

Fast Facts....**SCOTLAND: A Literary Nation**

The Write Stuff - Scotland's list of acclaimed contemporary writers of fiction, poetry and plays reads a little like a Who's Who of literature: James Kelman, A L Kennedy, Ali Smith, Jackie Kay, Kate Atkinson, Iain Banks, Janice Galloway, Liz Lochhead, Alasdair Gray, Gregory Burke, Irvine Welsh, Andrew O'Hagan, James Robertson, Don Paterson, Kathleen Jamie, Douglas Dunn, Edwin Morgan, John Burnside . . . **Carol Ann Duffy**, the UK's Poet Laureate, hails from Glasgow and world-famous authors **Alexander McCall Smith** (No.1 Ladies' Detective Agency series), **Ian Rankin** (Rebus series) and **JK Rowling** (Harry Potter series) all live and work in Edinburgh. There are approximately **600 authors** registered with the Society of Authors in Scotland (2009). (Source: www.cityofliterature.com www.societyofauthors.org)

On the Shoulder of Giants - Scotland has a distinguished position in the pantheon of world literature through our poets, novelists, short story writers, philosophers, screenwriters, playwrights, storytellers, song makers, scientists, historians and biographers. Novelists associated with Edinburgh have made a particularly strong impact around the world: **James Hogg** (*The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*), **Sir Walter Scott** (The Waverley Series), **Robert Louis Stevenson** (*Treasure Island, Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*), **JM Barrie** (*Peter Pan*), **Kenneth Grahame** (*Wind in the Willows*), **Sir Arthur Conan Doyle** (Sherlock Holmes series), **RM Ballantyne** (*The Coral Island*), **John Buchan** (*The Thirty-Nine Steps*) and **Muriel Spark** (*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*). (Source: *We cultivate literature, Edinburgh UNESCO City of Literature Trust, 2004*)

What's in a Name - from heroic epics to poignant tragedy Scotland's early literature was dominated by poetry and in particular John Barbour (c.1320-1395). Perhaps our best known figure internationally is **Robert Burns** (1759-1796), our **national Bard**, whose work is celebrated worldwide with Burns Suppers on 25 January each year. **Sir Walter Scott** (1771-1832), recognised in Europe as the creator of the modern historical novel, was the first British novelist to become a famous public figure pioneering a new type of romantic historiography. His novels, ballads, poems and other writings have been translated into almost every major world language and the world's largest monument to an author sits in Edinburgh commemorating Scott's life and work. The Bibliography of Scottish Literature in Translation has already recorded over **20,000 Scottish titles** translated into over **100 languages** worldwide. (Source: *We cultivate literature, Edinburgh UNESCO City of Literature Trust and University of St Andrews, Department of English website, 2009*)

Edinburgh the world's first UNESCO City of Literature - in 2004 Edinburgh was designated the world's first UNESCO City of Literature, a permanent title celebrating Edinburgh's status as a literary capital and pioneer in the UNESCO Creative Cities network. It is the capital of a nation renowned throughout the world for its writers, past and present, with a vibrant writing and publishing community. It is home to the world-famous Edinburgh International Book Festival, the National Library of Scotland, numerous prestigious collections, libraries both public and private, bookshops, literary tours and is a noted centre of education with four Universities. The '**Literature Quarter**' area of the city contains the Scottish Poetry Library, Scottish Storytelling Centre, Scottish Book Trust (Scotland's national agency for the promotion of literature, reading and writing), Canongate Books, the Writers' Museum, Makars' Court (commemorating our writers and poets), the grand Central Library and the imposing National Library of Scotland. (Source: www.cityofliterature.com)

The Written Word - printing, book importation and learning were firmly established in Scotland when the first printing press was set up by Andrew Myllar and Walter Chepman in Edinburgh in **1508**. Many of today's global publishing houses have their origins in Scotland including Chambers, Nelson, John Murray, Collins and A. & C. Black and for years the magazine world was dominated by Edinburgh titles, The Edinburgh Review and Blackwood's Magazine. The **Encyclopaedia Britannica** was first published in Anchor Close in Edinburgh in 1768. The University of Edinburgh's **James Tait Black Memorial Prizes** are Britain's oldest literary awards and among the most prestigious awarded for literature written in the English language. The **Saltire Society Literary Awards** annually recognise outstanding Scottish writing. *(Source: We cultivate literature, Edinburgh UNESCO City of Literature Trust, 2004)*

Buy the Book - There are around **120** publishers in Scotland. In a typical year, Scotland's publishers produce 3,000 titles, pay royalties to over **14,000** writers and launch the careers of hundreds of new writers. Scotland has publishing activity worth an estimated **£343 million** (at invoice value) to the Scottish economy, which is more than the cashmere industry and just behind the salmon industry. *(Source: www.publishingscotland.co.uk)*

Inspiring Readers and Writers - there are more than **25 organisations** in Scotland involved in writer support, readership and literature development. The work of these bodies is extensive and in 2008-09 included projects directly reaching audiences of more than 2 million people. Organisations such as **Scottish Book Trust** fund thousands of events every year, connecting writers with their readers in schools and in the community, and run high-profile book awards, creative writing and reader development programmes to inspire both adults and children to read and write. *(Source: Literature Forum and www.scottishbooktrust.com)*

The Finest of Festivals - Edinburgh International Book Festival – declaring itself '**the biggest and best**' literary festival of its kind in the world, the Edinburgh International Book Festival runs for 17 days each August and in 2008 it celebrated its **25th anniversary** with 700 events – adult and children, 800 authors from 45 different countries and more than 200,000 visitors. The festival is one of more than **40** literary festivals that take place across Scotland each year. *(Source: www.edbookfest.co.uk)*

Oor wan-aff tongue sae braw - Scots - Scotland is a multilingual country. Scots, a language closely related to English, is spoken from the Borders and Galloway in the south to Orkney and Shetland in the north. Dialects of the language are found in Scotland's main cities and in the densely populated central belt. Scots was the principal language of Robert Burns and has been used as a medium for literary, poetic and dramatic expression for many centuries. Recent years have seen increasing levels of interest in Scots with lively use of the language online and in poetry and books for children. *(Source: www.scotslanguage.com)*

Ar Cànan Fhìn (Our Own Language) - Gaelic - although no longer the language of the royal courts, Gaelic has been in Scotland for the best part of two millennia. It has contributed a wealth of cultural assets to the nation in terms of music, song, dance, poetry and storytelling. The literature is distinguished, with the early 16th century Book of the Dean of Lismore having preserved much of the older poetry, while the 20th century saw the emergence of several poets of international stature including **Somhairle MacGill-Eain** (Sorely MacLean) (1911-1996) from the island of Raasay. The 21st century has seen prose fiction thrive as never before and today **Bòrd na Gàidhlig** (the Gaelic Council) work to promote and develop the use and understanding of Gaelic, while **Comhairle nan Leabhraichean** (the Gaelic Books Council) have a specific remit to support Gaelic writers and

publishers. (Source: *We cultivate literature*, Edinburgh UNESCO City of Literature Trust, 2004 and www.gaelicbooks.org)

The Place for Poetry - in its earliest form, Scottish literature was dominated by poetry and today Scotland has a Poet Laureate, Liz Lochhead, as do several Scottish cities. Robert Burns is the poet at the nation's heart but Scotland's poetry is a broad river and still in spate. It's canty, it's couthy, it's concrete. It's urban, angry, rude and funny. It's lyrical, and reflects on love and landscapes. It's in English, Scots and Gaelic. It comes in books, in pamphlets, on CDs, on websites and podcasts; it is performed in pubs and slammed in halls and read in libraries. It's carried in pockets, in diaries, and learned by heart. Edinburgh is also home to the glorious **Scottish Poetry Library**, custom-built to celebrate poetry in all its forms, with collections of contemporary Scottish and international poetry. (Source: www.spl.org.uk)

Storytelling Scotland - Scotland possesses ancient storytelling traditions deriving from Celtic, Norse, Germanic and Latin cultures. Early collectors of these traditions included James Hogg, Robert Burns and Walter Scott, but in the 19th century John Francis Campbell created the first systematic gathering of storytelling traditions in the world when he engaged a network of Gaelic speakers across the Highlands and Islands to transcribe the stories of a whole people. In the late 20th century live oral storytelling experienced a renaissance in contemporary culture leading to the building of **one of the world's first purpose built storytelling centres** on Edinburgh's Royal Mile. Today there are more than **100** professional storytellers living and working in Scotland. (Source: www.scottishstorytellingcentre.co.uk)

Libraries Gave Us Power - the oldest subscription library in Britain was founded by miners in Leadhills in South Lanarkshire in 1741, with the oldest free lending Library in Scotland being founded around 1680 in Innerpefferay, near Crieff. Free public lending libraries across Scotland were established in 1853 and Scotland boasts no fewer than **550** offering a huge range of readership programmes across the country supported by an array of free digital resources. Scotland has two exceptional public reference libraries located in the nation's two great cities: **The National Library of Scotland**, a library of deposit, in Edinburgh and **The Mitchell Library** in Glasgow. The National holds over **seven million titles** and is the 12th largest library in the world and together with the National Archives of Scotland is the leading repository of manuscript records of Scotland's history. The Mitchell – built in part by a donation from billionaire Scots philanthropist Andrew Carnegie – is one of **the largest public reference libraries in Europe**, with over one and a half million titles, including unparalleled collections by Scots authors like Robert Burns. Both libraries are architecturally-inspired environments which offer free study space, research facilities and internet use to any member of the public with the time to fill out a form. (Sources: www.scotland.org and *Scottish Library & Information Council*, 'Libraries Supporting Scottish Publishers and Writing', 2009)

Let There Be Light - **Scotland was one of the first literate societies in Europe.** In **1496** the Scottish Parliament passed the world's first compulsory education law, obliging each freeholder to send his eldest son to school at six years old. By the **1790s** an exceptionally high proportion of Scots could read, regardless of wealth, gender, status or location. Dr Samuel Johnson noted in a visit to the remote Hebridean Islands that he *never encountered a house in which he did not find books in more languages than one.* (Source: *We cultivate literature*, Edinburgh UNESCO City of Literature Trust, 2004)

Books and Learning - Scotland's university tradition is among **the oldest and most respected** in the world: St Andrews (1411), Glasgow (1451), Aberdeen (1494) and Edinburgh's Medical School (1504), the first of its kind in Britain. Edinburgh ranks as one of

To find out more visit – www.cityofliterature.com

the world's leading Universities and all the major Scottish Universities teach Scottish literature as an integral part of their literature programmes. (Source: *We cultivate literature, Edinburgh UNESCO City of Literature Trust, 2004*)

Scottish Enlightenment - a 'hotbed of genius' - Scotland's outstanding achievement in philosophy, particularly during the period of the Scottish Enlightenment towards the end of the eighteenth century, is one of the great intellectual contributions to world culture. Edinburgh-based writers such as David Hume and Adam Smith changed not only Scotland, but the world, forever. Their statues stand in the Royal Mile. (Source: *We cultivate literature, Edinburgh UNESCO City of Literature Trust, 2004*)

A Creative Future - with creative writing now firmly established on the curriculum of many of our universities, Scotland's next generation of writers are hard at work... (Source: www.cityofliterature.com)

Background Information

Key online resources:

We cultivate literature on a little oatmeal – this book details Scotland's contributions to world literature and an introduction to Edinburgh as a UNESCO City of Literature – free to read online at www.cityofliterature.com

What is Scottish literature? – in this free booklet, Alan Riach, Professor of Scottish Literature at the University of Glasgow, offers an overview of Scotland's literary culture with an introduction to Scotland's best-known writers, poets and playwrights.

http://www.arts.gla.ac.uk/ScotLit/ASLS/SWE/What_is_Scottish_Literature.pdf

St Andrews University – Department of English – this website provides some background to Scotland's literature and literary heritage.

http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/%7Ewww_se/personal/cjmm/Scotback.html

Scotland's Literature Organisations:

Association for Scottish Literary Studies (ASLS) – www.asls.org.uk

For the promotion and study of the languages and literature of Scotland.

Books From Scotland – www.booksfromscotland.com

Online bookshop and information portal for all books about and from Scotland.

CILIPS – www.slainte.org.uk

The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals in Scotland.

Edinburgh International Book Festival – www.edbookfest.co.uk

The largest festival of its kind in the world.

Edinburgh UNESCO City of Literature Trust – www.cityofliterature.com

Promoting literary Edinburgh, the world's first UNESCO City of Literature.

To find out more visit – www.cityofliterature.com

Comhairle nan Leabhraichean / The Gaelic Books Council – www.gaelicbooks.net
Supporting writers and publishers with grants for Gaelic books.

Itchy Coo – www.itchy-coo.com
Publishing in Scots for children.

Moniack Mhor – www.arvonfoundation.org
A Writers' Centre serving writers in the Highlands.

The National Library of Scotland – www.nls.uk
Housing over thirteen million printed items.

Playwrights Studio, Scotland – www.playwrightsstudio.co.uk
Serving Scottish playwrights.

Publishing Scotland – www.publishingscotland.co.uk
Representing Scottish publishers.

Saltire Society – www.saltiresociety.org.uk
Information on Scottish culture past and present.

Scots Language Centre – www.scotslanguage.com
All you need to know on the Scots language.

Scottish Arts Council – www.scottisharts.org.uk
Scotland's lead body for the funding, development and advocacy of the arts in Scotland.

Scottish Book Trust – www.scottishbooktrust.com
Scotland's leading agency for the promotion of literature, reading and writing.

Scottish Library and Information Council - www.slainte.org.uk
The advisory body to the Scottish Government and Scottish Ministers on library and information matters.

Scottish PEN – www.scottishpen.org
Part of International PEN, a worldwide association of writers pledged to protect freedom of expression and promote literature across frontiers.

Scottish Poetry Library – www.spl.org.uk
The Scottish Poetry Library is *the* place for poetry in Scotland, for the regular reader, the serious student or the casual browser.

Society of Authors in Scotland – www.societyofauthors.org
A non-profit making organisation, founded in 1884, "to protect the rights and further the interests of authors".

Scottish Storytelling Centre – www.scottishstorytellingcentre.co.uk
All you need to know about Scotland's rich storytelling traditions.
