



## Poetry Masterclass: Basil Bunting's Briggflatts – "laying the tune frankly on the air"

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**Start date** 1 September 2017

**End date** 4 September 2017

**Venue** Madingley Hall  
Madingley  
Cambridge

**Tutor** Roger Garfitt

**Course code** 1718NRX004

**Director of Programmes** Emma Jennings

**For further information on this course, please contact** Public Programme Co-ordinator, Clare Kerr  
[clare.kerr@ice.cam.ac.uk](mailto:clare.kerr@ice.cam.ac.uk) or 01223 746237

**To book** See: [www.ice.cam.ac.uk](http://www.ice.cam.ac.uk) or telephone 01223 746262

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### Tutor biography

A freelance writer ever since he won the Gregory Award in 1974, Roger Garfitt has been Poetry Critic of *London Magazine*, Editor of *Poetry Review*, Writing Fellow at UEA and Royal Literary Fund Fellow at Swansea University. The CD of *In All My Holy Mountain*, his celebration in poetry & jazz of the life and work of Mary Webb, recorded with the John Williams Octet to a score by Nikki Iles, was hailed in *The Guardian* as "an imaginative and illuminating addition to the genre." It is available from [www.restringingthelyre.wordpress.com](http://www.restringingthelyre.wordpress.com) and he will be performing it live at the King's Lynn Poetry Festival, using a dub track. His *Selected Poems* is published by Carcanet. His memoir, *The Horseman's Word*, was shortlisted for the PEN/Ackerley Prize and is a Vintage paperback.

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## Course programme

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### Friday

Please plan to arrive between 14.00 and 15:30. You can meet other course members at Tea, which will be served in the Terrace bar at 16:00. Tea and coffee making facilities are available in the study bedrooms.

16:00	Tea
16:30 – 18:00	Opening seminar on Part One of <i>Briggflatts</i> , beginning with Basil Bunting's own reading of it from the CD.  Please bring two of your own poems for photocopying for the Evening Readaround.
19:00	Dinner
20:30 – 22:00	Evening Readaround: a chance for the students to showcase their own work and get to know each other. We will set up a book table and you are welcome to bring copies of your own books and pamphlets to sell.
22:00	Terrace bar open for informal discussion

### Saturday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	Individual Tutorials and Work on the First Writing Assignment: you are welcome to bring a folder of existing work to discuss with the tutor.
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	Individual Tutorials and Work on the First Writing Assignment.
13:00	Lunch
14:00 – 16:00	Free
16:00 – 16:30	Tea
16:30 – 18:00	Seminar on Part Two of <i>Briggflatts</i> , beginning with Bunting's own reading of it. Please bring your work on the First Writing Assignment ready for photocopying.
18:00 – 18:30	Free
18:30 – 20:00	Dinner
20:00 – 21:30	Group Workshop on the First Writing Assignment.
21:30	Terrace bar open for informal discussion

## Sunday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	Individual Tutorials and Work on the Second Writing Assignment.
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	Individual Tutorials and Work on the Second Writing Assignment.
12:45	Lunch
14:00 – 16:00	Free
16:00 – 16:30	Tea
16:30 – 18:00	Seminar on Part Three of <i>Briggflatts</i> and a discussion of its difficulties.
18:00 – 18:30	Free
18:30 – 20:00	Dinner
20:00 – 21:30	Seminar on the concluding sections of <i>Briggflatts</i> and on two late lyrics, 'Stones trip Coquet burn' and 'Such syllables flicker out of grass', for which I will supply photocopies.
21:30	Terrace bar open for informal discussion

## Monday

07:30	Breakfast. Please have your work on the Second Writing Assignment ready for photocopying.
09:00 – 10:30	Group Workshop on the Second Writing Assignment.
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	Group Workshop on the Second Writing Assignment. This is also a chance to discuss any problem poems you may have brought with you and explore any difficulties thrown up in the course of the assignments. We will conclude by looking at Bunting's remarkable late lyric, 'Now we've no hope of going back, cutter', for which I will supply a photocopy.
13:00	Lunch

**The course will disperse after lunch**

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## Course syllabus

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### Aims:

To offer a reading of *Briggflatts* and of Bunting's late lyrics that pays particular attention to their sound patterning and to their extraordinary verbal economy.

To give students the chance to develop "a flexible, unrepitive line" in their own writing.

### Content:

A study of *Briggflatts*, informed by Bunting's own reading on the CD supplied with the book, by a prior viewing of Peter Bell's film on the DVD supplied with the book, and with a prior reading of *A Strong Song Tows Us*, the biography by Richard Burton.

### Presentation of the course:

Close reading and discussion in the seminars of *Briggflatts* and of three late lyrics that represent a further refinement of Bunting's mastery of sound patterning.

Two writing assignments, to be undertaken in close consultation with the tutor in individual tutorials, and offered for friendly and supportive discussion in the group workshops.

### Outcomes:

**As a result of the course, within the constraints of the time available, students should be able to:**

Have an enhanced appreciation of the sound patterning and the verbal economy of *Briggflatts* and Bunting's late lyrics.

Have an initial understanding of the complex relationship between Bunting's biography and *Briggflatts*, which is presented as an autobiography.

Have an appreciation of what is entailed in the modernist commitment to developing a "flexible, unrepitive line", both in theory and in their own practice as poets.

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## Reading and resources list

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Author	Title	Publisher
Basil Bunting	Briggflatts	Bloodaxe, 2009
Richard Burton	A Strong Song Tows Us: The Life of Basil Bunting	Infinite Ideas, 2014

Do take the chance to watch Peter Bell's film on the DVD supplied with the book and to listen to Bunting's own reading on the CD.

The biography is fascinating in its detail and focuses on *Briggflatts* as the achievement that finally secured Bunting's place as one of the founding poets of Modernism.

### Further Reading:

For further reading I would recommend *The Poems of Basil Bunting*, edited by Don Share, Faber, 2016, a critical edition that comes with an introduction, detailed notes and a history of the text with textual variants.

### Website addresses

<https://www.bloodaxebooks.com/>    <https://www.poetrybooks.co.uk>  
<https://www.amazon.com/Strong-Song-Tows-Us-Bunting/dp/1935212508>

**Note** Students of the Institute of Continuing Education are entitled to 20% discount on books published by Cambridge University Press (CUP) which are purchased at the Press bookshop, 1 Trinity Street, Cambridge (Mon-Sat 9am – 5:30pm, Sun 11am – 5pm). A letter or email confirming acceptance on to a current Institute course should be taken as evidence of enrolment.

*Information correct as of:*    20 July 2017