

Makars' court – new inscription to be unveiled

✘ A courtyard celebrating Scotland's rich literary heritage is set to welcome its newest inscription this weekend.

Makars' Court, which lies adjacent to the Writers' Museum, takes its name from the Scots word for a poet and is an evolving national literary monument.

The Court already boasts stones bearing quotations from 32 illustrious Scottish writers, from Sir Walter Scott and Dame Muriel Spark to Sorley MacLean and John Buchan.

The newest stone, being unveiled at a special dedication ceremony on Saturday, is in honour of James Allan Ford CB, MC (1920 – 2009). The inscription, taken from the final chapter of Ford's 1965 novel *A Statue for a Public Place*, reads:

"Sing out the silence, fill for ever and ever the emptiness"

Councillor Deidre Brock, Convenor of the Culture and Leisure Committee, said: "This poignant and uplifting inscription is a very welcome addition to Makars' Court, which is a key landmark on the Old Town tourist trail. Scotland – and not least its capital city – has produced an extraordinary number of accomplished writers and Makars' Court is an excellent way of paying tribute to them and celebrating their work."

Paul Scott, past President of the Saltire Society and lifelong friend of James Allan Ford – they were contemporaries at the Royal High School and Edinburgh University – said: "James was a remarkable character. Having survived horrendous experiences in a Japanese POW camp (where his brother was tortured and executed), he wrote five very distinguished novels, the first two on the subject of the POW camp and the final three about Edinburgh. However, this was quite a long time ago and I fear

the books have been more or less forgotten. No doubt his work will be rediscovered by a whole new audience now that he is being commemorated in Makars' Court."

Makars' Court was officially inaugurated by the late Iain Crichton Smith in August 1998. The Saltire Society selected twelve writers, ranging in date from John Barbour, who lived in the 14th century, to Sorley MacLean, who died in 1996. Each writer was commemorated by a quotation selected from his or her work which was inscribed in stone and set in the paving which leads from the Mound and the Lawnmarket approaches to the door of the Writers' Museum. Twenty other inscribed stones were added between October 2000 and June 2008.