

Organisations gather together to remember loved ones as part of 'To Absent Friends'



Organisations across Edinburgh will be gathering together this week to remember loved ones who have died, as part of To Absent Friends, a Scotland-wide festival of storytelling and remembrance taking place from 1 – 7 November.

The festival, which started in 2014, gives people an opportunity to celebrate the lives and memories of people who have died, through stories, celebrations and acts of reminiscence.

Events in store in Edinburgh this year include a concert by the Edinburgh Brass Band, an organ recital by city organist John Kitchen, a poetry evening hosted by Poetry Circus, and a public To Absent Friends supper at Broughton St. Mary's Church where people can share stories over a simple three course meal.

Many community organisations are hosting their own private acts of remembrance for To Absent Friends. Among them are the Eric Liddell Centre in Morningside who will light candles and share memories over a special afternoon tea on 2 November, which will also see them create a lasting framed memorial dedicated to absent friends.

Meanwhile, the Broomhouse Centre will be remembering their absent friends by creating a "tree of life" tied with notes dedicated to the memory of loved ones. The Centre's dementia day care service, The Beacon Club will be sharing tales of their absent friends with a storyteller and musical session.

Also, at the Hibernian v Dundee match at Easter Road on Saturday fans will be invited to leave personal tributes on the club's To Absent Friends wall.

"Talking openly about someone who is dead can often cause discomfort or embarrassment" says Robert Peacock of Good Life, Good Death, Good Grief, the alliance of organisations behind the festival. "To Absent Friends wants to change that. We want people to have time and space to acknowledge those who have been important to them. People can often find comfort and meaning from being able to share those stories. We're very glad that so many community groups in Edinburgh have decided to take part."

And there is still time for people to get involved with the festival themselves. "It doesn't have to be a big thing," continues Peacock. "It could be something as simple as raising a glass and proposing a toast, or gathering friends and family together over old photo albums."

The festival website, www.toabsentfriends.org.uk, has plenty of suggestions of ways to participate. There are plenty of online activities for the week too. People are invited to change their social media profile pictures to someone who has died, with a story and the hashtag #ToAbsentFriends. People can also share their tributes on the online [Wall of Remembrance](#), and their songs on the [Remembrance Playlist](#), both of which can be found on the To Absent Friends website.

To Absent Friends will take place across Scotland from 1 – 7 November 2017. For more information, contact Robert Peacock on robert.peacock@palliativecarescotland.org.uk or 0131 272 2735 or see the website www.toabsentfriends.org.uk

PUBLIC EVENT LISTINGS

Widow Me This – Isla MacLean

Join Isla Maclean on her first full length stand-up show as

she explores life, death and happily never after.

Fri 27 – Tues 31 Oct, 6.20pm @ Banshee Labyrinth, 29-35 Niddry Street, EH1 1LG. FREE

Beloved

Poetry Circus present an evening of tributes, including a feature tribute to poet and activist, Sindigo

Wed 1 Nov, 7.30pm for 8pm @ Woodland Creatures, 260-262 Leith Walk, EH6 5EL. FREE

Reflections at Wardie Church

The church will be opening its doors to allow people time and space to reflect upon loved ones they have lost.

Thu 2 – Sat 4 Nov, 10am – 12pm @ Wardie Parish Church, 29 Primrose Bank Road, EH5 3JE. FREE

Edinburgh Brass Band

Taking inspiration from and honouring absent friends, the band will blend the melancholy and magnificent.

Sat 4 Nov, 7.30pm @ St Mary's Cathedral, Palmerston Place, EH12 5AW. FREE

Get Organised

Reflect on absent friends in the company of city organist John Kitchen, playing a range of music themed around remembrance.

Mon 6 Nov, 1.10pm @ Usher Hall, EH1 2EA. Tickets: £4

To Absent Friends Community Supper

Share stories over a simple three course meal, interspersed with entertainment from local artists – Cat Loud, cabaret singer; Donald Smith, storyteller; Max Scratchmann, spoken word artist

Tue 7 Nov, 7pm @ Broughton St Mary's Parish Church Hall, EH3
6NE. Tickets: £6 (BYOB) via www.toabsentfriends.org.uk