

Brownsbank Bulletin

Promoting creative writing in South Lanarkshire from Hugh MacDiarmid's last home, Brownsbank Cottage

And Finally...

The post of South Lanarkshire's Writer in Residence finishes on St Andrew's Day, 2010. The Fellowship was inaugurated in 1993, when Edwin Morgan planted a rowan in the Brownsbank Cottage garden at the start of James Robertson's term, reconstituting the great Scottish poet Hugh MacDiarmid's former home as a centre of literary activity.

The Fellowship was supported by the Scottish Arts Council, now Creative Scotland, initially with match funding from Clydesdale District Council, which became part of South Lanarkshire Council. The Fellowship could no longer continue when South Lanarkshire Council withdrew their financial contribution, leaving the Fellowship to look for alternative funding.

A vigorous campaign was mounted and a petition was signed by prominent Scottish writers, but the match funding from council was discontinued "as part of the savings programme agreed by the Council's Executive Committee."

James Robertson was succeeded by Matthew Fitt, Gerry Cambridge, Aonghas Macneacail, Linda Cracknell, Tom Bryan and Carl MacDougall.

In 2003, William-John Deerin wrote in *Stepping Into the Avalanche*, an anthology which contained work by each of the previous fellows and was published to commemorate the Fellowship's 10th anniversary:

"It is hard to believe that a decade has passed since the Fellowship's first writer drew ink by the side of a roaring fire. Now six have been resident. Each has brought distinction to the post. Each has added a layer of creative substance that has enhanced and developed the Fellowship's objectives. Their creativity and community support has laid a solid foundation for other writers who will take up residency in the next decade and on."



Edwin Morgan planting the Brownsbank rowan on May 8, 1993 to inaugurate the Hugh MacDiarmid Fellowship.

Aspects of the residency will be taken up by South Lanarkshire Writers Forum, a new group that will co-ordinate the work of individual writers' groups, bring them together for more formal joint workshops, events and publications. The Forum is organised along the lines of similar associations that already exist in

Borders and East/Midlothian Regions and have been very successful.

One of the Forum's early tasks will be to see the third and subsequent issues of the *Brownsbank Broadsheet* into publication. The second issue is ready and the South Lanarkshire Arts Development Team will continue the *Broadsheet* distribution and aid in publication.

Biggar Writers Come to Light

No one is quite sure how long Biggar writers have been going or how the group started. What is known is that none of the original members are now active in the group.

They used to meet at Brownsbank Cottage - in the shed an admirer built as MacDiarmid's work space cum scriptorium - and on winter nights in the cottage itself. Then, as numbers grew, the group moved to their present home in Biggar Municipal Hall.

And though individual members were and still are widely published, for some reason Biggar Writers never did what many groups see as their first duty - published an anthology.

This omission is being remedied and the first Biggar Writers' Group anthology has been prepared with prose and poetry by 16 writers past and present.

The anthology will be published in the New Year and is called *From Under a Bushel*.

Tall Tales in Lanarkshire

Lanarkshire Storytellers actively use storytelling in the community and their membership currently includes folk from both sides of the Lanarkshire divide.

As well as storytelling in special projects and events, members meet monthly to catch up with news, share experiences and plan future activities. These meetings include storytelling round the circle.

Lanarkshire Storytellers welcome anyone who is interested in storytelling, from beginners to experienced tellers. Meetings are normally held at 7.30pm in the Upstairs Lounge in The Wallace Cave, 11 Bloomgate, Lanark, ML11 9ET.

There will be no January meeting, but the remaining dates are -

Wednesday 1 December, 2010
Wednesday 2 February, 2011
Wednesday 2 March 2011
Wednesday 6 April 2011
Wednesday 4 May 2011
Wednesday 1 June 2011

EK and Amazon

Last year Writers Inc published their group anthology, *A Blended Bouquet*. As part of their arrangement with their publisher and distributor Lulu, *A Blended Bouquet* is now available on US and UK Amazon.



Writers' Groups in South Lanarkshire

Writers of whatever interests or abilities are very welcome to join South Lanarkshire writers' groups. Please contact the person listed for more details.

Biggar Writers' Group:

Contact: Andrew McCallum (01899 221743). The group meets fortnightly, Mondays, in the Biggar Municipal Hall from 7:30-9:30pm. www.biggarwriters.weebly.com

Dolphinton Women Writers:

Contact: Amanda Maclean (01968 682345).

Hieton Writers' Group:

Contact: Jean Livingstone (jeanliving@hotmail.com). The group meets weekly, Wednesdays, in the Hamilton Town House from 1-3 pm.

Kirkmuirhill Writers:

Contact: Ethyl Smyth (01555 892625). The group meets weekly, Wednesdays, in The Leisure Dome, Thornton Road, Kirkmuirhill from 10.30am-12noon.

Lanark Writers' Circle:

Contact: Brian Laidlaw (01555 666201). The group meets weekly, Mondays, in the ALVO Centre, Lanark from 7-9pm.

Larkhall Writers:

Contact: Rita Little (01698 883133) The group meets weekly, Mondays, in the Community Fire Station, Larkhall, from 7-9 p.m..

Strathaven Writers:

Contact: Jane Struth (01357 522638). The group meets on the last Wednesday of every month in the Strathaven Public Library, from 7-9 pm.

Writers Inc.(East Kilbride):

Contact: Mark Rice (01698 323136). The group meets monthly in the East Kilbride Arts Centre on the first Tuesday of each month from 7.30-9.30pm.



In the summer of 2008, French writer Renaud Camus visited Brownsbank as part of his *maisons d'ecrivain* series. This is one of his pictures. Others have been published in previous Bulletins.

Brownsbank Bulletin has been compiled by Carl MacDougall and published from Hugh MacDiarmid's former home at Brownsbank Cottage, Candymill, Biggar, ML12 6QY. Full colour copies and information about Hugh MacDiarmid, his life and work are available from brownsbank.weebly.com.

And for further information on writers' groups, publications and activities throughout South Lanarkshire please contact – voluntary.arts@southlanarkshire.gov.uk



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