

2010 - 2023



# Live encounters

YOUNG POETS & WRITERS

FREE ONLINE MAGAZINE FROM VILLAGE EARTH  
OCTOBER 2023

A close-up portrait of Eileen Casey, a woman with short dark hair, wearing a patterned jacket and an orange scarf. She is smiling slightly and looking towards the camera. The background is a blurred wall with faint text.

EILEEN CASEY  
*Children's River Poems*





©Mark Ulyseas

Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.



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Live Encounters is a not-for-profit free online magazine that was founded in 2009 in Bali, Indonesia. It showcases some of the best writing from around the world. Poets, writers, academics, civil & human/animal rights activists, academics, environmentalists, social workers, photographers and more have contributed their time and knowledge for the benefit of the readers of:

*Live Encounters Magazine (2010), Live Encounters Poetry & Writing (2016), Live Encounters Young Poets & Writers (2019) and now, Live Encounters Books (August 2020).*

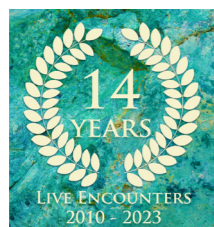
We are appealing for donations to pay for the administrative and technical aspects of the publication. **Please help by donating any amount for this just cause as events are threatening the very future of Live Encounters.**

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

Mark Ulyseas  
Publisher/Editor

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OCTOBER 2023

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Clár Éire Ildánach  
Creative Ireland  
Programme



Acknowledgements are due: **Karen Grey**, Creative Ireland Officer, County Offaly Arts.

**Niall Crofton**, Principal Saint Brendan's Primary School for Boys, Birr and **Barbara Hanamy**, Principal Mercy Primary School for Girls, Birr and to the teachers in both schools for their enthusiasm.

Gratitude also to photographers and artists who feature here.

To *Bird Watch Ireland*. Their generosity with photographs is most appreciated.

Special thanks to *Mark Ulyseas, Live Encounters*. Without his support, poetry would be all the poorer.





Born in Birr, County Offaly, Eileen Casey is now based in South Dublin. Her fiction, non-fiction and poetry are widely published in anthologies by Dedalus, New Island, Arlen House, The Stinging Fly, Poetry Ireland Review, Orbis, among others. A Patrick Kavanagh Fellowship recipient (poetry), she is also a Sunday Tribune/Hennessy award winner (emerging fiction). *Birr Town Stills*, a collaboration with photographer Jackie Lynch was commissioned by County Offaly Arts for Culture Night 2023. Previous collaborations include Visual Artist Emma Barone, Composer Fiona Linnane and Canadian academic, visual artist and writer, Jeanne Cannizzo. *Bog Treasure* (Arlen House, 2021), Casey's sixth poetry collection, received a development award from The Arts Council, An Comhairle Ealaíonn. A TAP (Teacher/Artist Partnership) practitioner, she works with primary school and secondary school children and young adults. She was Writer-in-Residence in Stradbally Arts Centre, Bealtaine, 2023 and currently facilitating *The Elements of Fiction* there. *River Songs* (poetry themed on the rivers of the midlands, awarded by Creative Ireland 2022) is due out.

## EILEEN CASEY

### CHILDREN'S RIVER POEMS

I grew up in the Midlands town of Birr, County Offaly at the dead centre of Ireland. Flowed under the bridge at the bottom of High Street (where I lived), the Camcor river back-dropped my childhood and subsequent journey into young adult. To this day, I pass over that bridge countless times, hardly ever failing to look down upon waters, tipped with silver in sunlight, bronzed after winter floods. I also like how a river isn't static, how it flows onwards towards its destiny.

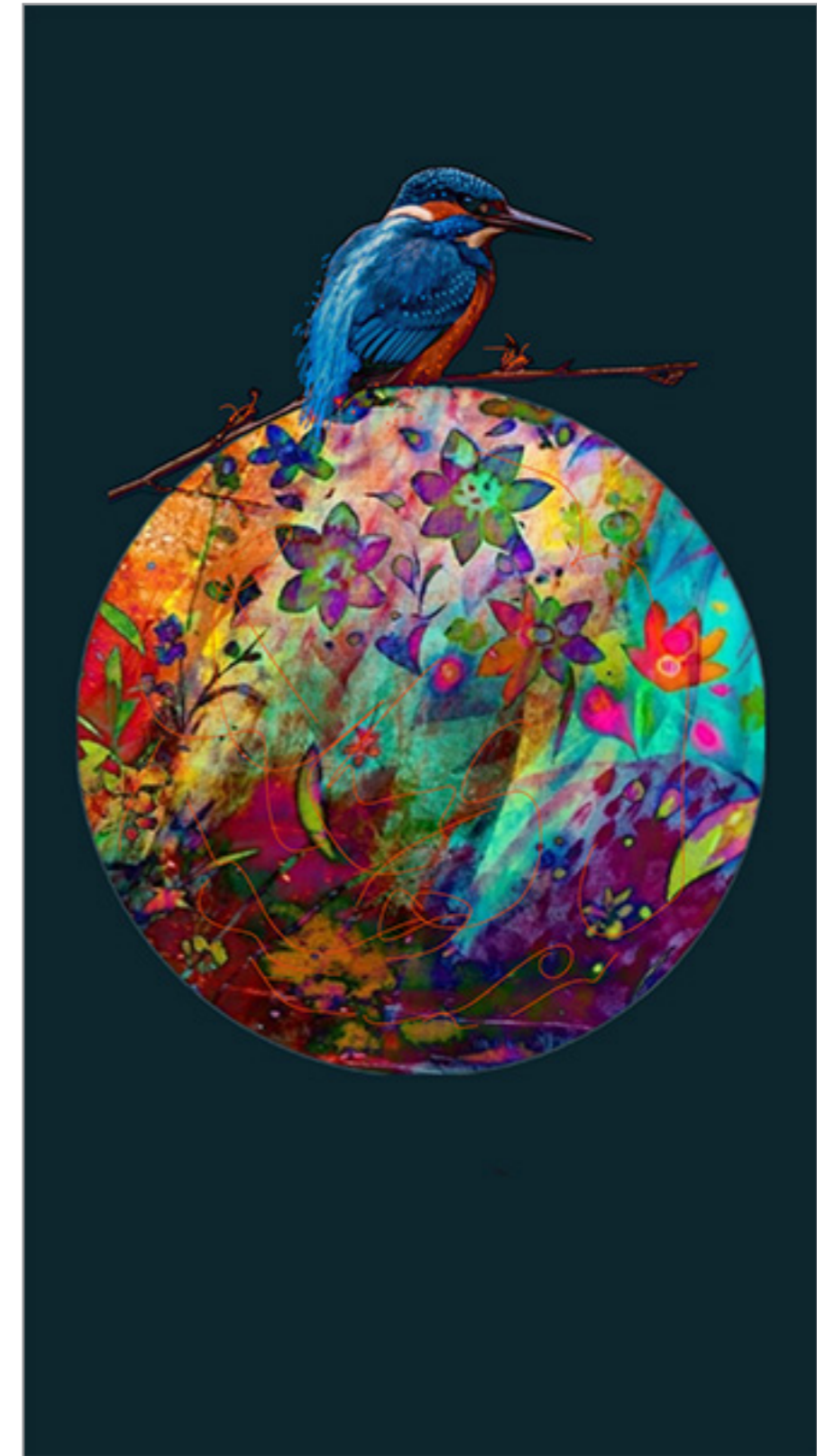
The Camcor attracts river birds and river flora, the natural world resplendent throughout each season. In summertime I walked into this river, wearing plastic sandals, protection against the stony floor. As I grew older, I played with friends on the Mill Island nearby or generally just 'hung out' on the river bank. I attended The Mercy Convent Primary School, situated right alongside The Camcor. On warm days we'd sit by the railings and I'd sing pop songs, the lyrics of which made whichever nun was on yard duty, dip her head with embarrassment. I of course, hadn't a clue what I was singing! In a later poem ('Schooldays'), I imagine my song notes drifting over the railings, all the way down the river right up to the bottom of High Street hill. There, perhaps, my mother hears them as she goes to the town to shop. Or perhaps those notes are swallowed up by a croneen, the fish of Birr, a trout like fish that comes over from Lough Derg to spawn in the Camcor. After all, anything is possible in a poem. My schooldays were generally happy. My brothers too spent many happy hours fishing at the Camcor, rarely coming home empty handed.

Eileen Casey. Photo credit: Lynda Tavakoli.



Earlier this year, I received a Creative Ireland Award, to write a sequence of poems 'River Songs' about the rivers in the Midlands. Through this Award, I returned to Mercy Primary school, not only as an ex-student but as a writer. I wanted the children to see that writing could provide a worthwhile life choice. I also wanted to talk about the river that runs right beside their school; how it impacts on them or indeed, if they have even given the river much thought. I wanted them to know how privileged they are to attend school with so much of the natural world going on around them. It was an awakening of sorts for the children. Often, what's familiar holds little attraction but together, we looked at the many facets a river can provide to the imagination. I also visited Saint Brendan's Primary School, the school my own brothers attended. At that time, Saint Brendan's could be reached by 'hopping' the wall at the end of a field right behind our house in High Street.

Both schools were responsive to language elements and how to approach a poem. We explored simple forms, haiku, cinquain and devices such as kennings. Children are the best poets in my view. They have that wonderful sense of freedom when choosing an image or a descriptive phrase. The children in Mercy Primary are aged 11 – 12 years, also the age group of the boys in Saint Brendan's Primary.



Kingfisher, artwork by Emma Barone.



Eileen Casey, Mercy Primary, Birr.

## MALLARD

The duck is colourful,  
his head is an emerald.  
Rain to him sounds  
like water hitting  
the ground hard.  
Camcor River curves  
like a Swan's neck.  
So many river birds,  
so many rivers.  
But only one Camcor.

**Billy Carroll**

## EMERALD-BLUE FEATHERS

The mallard's head is an emerald green.  
Heron has three toes to the front  
one to the back. They help him  
walk in mud, he doesn't stick.  
He's not a stick-in-the-mud!  
Makes him 'goofy' looking.

I wonder if there are blue mallards?  
In some blue (ish) place. Mallard Sky  
Blue or the colour of an iced lolly.  
A blue frozen drink, what river  
becomes in winter...for dipping  
birds like dippers. Wagtails. Herons.  
Swans. Ducks. Kingfishers.

**Ryan Kelly**





Mallard. Photo credit: Richard T. Mills.



## FLOWING

The river is flowing  
always growing.  
The heron looks like  
it's on stilts.  
The mallard's colours –  
so flamboyant.  
When winter arrives, the Camcor  
becomes a captive to the ice.  
A prisoner of the weather.  
it can't run so fast  
and it feels cold.  
The fish don't freeze,  
they keep on swimming.  
But they must feel the drop  
in temperature.  
Perhaps they grow  
an extra skin?  
Or shrivel up and hibernate  
under a mossy stone  
until spring comes.

**Conall Smith**

## THE CAMCOR RIVER

The Camcor is a fish carrier.  
It's a bank supporter. In rain, river  
sounds like it's going down a drain.  
Or a child laughing.  
Glug Glug. Gurgle, Gurgle.  
The river has lots of different sounds.  
Angry rushing  
Gentle slow  
Shy run behind the rocks.  
Hiding in the reeds.  
River water running down like beads.

**Ryan Kelly**



Mercy Primary School, Birr. Photo credit: Eileen Casey.



## HANGING OUT

I like the river, hanging out  
with friends. Lying on the grass,  
eating popcorn or crisps.  
Swimming in the water  
shaking out  
like my pet dog  
water flying everywhere.

**Adam Feighery**

## WATERFALL

The Heron sits on the waterfall  
of spring.  
He walks down the waterfall  
in summer.  
In winter the heron works harder  
breaking the ice to catch his fish.  
He never goes hungry.  
When the ice breaks  
river twists and turns  
towards spring,  
gets a nice, still rest  
through summer.

**Callum Rock**





Camcor River Frozen. Photo credit: Tina Claffey.



## RIVER POEM

Rivers are so happy, currents  
so very strong  
sometimes.  
Waterfall so beautiful.

**Sarah Rothwell**

## RIVER WEATHER

Cold. Camcor River  
silvery fish swim in your  
reflection of Kingfisher blue.  
River songs, so sweet and true.

**Saoirse Lally**



Work in progress, Mercy Primary, Birr. Photo credit: Eileen Casey.



## LOCATION

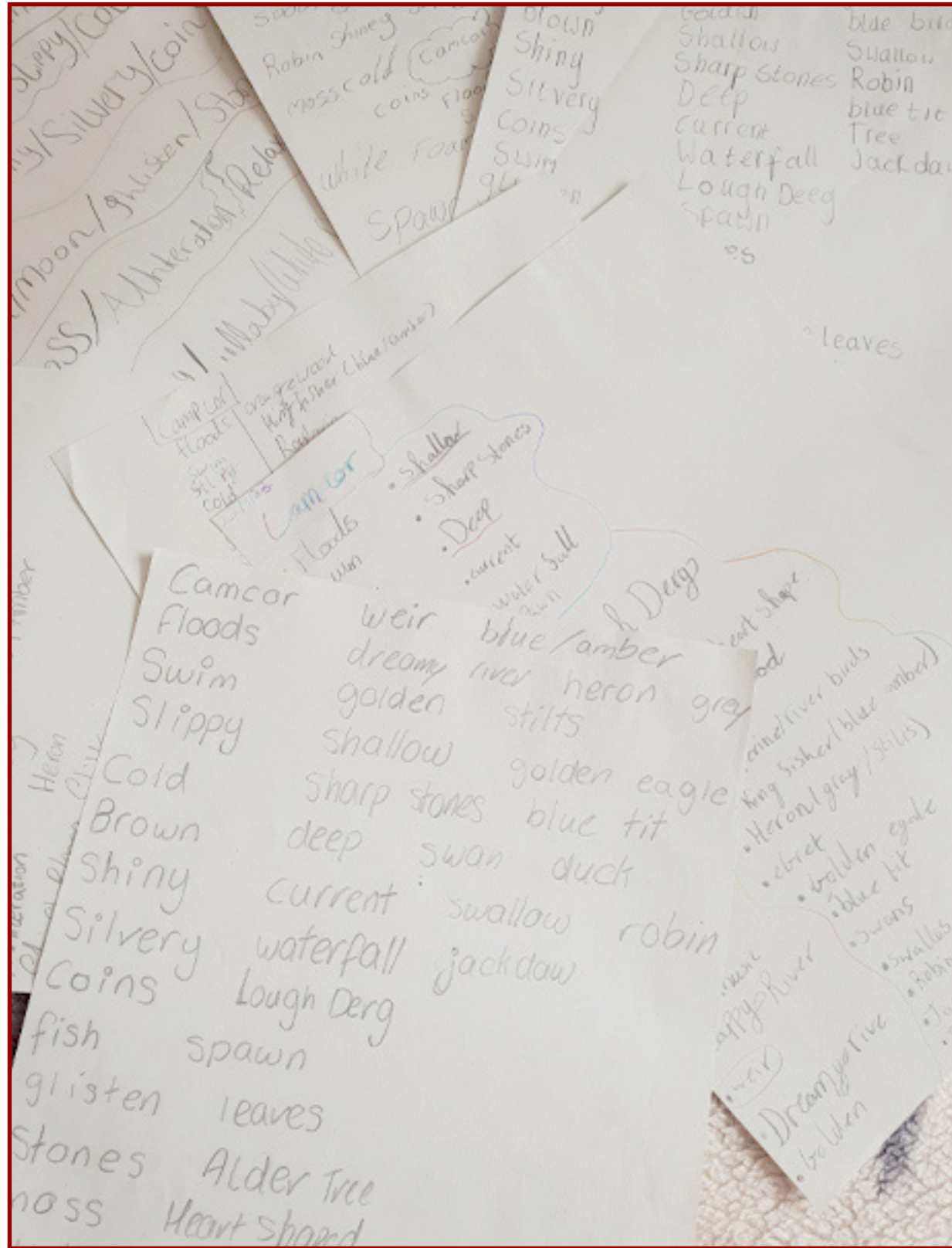
I can find the mallard in Birr Castle.  
He lies on the grassy bank  
or swims in the lake  
surrounded by reeds.  
He glides and dips.  
The male mallard is green  
female is brown.  
I like the sound of the lake,  
it sounds very calming  
and peaceful.  
The mallards like it too  
or else they would fly away.

**Logann King**

## DEPTH

Shallow in the summer.  
Deep in the winter,  
Camcor is always changing  
growing or slowing  
like grass needing mowing.  
When water gets too high  
it spills over the bank  
flooding the grass.  
But Camcor is always changing.  
Like me!

**Michael Conneely**



## CINQUAINS

Dipper  
 Dipping brown bird  
 Sitting by riverside  
 Eating insects from the river  
 Dipper

**Ruby Richardson**

It's small  
 Turquoise colour  
 Amber breast; kingfisher  
 Nests on the river bank hollows  
 Feathered

**Ruby Richardson**

Word Pool, Mercy Convent. Photo credit: Eileen Casey.



## HAIKUS

A black moonlight sky  
River glistening with light  
During the dark midnight

**Ruby Richardson**

The Camcor River  
White foam good enough to drink  
In summertime glints

**Alisha Molloy Argue**

The fish swim with grace  
Leaving a white foamy trace  
Ending the great day.

**Ruby Richardson**

The Camcor River  
In summertime, it will shine  
Off the lovely sun!

**Madison Lynskey**

Summer is leaving  
Alder leaves soon start to fall  
By the Camcor River.  
By Sarah Rothwell

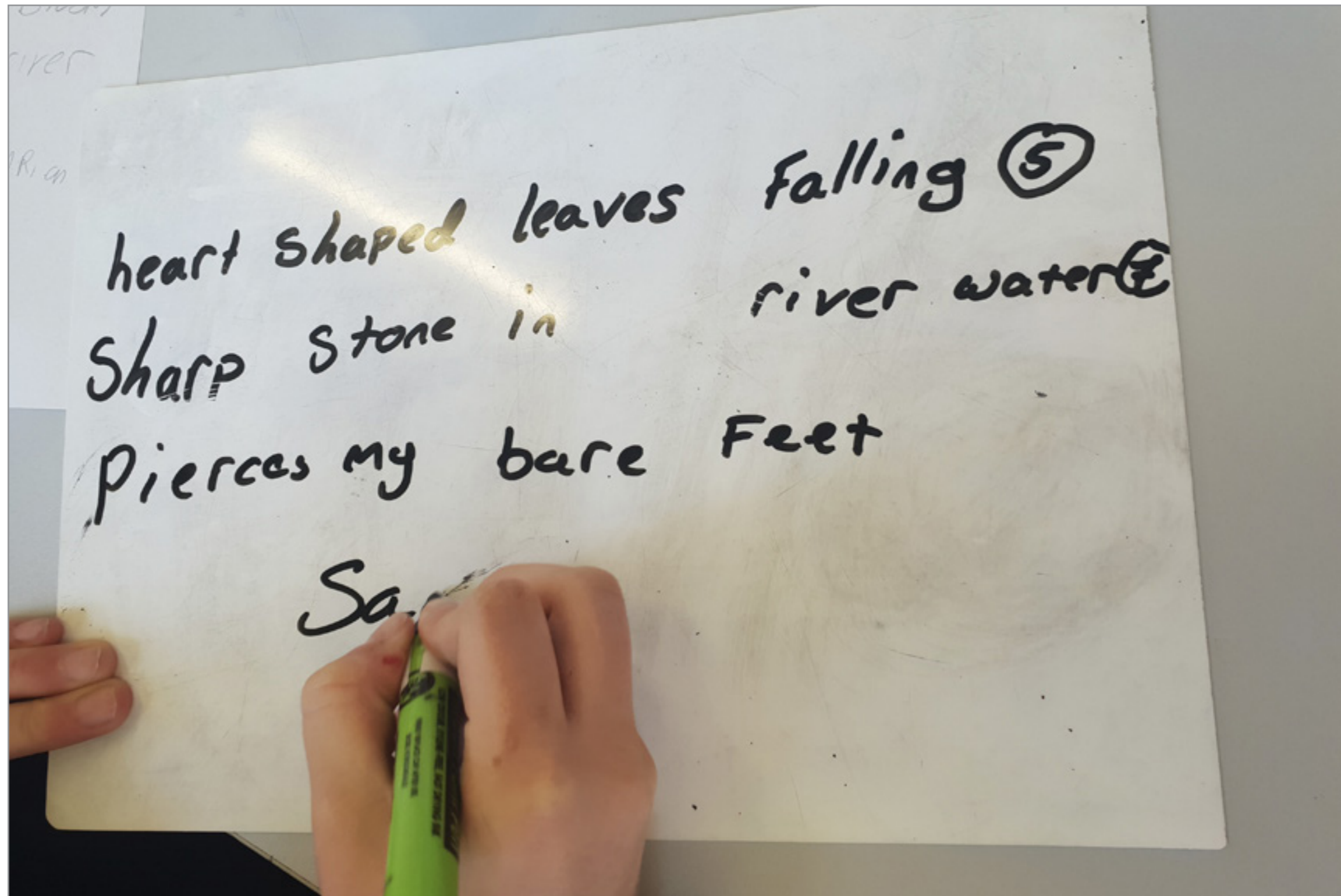
**Keeley Byrne**

Shallow to the eye,  
Heron stands still on long stilts  
Bird shape reflection

**Ella Brewer**

Gold Dreamy River  
Mossy stones in the water  
Fallen leaves floating

**Kacie Parsons**



Croneen on Camcor waterfall. Photo credit: Tina Claffey.



## WHAT LIES BENEATH

Silvery coins on river floor  
heart shaped leaves from Alder fall  
mingle with the river's treasure  
coins and leaves. Soft and hard.  
Round and heartshape.

**Kacie Parsons**

## ALDER

Down by the Camcor  
Alder Tree stands.  
River runs on  
stones line the river floor  
leaves cover earth  
mingles with the river  
when winds blow.  
Oh how beautiful!

**Jane Liffey**



## KINGFISHER

You swallow fish whole  
nest in river bank  
shy bird  
rarely seen.  
Where you been?

**Sarah Rothwell**

Grey Heron. Photo credit: Shay Connolly.





Saint Brendan's Primary School. Photo credit: Eileen Casey.

## ALL THE BIG FISH

Swim very fast,  
all the small fish dart and twist  
like silver dancers  
bright lights  
under water.

**Alexa Ciobanu (past pupil)**

## CHRISTMAS WATERFALL

It was one silent morning  
Camcor waterfall crashed down  
under Saint Brendan's bridge.  
Everyone cheered.  
It was a special day.

**Millie-Eve Cooney (past pupil)**



## SWAN

Elegant, white swan  
floating through the night  
ghostlike  
among the reeds  
gliding in and out  
staring at the moon.

**Maisie Murdock (past pupil)**

## SWALLOW

The Swallow is an acrobat in flight.  
Dips and dives morning or night  
all the way from Africa  
then back again. Summer's end.  
Its beady eyes will never  
see the winter beauty of the Camcor.  
Or taste with its little beak  
refreshing air from the waterfall  
or splish and splash of the rocks  
tumbling in.  
Oh little swallow, far traveller  
what if you took a small flight  
to our home river and experienced  
the magnificence of winter  
at the Camcor?

**Millie-Eve Cooney (past pupil)**



Saint Brendan's Primary School. Photo credit: Eileen Casey.



## HAIKU

Sleek pretty otter  
Sliding in The Camcor river  
In the starry night

**Millie-Eve Cooney (past pupil)**

## CRONEEN

Baby croneen sleep  
in Camcor river's cold waters  
during the night time.  
Croneen is the special fish of Birr.

**Odre Kairyte (past pupil)**

## BUTTERFLIES

They fly high. All through day and summer.  
All around the place. Weaving in the trees.  
Gliding over water. Spreading colour.

**Ella Brewer (Past pupil)**



Photo credit: Mark Ulyseas



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