

# Book Week Scotland 2014 – a celebration of books and reading



‘A love of reading.....at its most powerful, transforms lives’  
(Sophie Moxon, Acting Director, Scottish Book Trust)

For all the gloom and doom we hear about parents who never read to their children, teenagers who can only text and tweet, adults whose only use for books is to prop up their laptops and cats who’d rather sit on a book than read it, literature is alive and well – the crowds at the **2014 Edinburgh Book Festival** were evidence of that (okay, maybe the cats were unimpressed...)

This year’s **Book Week Scotland** takes place between **24-30 November 2014**. It’s a celebration of books and reading, with events in libraries, community venues, schools and workplaces all over the country. Authors, poets, playwrights, storytellers and illustrators will be out and about, answering your questions, telling you about their work and sharing their tips on how they do it. Book Week Scotland will be delivered by the **Scottish Book Trust**, working with a wide range of partners. The programme was launched yesterday at the Holyrood Boxing Gym (a more appropriate choice than it may at first appear...)

The key theme of the Week is **LOVE**, with Scots everywhere given the opportunity to celebrate, document and proclaim their love of books with the people who write, publish and deliver them. Over 600 book-related events will pop up in a diverse range of locations across Scotland, and on Wednesday Sophie Moxon praised the ‘ingenuity, passion and commitment’ shown by the

Trust's many partners, who have come up with ideas as diverse as an **Inky Fingers Scavenger Hunt**, **Drama Queens** play reading sessions, a celebration of **George Mackay Brown** and the opportunity to hear some **Tales in the Tower** at **St Giles Cathedral**.

## Love Your Library



**Libraries** will be at the very heart of Book Week Scotland: five large artworks will be unveiled in libraries across the country, two in Edinburgh and East Lothian.

A continuation of the 2013 **Artworks for Libraries** project, each work has been inspired by **Jackie Kay's** poem *Dear Library* and aims to enhance the chosen library's visibility and value in its local area. **Pidgin Perfect**, an award winning Glasgow-based studio, has worked with the Scottish Book Trust to develop and deliver this project.

You will be encouraged to declare your true feelings for your own library through the **Love Letter to Your Library** campaign, and authors and celebrities will also be revealing which libraries are their favourites, and why. **The Scottish Library and Information Council** will fund a major programme of library-based events featuring appearances by some of the country's best-loved writers and illustrators.



At the launch authors **Helen Grant**, **Shari Low** and **Paul Cuddihy** shared their love letters. In a way it's surprising that Paul visits **Bishopriggs Library** at all – at the age of 10 he got the belt at school for revealing the ending of a story his teacher was reading to the class; young Paul, unable to wait, had borrowed the book from the library and read it himself.

Despite this unfortunate outcome Paul still takes his own children to that same library, 'history was repeating itself and it felt great' – though he should maybe give his offspring a little talk about spoilers.



Helen Grant calls herself a library philanderer' having moved homes, and indeed countries, frequently. She keeps all of the library cards she has ever had 'like old love letters', and has now settled down with **Strathearn Library**, where she especially loves the Local History section. When she found her husband's birth announcement in an old copy of the *Crieff Herald* 'it made me feel like we belonged just a little bit more.'



Shari Low grew up in Renfrew where, at the age of 5, she treasured her new library card 'more than a £10 note.' Like a Scottish version of **Roald Dahl's** *Matilda*, Shari lugged home a stack of books every week 'developing my imagination and my biceps', and in an age before the dawn of Young Adult Fiction, moved seamlessly from the *Babysitters' Club* to **Jackie Collins** and **Shirley Conran**, always expecting to be swept off her feet by **David Cassidy** or 'a billionaire playboy called Lance.' Later on she studied in the library to escape the chaos at home, and it was there that she came upon a careers book and some explosive information – 'writer' was a Real Job. Arm candy may come and go, but libraries never let you down: 'David Cassidy and that bloke called Lance inevitably disappointed, but Renfrew Library never did.'

**Stories of Home**



150,000 copies of *Scotland's Stories of Home*, a collection of short stories and poems written by Scottish people, will be distributed free via libraries, hospitals, bookshops, prisons and other outlets. Some famous names have contributed to this irresistible anthology – **Kirsty Logan**, **Uuganaa Ramsay** and **Alan Warner** are all there and all brilliant, but lesser known voices feature too: **Elizabeth Cummings'** *Dad's Failing* vividly depicts the way in which a child interprets an adult's unthinking sarcasm; **Drew Black's** *The Scottish Sex Education Talk* is a brilliant snapshot of a short but subversive conversation at the kitchen sink.

## Take The Pledge

✘ No, not that one! Galvanise yourself into action – choose from a list of pledges or create your own: promise to **pick up that book you've been meaning to read**, **pass on a much-loved book** or **share a book with your child** every night. Share your pledges on social media, then carry them out throughout Book Week – and beyond. Speaking at the launch, Fiona Hyslop, Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs, recalled the late Iain Banks talking about the book-less house of a childhood friend, 'I thought it was like not having oxygen or hot water.' Ms Hyslop described reading as 'a precious gift to give to our children.' One of the added benefits of sharing that gift, she said, is the way in which this can bring Mums, Dads and caregivers closer to their children; I certainly remember sitting on the bed reading to mine (and the row my daughter and her friend had when they both claimed that only their Mummy could do Anne of Green Gables' voice properly...)

## Robots, Rhythm and Runaways



The **Bookbug Primary 1 Family Pack**, containing **Sean Taylor** and **Ross Collins' *Robot Rumpus***, **Alison Murray's *Princess Penelope and the Runaway Kitten*** and **Natalie Russell's *Lost for Words***, will be given to every P1 child in the country. These books comprise the 3-7 years shortlist for the **Scottish Children's Book Awards 2015**, and will introduce children to the wonders awaiting them within the covers of a book.

On **27th November at 11am**, two of Britain's best-loved poets **Roger McGough** and **Valerie Bloom** will bring rhythm and rhyme to life for young children in a **special free author webcast**.

The Book Week Roadshow will bring many schools a personal visit from **Steve Cole**, author of *Astrosaurs* and *Cows in Action*, and many schools will also receive an e-publication featuring pupils' stories of home.



**Another Referendum! Top Ten Scottish Characters Revealed!**

And if you're wondering where the boxing comes in....



Well-loved literary characters don their boxing gloves and get ready for the fight of their lives, as Scottish Book Trust launches the full Book Week Scotland 2014 programme, which includes a national vote for the favourite character from a Scottish book. © Rob McDougall



(Boxing photos by Rob McDougall)

The Book Trust invited seven literary people to prepare their own shortlists of favourite fictional Scottish characters; the panel then met ('mostly politely') to whittle these down to one list of 50, which will be posted online with everyone invited to pick their favourite – or suggest their own. Suggestions will not be added to the shortlist, but if they end up with enough votes they will certainly appear in the Top

Ten.

On Wednesday some very game staff members dressed up as a selection of the shortlisted characters and fought it out in Holyrood Boxing Club's ring. Long John Silver ('where's your parrot?' 'It died. '), Chris Guthrie and even Jean Brodie donned the boxing gloves and assumed the position – though this time for the photographers rather than the punters. It certainly wasn't your average book launch.

Fisticuffs aside, the Trust's Phillipa Cochrane emphasised that 'favourite' doesn't always mean 'nicest' – villains are popular too, and Scottish literature also has many dual characters (Jekyll and Hyde are on the list as one person).

The aim is to start conversations, to encourage people to talk about their choices. On the Friday of Book Week the country's choices will be revealed. Who will they be? **The Gruffalo? Dr Findlay? Miss Brodie** herself? I know who my money's on, though I'm sorely tempted to suggest **Alexander McCall Smith's Bertie**, an omission from the list and surely one of Edinburgh's finest citizens.

The Scottish Government, says Fiona Hyslop, believes in the transformative power of reading. Book Week Scotland's exciting and innovative programme will surely encourage all of us to turn the page and read the next chapter.

Book Week Scotland was initiated by the Scottish Government in 2012 and is supported by **Creative Scotland, the Scottish Library and Information Council, the Scottish Government and Education Scotland**. The Scottish Book Trust wishes to thank **Bradley** of the **Amateur Boxing Association** for his help in facilitating Wednesday's launch.

More information and a full programme of events can be found at [www.bookweekscotland.com](http://www.bookweekscotland.com). Book Week Scotland can also be found on **Twitter** @Bookweekscot and on **Facebook**.

