

# Five things you need to know today



**Edinburgh International Book Festival opens today**

**New hotel for Leith**

**Fringe and Festival reviews**

**Gaza Protest**

**Edinburgh International Festival**

The Book Festival has an atmosphere all of its own. The Edinburgh Reporter loves the press yurt!

Over 800 events will take place in Charlotte Square Garden from today onwards. There are still tickets available but sometimes it is just nice to sit in the garden and soak up what is going on around you and see who you can see....

Under the headline 'Let's Talk', there will be discussion of such diverse topics as the Middle East, two world wars, the Commonwealth, economic migration, society, identity and the future of Scotland.

Nick Barley, Director of the Edinburgh International Book Festival said: 'The Book Festival provides a crucial forum for dialogue, where we can listen to and learn from one another, particularly in this year of momentous events in Scotland. Our thought-provoking conversations with both authors and audiences will permeate through Charlotte Square Gardens as we welcome writers and thinkers from many countries and cultures to Edinburgh, some for the first time in their careers. We offer a platform for emerging voices that are set to shape the world's literary stage in years to come and launch some of the

most talked-about books of the year. Come and join us for a stimulating, entertaining, endlessly fascinating Festival.'

A number of events have already sold out: George R R Martin, author of the *Game of Thrones* series and Haruki Murakami, who makes his first trip to Edinburgh to launch the English edition of his latest novel *Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage*, proved exceptionally popular and sold out within hours while two later additions to the Scotland's Future strand of events – talks by First Minister Alex Salmond and former Prime Minister Gordon Brown – also sold out immediately. However there are still tickets for events throughout the programme including Rowan Williams launching his new book of poetry, Kirsty Wark discussing her debut novel, Sarah Waters previewing her new book, Irvine Welsh, David Peace, Katy Brand, James Robertson, Bonnie Greer and many others.

The Edinburgh International Book Festival opens this morning at 9.30am and continues until Monday 25 August 2014. Full details of the programme can be found at [www.edbookfest.co.uk](http://www.edbookfest.co.uk). Tickets to all events can be purchased online at [www.edbookfest.co.uk](http://www.edbookfest.co.uk), by phone on 0845 373 5888 or in person at the Box Office in Charlotte Square Gardens

\*\*\*

The Royal Yacht *Britannia* has acquired the iconic heritage vessel MV Windsor Castle.

In a near £1 million investment, this classically designed ship is to be converted into a 25 bedroom luxury 'boatique' hotel. She will be berthed permanently, adjacent to *Britannia* in Edinburgh's historic port of Leith.

Launched in August 1963, she was the last ship built by the Blythswood Shipbuilding Company, Glasgow, and was previously the Northern Lighthouse Board's (NLB) tender *Fingal*. She was Leith registered but spent most of her NLB service working out

of Oban for 30 years, followed by her last 6 years, based in Stromness, Orkney.

At 239 feet long, she is nearly two-thirds of the size of *Britannia*. The vessel was sold by the NLB in 2000 to Tamahine Shipping and has been maintained to the highest standards ever since, at her berth on the River Fal in Cornwall.

The ship is scheduled to arrive in Leith during the week of 25 August, 2014, and undergo an 18 month conversion, scheduled to open in Spring 2016. Developing a floating hotel represents natural organic growth for *Britannia*, having the requisite management skills in-house, and servicing demand from both day visitors and evening event guests for quality accommodation, adjacent to the Royal Yacht. Officially Scotland's best visitor attraction, for each of the last nine years, and the UK's No.1 attraction (TripAdvisor 2014), *Britannia* is already renowned for delivering the highest quality of customer experience; and this hotel will fit neatly within the overall brand.

*Britannia's* Chief Executive Bob Downie said, 'After many years of searching for the right ship, we are delighted that we have been able to acquire this iconic vessel and look forward to opening Scotland's first boatique hotel. As a youngster growing up in Oban I have very fond memories of seeing the *Fingal* and I am delighted that the long-term future of another much loved classic vessel has been secured.'

\*\*\*



Please add a few words about any of the shows you get to see at the variety of festivals around town this month over on our Edinburgh Festivals page of EdinburghReportage and share your thoughts with our readers. It is very easy to register with Facebook or Twitter and then post short reviews, video or

photos. We look forward to hearing from you!

[Click here](#) to add your stories

\*\*\*

There will be a demonstration today at 2pm at the top of The Mound.

This has been organised by the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement to highlight the horrors of what is happening in Gaza and in Palestine. This emerged from Palestinian civil society organisations, among them health workers, teachers and farmers in Gaza who have said, "From Gaza under invasion, bombardment, and continuing siege, the horror is beyond words. Medical supplies are exhausted. The death toll has reached 1813 killed (398 children, 207 women, 74 elderly) and 9370 injured (2744 children, 1750 women, 343 elderly). Our hospitals, ambulances, and medical staff are all under attack while on duty. Doctors and paramedics are being killed while evacuating the dead. Our dead are not numbers and statistics to be recounted; they are loved ones, family and friends."

Over the last week two shows at the Edinburgh Fringe have been cancelled; the Palestinian flag is being flown above council headquarters in Dundee, West Dunbartonshire and in Glasgow, planned also for Fife and Aberdeen; the Scottish Government has called for an arms embargo on Israel and for a UN led investigation into war crimes by Israel; scores of MSPs joined protestors outside the Scottish Parliament in their call for an end to the siege of Gaza.

The demonstration in Edinburgh will be addressed by a number of speakers including Green MSP Alison Johnstone, Gordon Maloney (NUS Scotland), Mike Arnott (STUC General Council). Albie O'Neill of the Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign said on behalf of the organisers of the march "The people of Scotland are repulsed by what is happening in Gaza and are demanding that the slaughter of innocents must end. But they are also demanding that something be done to force Israel to cease its illegal practices in Gaza and the rest of Palestine. Illegal detention of minors, use of live ammunition against unarmed protestors, land theft, illegal settlements, the list

goes on.

“Scotland has a proud tradition of standing in solidarity with oppressed people across the world, this is another expression of that solidarity which will be welcomed in Gaza and applauded across the world as we stand together in the fight against apartheid Israel. Only the isolation of Israel through boycott, divestment and sanctions will force them to stop.”

The cast of The City who were due to perform their hip hop opera at The Fringe have been unable to find an alternative venue. Today at Bristo Square they will perform their show without any sound as a protest against what they see as an infringement of their right to free speech.

We met with the cast of The City before their run was due to start.

\*\*\*

And then as if there was not enough buzz in the capital the Edinburgh International Festival began last night with its opening concert at the Usher Hall.

The programme is below – although if you cannot make up your mind then there is a lovely idea from EIF in Suggest my Fest which you will find on the EIF website.

<http://www.eif.co.uk/sites/default/files/mag-pdf/eifbrochure2014-websitedownload.pdf>