

The 10th Portobello Book Festival is here!

The **10th Portobello Book Festival** opened last night, with a packed out (and packed in) evening of entertainment in Portobello Library.

Introducing a programme of readings and music, author **Louise Kelly** spoke of the goodwill and hard work that goes into creating a weekend in which the community comes together in a celebration of local writing. She thanked the library (and especially library manager Paul) for its continuing support in acting as both box office and venue, Creative Scotland, who funded the printing of *Postcards from Portobello*, Bellfield Brewery for much needed refreshments, and most of all the writers, who all appear without payment – for at this festival everything (except the drink...) is totally free, and kept as simple as possible – and the organisers want it to stay that way;



'It's *almost* a complete pleasure to do because of our total disregard for paperwork.'

To mark the festival's tenth anniversary, committee member **Christine Hoy** floated the idea of creating a community artefact, a 'lasting expression of the distinctiveness of Edinburgh's seaside community as seen through the eyes of some



of its many writers.' People were asked to interpret the 'Postcards from Portobello' theme in whichever way they wished. Poems, stories, memoirs, grief, ghosts, humour,

hilarity, mystery, murder, even an ode to a crab; the results were nothing if not varied. Now printed in a free anthology, they bear witness to Portobello's huge pool (sea?) of talent, and some of the contributors were on hand to read their work.

Musician **David Francis** spoke of his daily walk along the Prom and the changes he has seen over the years;

'You could get chips and ice cream when there was no 'r' in the month...now cappuccino, ciabatta and craft beer is the order of the day'

Meanwhile, in a brilliant, surreal piece involving setts, salmon and saliva, writer **Rory Martin**, who grew up in Portobello and tried to leave, described an inebriate stagger through night-time streets, and considered the meaning of home.

A Victorian seaside postcard inspired videographer and writer **Peter Ross** to philosophise about the future, and how sometimes it's a good thing that we can't see it;



'Luckily those children can't see that the tide of history is turning on them...Do we know what awaits us as the tide turns in the early 21st century?'

Grahame C Howard's *Ode to an Injured Crab* and **Jim Gilchrist's** *One for the Birds* both saw the lighter side of Portobello life. Crabs short on legs, gulls outside Greggs...all natural life is here, battling on, making the most of the Scottish schoolchild's post-lunch detritus.



It's not only writers who live beside the seaside; musicians gravitate to Portobello too. **Steve Baird, Ian Ireland, Eileen Penman, Lisa Rigby, Rosie Nimmo** and **Mairi Campbell** all performed during the evening; not many Edinburgh libraries will have had such a cabaret air.

Free events continue throughout Saturday and Sunday – there are still tickets available from the library for some of them, and even if you don't have a ticket, the organisers don't want anyone to miss out; they encourage you to turn up at the door and see if space is available. The full programme can be seen at www.portobellobookfestival.wordpress.com, while the paper version is available at the library and numerous other local

shops and businesses. Or why not just take a chance, choose a ticket from the dwindling stock, and come to see something new to you? As Louise Kelly says;

'We don't do highlights – it's all good.'