

The 10th Portobello Book Festival is coming!

Ten years ago a group of Portobello residents decided to start a book festival.

Ambitious? Maybe.

They decided they wanted everything at that festival to be kept local – and free. This meant no-one would be paid. Not even the authors.

Ambitious? Definitely.

This year the **Portobello Book Festival** celebrates its tenth birthday. It's still local, it's still run entirely by volunteers, and there are still no fees for appearing. And it's hugely successful, gaining in popularity every year and now a prominent feature of Portobello life.

On a perfect autumn night last week the 2018 festival was launched at the Dalriada on the Prom. Introducing this year's programme, Mae Shaw of the organising group said;

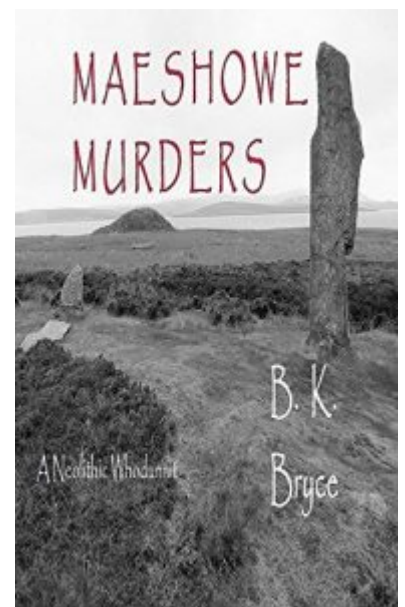
'We see ourselves as readers and writers who want to connect with other readers...It is a sign of solidarity and support when authors are prepared to come without payment. All they are promised is good sound quality, a good chair and an engaged and enthusiastic audience. And they still come *because they are in it with us.*'



Mae praised the Edinburgh City Council Library Service, and in particular its Portobello branch, for their continuing support of the festival. Many sessions take place at the library, which is also the only source of tickets; other venues include Portobello Baptist Church

and, for the first time this year, local care home Jameson Gate. Primary schools at Brunstane, Duddingston and Towerbank will also be treated to author events, while Portobello High School is running its very own festival earlier in the month.

The 2018 programme includes writers from near and slightly less near; its overriding aim is to be as diverse as possible, offering a variety of events that local people might enjoy. From world poetry to *Desert Island Books* and even a *Whodunit in Skara Brae!*, the festival packs no less than 23 events into one weekend in October. Enjoy an exquisite retelling of the tale of how the robin got his red breast (*A Wee Bird Was Watching*),



talk fiction genres in *Chick-Lit or Women's Fiction: What's in a Name?*, learn about the realities of life for women from ethnic minorities caught up in domestic abuse (*Real Women: Unheard Stories*) and hear about the people who travelled in one Edinburgh taxi driver's cab (*Rear View Mirror*). And



if you'd like to have a go at writing yourself, Sarah Bradley is offering a Writing Workshop – no experience required, all

styles welcome – while *in Short But Sweet* you can pick up tips on creating an effective short story.

To celebrate its milestone anniversary, the festival organisers wanted to create a lasting and timeless artefact – so what better than a book? *Postcards from Portobello* is a free collection of new writing from 31 local contributors, all reflecting local life.



‘It’s been a real experience,’ Mae said, ‘to discover what a wide range of writers there are in Portobello.’

The booklet, whose publication has been made possible by funding from Creative Scotland, will be launched at the Festival’s opening event on Friday 5 October, a lively evening of words and music at which some authors will read from their work.



Marjorie Lotfi Gill will discuss World Poetry with Stuart A Paterson and Lynn Davidson

Tickets for all events are available from Portobello Library, 14 Rosefield Avenue EH15 1AU. Although they are disappearing very quickly indeed (there is even talk of 'ticket hoarding' – *in Portobello!*), the organisers are determined to – as Mae puts it – 'retain spontaneity' – so they are making sure that some tickets will always be available on the door. Even if an event is totally 'sold out', people are encouraged to come along and try their luck, as there are usually at least a few no shows.

Tommy Sheppard MP once described the Portobello Book Festival as 'beautifully uncommercial', and that's the thing I love about it most. It's not flash, there are no authors' tents or champagne bars – just 'readers and writers who want to connect with other readers'. And isn't that what a good book festival should be?

The 10th Portobello Book Festival runs from Friday 5th to Sunday 7th October 2018. Full details of all events are in the new festival leaflet, and online at <https://portobellobookfestival.wordpress.com/category/home/>.

