

Edinburgh International Book Festival 2015: Around the World – with Two Goats



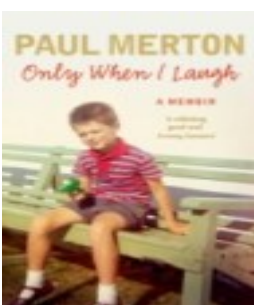
‘What unites us’, says Janet Smyth, ‘is our stories.’

Janet, **Edinburgh International Book Festival Children and Education Programme Director**, is speaking at the launch of the 2015 programme, and what a programme it is. As ever there are famous names a plenty – from **Paul Merton** to **Celia Imrie**, **Ian Rankin**, **Rev Richard Coles** and **Mark Rylance** – but this year the festival’s main theme is *‘Around the World’* – Scotland as an outward-looking nation. The work of authors and poets from as far afield as **Iceland** and **Nigeria** will feature alongside those of different cultures within Scotland itself; the festival will aim to create an environment that welcomes speakers of each and every one of the **140 languages** we can now hear without leaving the country. The art of translation will also be considered; in the *Talking Translation* thread, acclaimed translator **Daniel Hahn** will chair sessions on writers as diverse as **Georges Simenon**, **Christine De Luca**, **Elif Shafak** and **Juana Adcock**.






As we look out, so we need to look in: **mental health**, or ***Staying Well***, is another of this year's EIBF themes, and a very topical one too. In what promises to be a fascinating hour, **Professor Andrew Scull** looks at the historical clashes between **Reason and Unreason**, reflecting on the ways in which different times and places have responded to 'madness'. Just what does that term mean? And why do some societies see it as a challenge? Other sessions look at **psychosomatic illness**, **teenage stress** and **dementia**, whilst several writers – including **Matt Haig**, **John Burnside**, **Paul Merton** and **Debi Giori** – talk about their own experiences of mental illness.

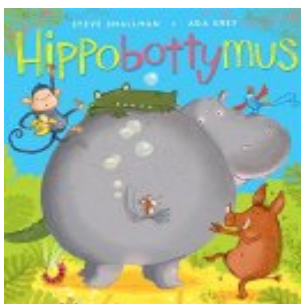


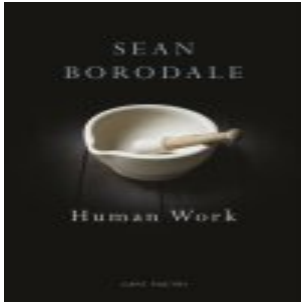


REASONS
TO STAY
ALIVE 
Matt Haig



Sometimes we just want to escape from all of life's many woes and enjoy a good revel in other people's (fictional) misfortunes; **crime writing**, from the cosy to the very *noir* indeed, is as popular as ever, and the 2015 festival offers at least twenty versions of it – so whether you prefer tough-cops-with-issues or salt-of-the-earth detectives with cups of tea, there's plenty here for you. Sticking to its international promise, the programme includes thrillers set in **Scandinavia, the Netherlands, Portugal, Italy, China**, and that most impenetrable of all places – **Aberdeen**.



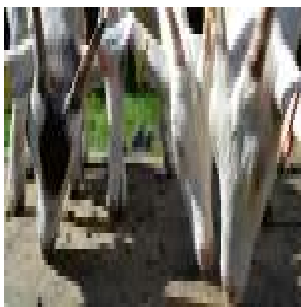


From **Liz Lochhead** to **Beowulf**, poetry is alive and well in the EIBF programme. From poets in translation to poets in the kitchen (**Sean Borodale** wrote *Human Work: A Poet's Cookbook* 'live' among the pots and pans), Charlotte Square will be alive with sound of verse, whilst children can learn how to be a rhyming word wizard with **Elli Woodward** (*Woozy the Wizard: A Broom to Go Zoom*) and dance and sing along with **Steve Smallman's** 'bonkers rhyming story' *Hippobottymus*.



I used to think I was pretty good at reading to my children – until one of their friends told me only *her* Mummy could do a proper Anne Shirley, and one of my own explained that she'd really rather read Harry Potter to herself, despite my

excellent rendition of Professor Umbridge... The authors coming to the **Baillie Gifford Children's Programme** will, I am sure, do a much better job; they include **Nick Sharratt**, **Cressida Cowell**, **Frank Cottrell Boyce**, **Jacqueline Wilson** and the inestimably wonderful **Patrick Ness**; Patrick delivered a cracking **Siobhan Dowd Memorial Lecture** last year – in 2015 **Matt Haig** will take up the baton in what promises to be an equally inspiring session. Again the festival's *Around the World* theme is highlighted, with writers from **Finland to France, Australia and Poland**. Meanwhile, for those fed up with sitting still, willow artist **David Powell** invites everyone to help him make a sculpture from *Alice in Wonderland*, and **Gorgie City Farm** introduces **Moonlight** and **Shadow**. No they're not aristocratic racehorses – they're pigmy goats, and just as entitled to their dreams as you are.



Of course there's lots, lots more going on at this year's EIBF. Art, music, nature, history, science, biography,

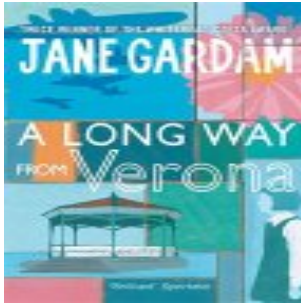
politics (yes, **Alex Salmond** and **Gordon Brown** are both here, though, perhaps sensibly, not in the same tent... plus **Lesley Riddoch**, **Polly Toynbee**, **Alan Johnson**, **James Naughtie** and **Nicola Sturgeon** herself – though don't start hassling the poor woman, she's here to talk crime with **Val McDermid**, not EU quotas with you lot).

Booking for all EIBF events opens on 23rd June 2015 and may be made in person, by phone or online – some events sell out very quickly, so have your list ready! (though the less high profile events are very worthy of your attention too; one of my favourite sessions last year was [**Books That Win**](#), a fascinating discussion about the value – or otherwise – of awards for YA fiction, and one of the reasons I liked it so much was that the speakers – **William Sutcliffe**, **Theresa Breslin** and **Moira Young** – had such interesting ideas). The full programme is available online and the paper version is widely available throughout the city in libraries, bookshops and many other venues.



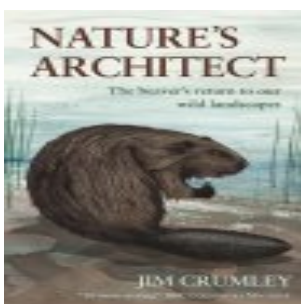
And just because I want to, here is my personal **Top Five** from this year's programme – see you in Charlotte Square, and let's hope it's sunny:



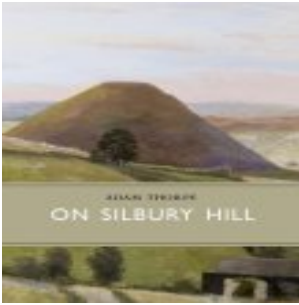


Jesse Jackson: *A Formidable Activist*. The Reverend Jesse worked for **Martin Luther King** in the 1960s, and in his later career specialised in high-profile international diplomacy, negotiating with **Fidel Castro**, **Saddam Hussein** and **Slobodan Milosevic**. He will discuss his life of campaigning for black rights and understanding. 8.15pm, Saturday 22nd August.

Jane Gardam, Penelope Lively & Eileen Atkins with Lennie Goodings: *The Female Gaze: Great Parts for Older Women*. Two of Britain's best-loved and highly acclaimed authors talk about some of their favourite older heroines from their own novels; Eileen Atkins provides the readings. 5pm, Monday 17th August;



Jim Crumley



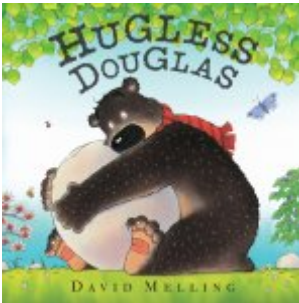
Jim Crumley and Adam Thorpe: *The Joy of Britain's Natural Landscapes*. Two distinctive voices with widely differing perspectives on the countryside. Jim Crumley has been described as 'the best nature writer working in Britain today', and he's certainly one of the best speakers on the subject; he will talk about his new book, *Nature's Architect*, a study of the reintroduction of beavers at several UK sites. Adam Thorpe's prize-winning novel *Ulverton* was described by none other than **John Fowles** as 'the most interesting novel I have read these last years...suddenly English lives again'; his new book *On Silbury Hill* conjures up an alluring landscape and a journey into the imagination. 12.15pm, Thursday 20th August;



Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow: *One in a Million*. After watching a 1992 news bulletin about war-torn Bosnia, Magnus and his brother decided to take a week off work to help; neither of them anticipated that their one-off road trip in an old Landrover would grow into Magnus's life work, leading him to leave his job, sell his house, and direct all his efforts to feeding thousands of the world's poorest children. In *The Shed That Fed A Million Children*, Magnus explains how a series of miraculous circumstances and an overwhelming display of love from those around him led to the creation of **Mary's Meals**, an organisation that could hold the key to eradicating child hunger forever. When it started in 2002 the charity provided meals to just 200 children in Malawi – now over one million children in twelve countries benefit from its work, and Magnus has been named one of **Time's 100 Most Influential People**.

10am, Monday 17th August;

And finally- the one you've been waiting for...



Animal Antics: a free, drop-in afternoon with stories about lots of animals, from *Hugless Douglas* to *Frog the Barbarian* and *Vampire Rats*. And *Moonlight* and *Shadow*, of course. 1-4pm, Saturday 15th August. In association with **Gorgie City Farm**.

