

Brownsbank Bulletin

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



Picture by Jim Ness

Brownsbank Broadsheet - no deid yet!

The first issue of the *Brownsbank Broadsheet* was published last year and distributed to more than 40 outlets in 32 locations across the country.

In the last issue of the *Bulletin* we put out a call for contributions for the second issue and received submissions from almost 80 contributors, mostly from South Lanarkshire, but again submissions came from across the country.

This is hardly surprising. Writers want to see their work in print and not only does the *Broadsheet* take work by South Lanarkshire writers beyond the region, but it is distributed free which means it can reach people and places beyond the scope of most literary publications Scotland.

This was a commitment we hoped to continue, but the second issue has been unavoidably delayed due to long-term sickness absence within South Lanarkshire Council's Arts Development Team. Potential contributors have been contacted and we are still hopeful that an issue of the *Broadsheet* can be published before the Brownsbank Fellowship terminates in November.

What Do We Want?

The previous issue of the *Bulletin* mentioned the possibility of establishing an organisation to co-ordinate the work of individual groups, to bring them together for more formal joint workshops, events and maybe even publications. Similar writers' forums exist in Borders and East/Midlothian Regions and they have been very successful.

They may provide a model, but the point would be to fashion a forum that was organised by South Lanarkshire

writers and suited the needs of their groups.

So far, the reaction has been positive, but there's a long way to go. Discussions are already underway and a meeting is being arranged for later this year.

Moonstruck MacDiarmid

Stewartry singer and musician Nicola Black has released a CD of MacDiarmid poems she's been working on for more than five years. The whole thing started when a friend asked if she could put music to 'The Little White Rose', which she set with 'The Bonnie Broukit Bairn' and now *Moonstruck's* 16 tracks cover 21 pieces.

"It was difficult at first," said Nicola, "but the further I went the easier it became. The tune for 'Cophetua', for example, leapt into my head fully formed. I was working on another piece and suddenly, 'Copherua' was there."

Unlike earlier settings by Francis George Scott and Ronald Stevenson, Nicola covers a wide musical range and styles, some of which, she admits, MacDiarmid may not have approved. 'Wha's the Bride' from 'A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle' has a blues feel, but there are folk, jazz and classical settings as well as 'Scunner' which is set in a French café style, complete with accordion accompaniment.

"I can see why MacDiarmid allied himself with the composition styles of his time," says Nicola. "Apart from the fact that it was contemporary, there was a strong belief among art composers that they could drag the populous towards enlightenment. Schoenberg and company had an almost messianic view of it. On the other hand, Britten's folk song settings were thought to raise them to a level of appropriateness for educated listening.

"It's interesting that so many of MacDiarmid's verses are written in a style that resembles the Border ballads, yet he saw the less accessible settings as appropriate. What I've tried to do is find a style that suits the rhythm of the pieces and so bring them out in a different way."

Nicola performed some of her settings at a 'Poetry Doubles' evening with Les Murray at The Burns Centre in Dumfries. Other performances took place as part of Dumfries and Galloway Arts Festival and she will feature at The Wickerman festival in July.

Moonstruck is available from www.nicolablack.co.uk.

Poets to be Hung!

The Chatelherault Arts Exhibition takes place this year from 1-31 October. Entries in prose and poetry are invited, along with painting, drawing, ceramics and so on. Entrants are asked to submit one piece only by 3 September, 2010. The work must not have been previously displayed in any South Lanarkshire venue, must be properly framed, fitted with mirror plates and ready to hang. Entry forms are available from Chatelherault Country Park.

Writers' Groups in South Lanarkshire

Writers of whatever interests or abilities are very welcome to join these 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.

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: Maureen King (01555-893870).

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.

Writer's Inc. (East Kilbride)

Contact: Kirsty Campbell (07990 843613). The group meets monthly in the East Kilbride Arts Centre on the first Tuesday of each month from 7.30-9.30pm.

The Brownsbank Writing Fellowship is a collaboration between The Biggar Museum Trust Brownsbank Committee, South Lanarkshire Council and The Scottish Arts Council. The Fellowship began in 1993.

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