

Camping Soup

Conor Whelan

Outside stations we sit on our tents and rucksacks
forming fleeting camps with nothing pitched
then haul gear onto shoulders, over spilling carrier bags by our
sides
and we're off to clog trains and fill racks
later get looks as we squidge on the bus
like Polyfiller, before cork-popping out the other end.
On the long walk from the bus stop
– when those not scared of cows laugh at those that are –
I am glad that I am not the one
who brought the gas canisters, though without them
there'd be no baked beans.
Once Galignite Bob plucked a tin from the fire!
Fire's my game, taking a hatchet to the woods
only fetching dead stuff, sticks for kindling
then stacking a tepee or making a line against a log.
The fire under the Milky Way, which the smoke
rises to join, makes us older than we are
by a hundred thousand years.
Or if it rains we'll tell our horror tales in the tent.

Of course I've missed out pitching the tents
that starts so well until the wind has its way,
and what you have to do when you need the loo.
But those take second place to the glow worms
on the dunes, the phosphorescence keeping company
with the moon on the midnight water.