornwall Gold, in Redruth.

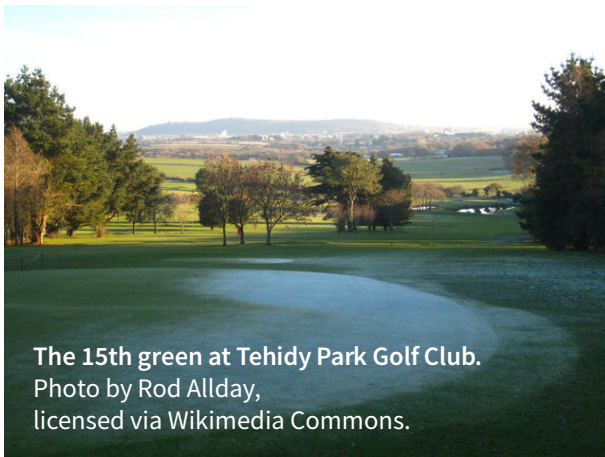
- There is no entry fee.
- See the Tolgus Tin Mill, the last working tin streaming mill in Europe.
  - Step back in time and discover the process of tin steaming and much more.
  - View the stunning Tolgus Jewellery collection,

combining heritage and contemporary Cornish designs.

- Grab some refreshment in The Cornish Pantry (this facility closes at 3.30pm).

Please meet in the Cornwall Gold car park at 1.45pm (TR16 4HN). The tour starts at 2pm.

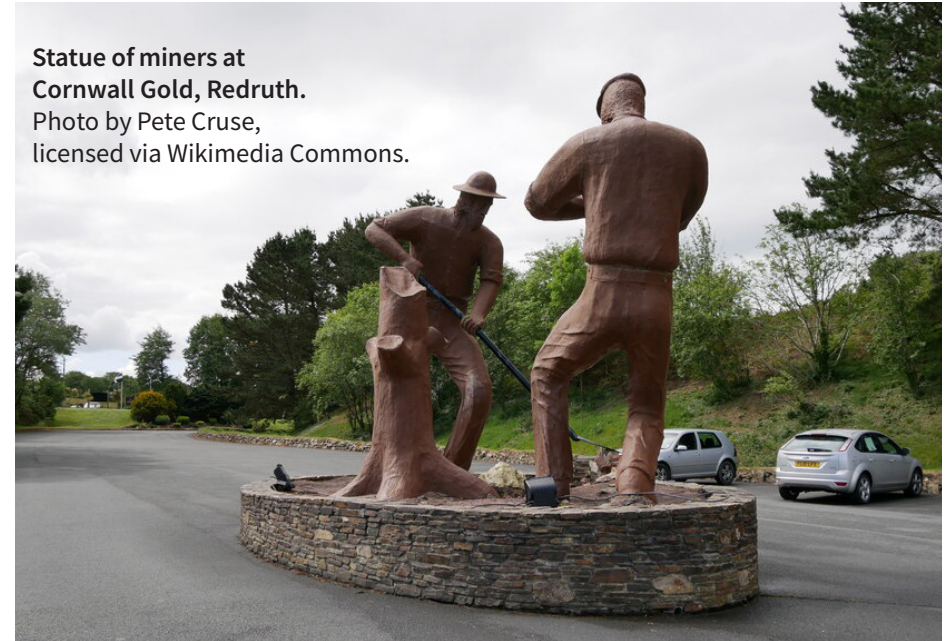
The following day, Sunday 11 October, at 10.30am, at Troon Methodist Church, there will be a service celebrating the life of John Harris, led by the Rev Dr David Hart. There is no need to book



The 15th green at Tehidy Park Golf Club.  
Photo by Rod Allday,  
licensed via Wikimedia Commons.

Statue of miners at Cornwall Gold, Redruth.

Photo by Pete Cruse,  
licensed via Wikimedia Commons.



but early arrival is recommended to get a parking space fairly close.

Following the service, please meet at 12.30 for 1pm at Tehidy Park Golf Club (TR14 OHH) for a two-course Birthday lunch in the Functions Room. The cost of the meal is £24 per person.

Payment (to the JHS) is required in advance please. Drinks can be ordered and paid for at the bar on the day.

There are two documents concerning the Birthday celebrations – a registration/booking form

and a lunch menu on which you can select your choice of food and highlight any dietary requirements.

You can make your payment direct to the John Harris Society bank account (details below) or by cheque (payable to 'The John Harris Society', in which case please add 42p to cover bank charges).

If paying directly into the bank account, the preferable option, please use the reference 'Birthday Event'.

Completed forms and menu choices to be returned to JHS Secretary,

Tony Langford, no later than Saturday, 3 October, either by email to: [tony46langford@gmail.com](mailto:tony46langford@gmail.com); or by post to: Tony Langford, St Hilary, South Downs, Redruth TR15 2NW.

**Bank details:**  
Account name: **The John Harris Society**  
Sort Code: **30-97-00**  
Account Number: **00480676**  
Bank: **Lloyds Bank plc.**

Cheques payable to: The John Harris Society, (please add 42p to cover bank charges).

# With John Harris in Falmouth (20 June 2026)



The steepness of the hill  
Told old hands to prepare  
Distant soles and toes  
For sea and sands, to spare

No effort in descending,  
To talk and listen and lubricate  
The afternoon walk of poetry  
And befriending as the Society

Followed a servant of heart  
And art secreted between  
Letters shaping words to speak  
And punctuation to indicate

Pauses and breaks between clauses  
From Killigrew Street  
To Gyllyngdune, through Quaker  
Gardens and a bardic rune,

A twist and turn of leaves, of bones,  
A twinge between sinew  
And pitch-pine Revival pew,  
Stopping periodically,

As if Ulysses seeking respite  
From downtown systems and sirens  
To allow a soul a hasty flight,  
A shoal to darken shallows,

To raise the huer's horn,  
To fly from hidden farms beneath  
Freehold, crazy paving patio,  
Tarmacadam's gypsy charms

And manicured ATCO lawn, down  
From Sinai to shatter and splinter  
In the grip of flames – 'Was it,'  
One romantic whispers before

The plaque upon the wrong house  
In the rising street – No! No!  
Not the terrace! – and look, out back,  
You can still see the studio,

The little room of practiced verse:  
'Was it Shelley's pyre, Trelawny's gift  
Of Percy's heart to Mary, the beach  
So tragically poetically alight

And the sizzle of poetry's flesh  
Upon the bone, done to a turn  
And sifted later to fill their urn,  
To be held in her mantle heart –

Was it that fire Moses found  
Into which he flung his burden down?  
In any odyssey or Saturday excursion  
A moment of sorrow, of sadness,

Of old custodians surveying  
Empires of surrendered responsibility,  
Such a backwards flash will cast  
Its free-flung glass-house stone –

At the pavilion, the music hall  
Of postcard time, the curtain call  
Of earnest rhyme, the silver band  
In courtly stand singing its village song

In a cosmopolitan Babylon,  
The princess of all towers ringing,  
Snapping tongues, averting eyes,  
Peaks of caps drawn disgustedly down,

For where the regal tiara, the bright  
crown  
Of theatre, red ridge and slattern roof  
To shelter actors from truthful skies,  
Should have swilled sweet April's rain  
Neatly, discreetly, season to season,  
From cloud to drain – there, slate to  
ground,  
Sprang couch and nettle, buddleia, moss,  
And gloss peeling from pale fascia

To accent ochre tones of rust  
Over launder's under-sided trough –  
'Wouldn't have been allowed  
To get like that back in our day!'

Then all is done in a bashful  
Half-disguised benediction  
Wrapped in oilcloth and foil  
Of a ministerial vote of thanks –

The old poet returns to ether,  
Plaques and chiselled stanzas  
Retire into the arms of lichen,  
And a kettle goes to work

With cup and caddy, a dash of milk,  
Small penance in the kitchen,  
And we settle to reflect  
On a poet's ghost over Dock and Railway

And to mutter: 'We'll not see the like,  
Not that ilk, ever again!' Evening  
Slips slowly down its slope  
Into the breast of horizon, to pain –

Perhaps a moon, half or quarter,  
Perhaps not, and a shadow  
Walking slowly over Carrick water,  
And a sailor's twist of knot –

A methody pen, ever scratching  
To find its rhyme and meter  
In the quiet of the Quaker,  
And faith laid out on gossamer paper

Between Victorian bindings,  
For scholar and gardener to exchange  
Tentative conclusions and findings  
Mulched and watered, nurtured

From Packet-borne seed in Gardens,  
Upon benches too bright –  
A garish blight of modernity! –  
Beneath the priesthood of trees –

And in a vase behind the glass  
Before the glaze of Earle's Retreat  
An echo of a poet's praise,  
An empire itching beneath our feet,

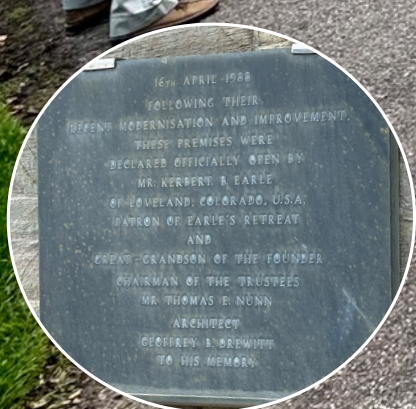
A poet's voice takes it ease  
And sings to fill this best of afternoons  
On Saturn's day of Solstice Eve,  
One of the best of all poetic days.

*Bert Biscoe*

The group, plus a feathered friend above, who flew in especially, listening to Duncan Yeates reading one of Harris's poems at Earle's Retreat.

16th APRIL 1988  
FOLLOWING THEIR  
RECENT MODERNISATION AND IMPROVEMENT,  
THESE PREMISES WERE  
DECLARED OFFICIALLY OPEN BY  
MR. KERBERT B. EARLE  
OF LOVELAND, COLORADO, U.S.A.  
PATRON OF EARLE'S RETREAT  
AND  
GRAND-GRANDSON OF THE FOUNDER  
CHAIRMAN OF THE TRUSTEES  
MR. THOMAS E. NUNN  
ARCHITECT  
GEOFFREY B. BREWITT  
TO HIS MEMORY

# Taking a summer stroll in Falmouth



# A sojourn of peaceful delight



*Bert Biscoe*

On Saturday 20 June, the John Harris Society quietly arrived in Falmouth. Congregating in Killigrew Street to admire the blue plaque affixed to a house next door to one of the miner poet's three homes during his pastoral career in Falmouth, the afternoon of poems and narrative began.

The group of about 20 JHS members clambered uphill to visit the Earle's Retreat before descending again to meet horticulturalist Simon Miles. He had begun his life as a gardener in Falmouth, and was, for a time, responsible for Fox Rosehill Gardens – one of those gardens assembled by the Fox family, as their skippers brought home seeds, cutting and samples.

As Simon said, every gardener adds their particular interest to any garden.

Tony Langford described the links of John Harris with various Quakers, including the Foxes and John Gill of Penryn.

Then it was on to Gyllyngdune to view the large plaque engraved with stanzas of John Harris' poem, *Gyllyngdune*. More poems; more reflections; more biography; more good-humoured and insightful conversation – all under a blue sky and in the spirit of keeping alive one of the most interesting and passionate poetic, pastoral and cherished lives of any Cornish artist.

Thanks to all participants, especially Simon Miles and of course to those Langford boys Paul and Tony.

A sojourn of peaceful delight in an otherwise uncertain world.



All Falmouth photos by Pol Hodge and Steve Crossman.

Clockwise from top left: Duncan Yeates reading while standing below the plaque in Killigrew Street; Duncan again, at Earle's Retreat; Simon Miles, delivering his expert knowledge on Fox Rosehill Gardens to the group; Joanne Yeates reading in the gardens; Tony Langford giving information on the Harris connection with Gyllyngdune Gardens.





Clockwise from top left: Simon Miles showing points of interest to the group in Fox Rosehill Gardens; The plaque in Gyllyngdune Gardens which contains part of Harris's *Gyllyngdune* poem; Paul Langford talks to the group by the Gyllyngdune Gardens plaque; A seating area in Fox Rosehill Gardens.



## *Gyllyngdune*

*How pleasant here at cool of day,  
Along the winding walks to stray,  
Where ebbs and flows the murmuring main,  
Whose music fills the woodbine lane,  
High on the beach with shingles strewn,  
As rise thy vespers, Gyllyngdune!*

*It is not meet to pass through life  
For ever in the city's strife,  
Where noise and clamour bear the sway;  
Then, weary worker, come away;  
Its gentle calm shall cheer thee soon,  
Though thou drop tears at Gyllyngdune!*

*And old Pendennis on his height  
Looks down well pleased on such a sight.  
There stands he like a warrior bold.  
Nor heeds he heat nor heeds he cold,  
From burst of morn till night's dark noon,  
To guard my lovely Gyllyngdune.*

*Dear home of love! Sweet haunt of peace!  
Here weary life's dark bickerings cease.  
A sacred song is on the air  
Which lulls to rest the storm of care,  
And lifts the heart to heaven's high noon;  
My beautiful, my Gyllyngdune!*

# A tribute to Joan Biscoe

Joan Biscoe, who served for many years on the committee of the JHS, died peacefully at Wellington in Somerset in May 2026 at the age of 99.

Born in Toronto in 1927, Joan and her mother returned to Cornwall, to Redruth. Joan was to remain in Cornwall for the rest of her life, fighting for Cornish people and Cornish culture. Her interests were wide, including sea angling, singing and travelling. Highly intelligent and articulate, Joan became involved in many organisations, one of which was the John Harris Society.

And what a difference she made. Highly intelligent and articulate, Joan brought her considerable talents and wisdom to the committee. Displaying seemingly boundless energy, Joan constantly came up with imaginative and thoughtful ways to raise funds and promote the life and work of John Harris. A gifted reader of poetry, Joan was always willing to read the work of Harris. This included contributing to the BBC Radio 4 pro-



Joan with her Honorary Life Membership certificate.

gramme on John Harris in its *Poetry Please* series. Following a pasty lunch in Balwest Chapel Hall on a blazing, hot day, the initial recordings were made on Tregonning Hill. However, the sensitive microphones picked up the slight breeze and had to be recorded again in Balwest Chapel car park. Joan was not the slightest bit fazed by this, reading with the same assuredness as she had a short time before.

Caroline Palmer, who also served on the JHS committee for many years, says of Joan: "She had a

great sense of humour and was fun to be with". In appreciation of many years of outstanding service, Joan was made an Honorary Life Member of the John Harris Society in 2023.

A celebratory Memorial service for Joan was held on 7 July at St Stythians Parish Church, at which the JHS was represented. It was a fitting farewell to Joan, who had championed many causes and inspired countless people in her full life. Thank you Joan.

*Tony Rangford*



**JOHN HARRIS**  
1820-1884

**The John Harris Society aims to publish this newsletter twice a year, free to members. We welcome articles from you – anything connected with Cornwall, John Harris, poetry, including other poets and Cornish life.**

## the miner the poet the preacher

John Harris was born in 1820 at Six Chimneys on Bolenowe Carn, near Camborne, the eldest of 11 children. Largely self-educated - he started school when he was six or seven years old, before finishing at the age of nine - John had an insatiable appetite for reading from his early years.

On his ninth birthday he started work, briefly as a ploughboy, then for a tin-streamer operating in Forest Moor.

When he was 13, John went to work underground at Dolcoath. He was to ply this arduous occupation for 24 years, seeing the famous mine pass from copper to tin.

Poetry, or verse-making as he called it, had been part of John's life since his first attempts at rhyme at school when he was just eight years old.

Whatever he was doing, verses were forming in his mind and he scribbled these down whenever and wherever and on whatever he could. He used the clean side of cast off labelled tea wrappers, and when no paper was available, would scratch his poems on slate, using a sharp pointed nail.

In his mining days his miner's 'hard' hat was sometimes used for this purpose. When no ink was available, he used blackberry juice.

He fitted his writing into a busy life that, apart from his work and his family responsibilities, included being a Methodist lay preacher and a Sunday School teacher.

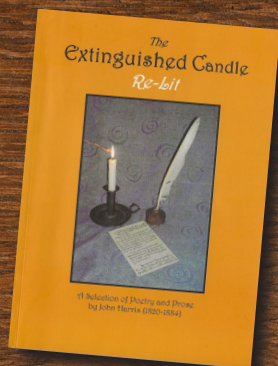
John Harris left Dolcoath in 1857 to take up an appointment as a Scripture Reader at Falmouth, a post which he threw himself into with enthusiasm.

He continued writing poetry, and began writing peace tracts and became a Quaker.

John Harris died in 1884 and lies buried in Trelathan Churchyard.

*Tony Rangford*

# Books & DVDs on sale



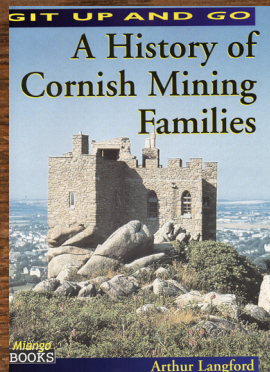
*The Extinguished Candle Re-Lit* is a large selection of poetry and prose by Harris, published in 2009 by The John Harris Society.

**PRICE: £5**

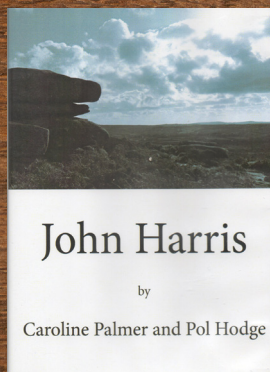


The two DVDs: *John Harris* and *Some Scenes from the life of John Harris* are combined in this DVD. To save on postage this DVD will be sent without a box. Running time 16 min 44 sec.

**PRICE: £7**



Published in 2002, this book by Arthur Langford, a great nephew of the poet, catalogues the lives of Harris' forebears from 1743 and his siblings. **PRICE: £7**



Created in 2004 by Caroline Palmer & Pol Hodge, this DVD was filmed by Leo Phillips, of Cornwall Media Resource, on Carn Brea and at Cornish Engines in Pool. Copper and Tin, adapted from a Harris poem by Sue Farmer, was sung by Kontekh Karrek Community.

**PRICE: £5**

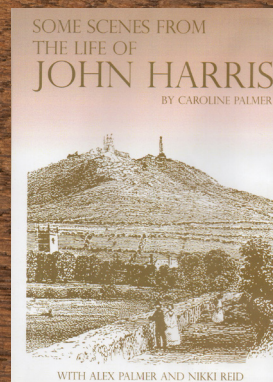
MAWLA, NANCEKUE  
AND MORE ABOUT  
PORTHTOWAN AND TOWAN CROSS



CAROLINE PALMER

Caroline Palmer's book, published by Pen and Ink, covers topics from farming to family life, from mining to Methodism and much else.

**PRICE: £9.99**



The creation of Caroline Palmer, this DVD was filmed locally and takes in various aspects of the poet's life. The film won Best Documentary at Buxton Film Festival in 2011 and was shown at the Cornwall Film Festival in the same year.

**PRICE: £5**