

Havant Literary Festival *'a fresh page'*

NEWSLETTER – MARCH 2010

The Festival Society AGM

The Society held its Annual General Meeting at The Spring on Tuesday 9 March. A copy of the 'Report from the Chair' on the 2009 Festival accompanies this newsletter. At the meeting, David Penrose and Sian Bamber were re-elected into the posts of Chair and Secretary respectively. Tim Dawes stepped down as Vice-Chair; Valerie Bird was elected to the post. Peter Corrigan stood down as Treasurer; Peter Adams was elected to the post.

The next Havant Literary Festival

This is an edited version of the Chair's report to the AGM. In the immediate wake of the last festival the Executive Committee took a unanimous decision not to stage a full scale event in 2010 but to plan instead for a September 2011 festival. The success of the 2009 festival took an undoubted toll on the dedicated group that made it. In less than a year we could not do that again. It is not only our energy levels that could not take it, but our financial standing too. The festival in its current organisational state is not sustainable. We need to take a breather to create a more substantial financial footing and, on the back of that job, to build a more robust infrastructure for planners, volunteers and Society members to rely on. In a first step towards this, we have recruited half a dozen or so new members to the committee, all endowed with expertise and interests that can only enrich what we do.

We need to be able to buy in commercial services to provide specialist facilities like temporary seating, staging and sound equipment where we need it. We need to be able to employ a project manager in the months leading up to the festival to ensure its smooth running. While many literary figures give their time free or for expenses only, we need to be able to pay competitive fees when we have to. For this we need to take the time to review and methodically apply for funding. Registered Charity status, Arts Council and Heritage Lottery funding are all realistic prospects for us, but they do not come without careful planning.

The Executive officers hope that members of the Society will see the wisdom of this decision and continue to support the festival. We keenly need new members and I would certainly ask everyone to do what they can to recruit on our behalf without falling out with their neighbours. Five and a half thousand people came to something during the 2009 festival; surely 1000 of them at least should be members of the Society. Certainly for the current year, we will not be raising the membership fee of £5.00. And for the future, before we do anything, we will be happy to hear the views of current members on what they would like to both get and give for their membership. The Festival website or a letter to the Festival Office at Nineveh will allow anyone to air their views.

Festival Events for 2010

We are not going entirely to ground in 2010. There will be a sequence of events under the HLF banner between now and then. This will keep us in the public eye and help to raise funds. So, here are some dates for your diary:

Saturday 17 April: A 'meet the author' event in the Meridian Centre

On Saturday 17 April, a small publishing house based in Winchester - Dragon International Independent Arts [www.diiarts.com] - is holding a 'Meet the Authors' event in The Meridian Centre. The venue is the currently empty shop opposite WH Smiths, the one that the Festival used for the Conan Doyle Exhibition. This has been arranged in conjunction with Havant Borough Council and the Literary Festival.

The four writers involved are all first-time published authors. The first three books are historical novels.

May 1812, by M.M. Bennetts, vividly evokes the events surrounding the assassination of the Prime Minister, Spencer Perceval, shot dead in the House of Commons.

Harbour, by Paul House, is set in Hong Kong between 1937 and 1941. It brings to life the interaction and conflict between colonial, Chinese and Japanese cultures.

Die a Dry Death, by Greta van der Rol, is a story of enterprise and courage, centred on the sinking of the Dutch East Indies vessel 'Batavia' off the coast of Western Australia in 1629. The survivors were stranded on a group of uninhabited, hostile islands, with little food or fresh water.

Pistols for Two - Breakfast for One, by Matthew J. Dick, represents a lighter side to Dragon International's list, following in the footsteps of great British comedic writers such as P.G. Wodehouse and George MacDonald Fraser.

Facebook users can RSVP to the event and invite their friends at <http://bit.ly/havant>. The event is free. Come along at any time between 10.00am and 5.00pm, meet these committed new authors and maybe buy a couple of their books.

Thursday 30 September: Tim Butcher

'Blood River – A Journey to Africa's Broken Heart' was one of the most brilliant non-fiction publications of 2007. As a journalist for the 'Daily Telegraph', Tim Butcher made an extraordinary journey down the Congo River, recreating H.M. Stanley's famous expedition of 1876. The journey itself was a remarkable feat, but the story of the Congo, past and present, is more remarkable still.

Tim Butcher will be at the United Reformed Church Meeting Hall at 7.00 on September 30 to talk about his new book 'Chasing the Devil – The Quest for Africa's Fighting Spirit' which will be published on 9 September.

This will be a ticketed event; full details will follow soon.

Saturday 2 October: A Havant Literary Festival Day at The Spring

The Spring Arts and Heritage Centre has been good enough to give the Literary Festival the run of its venues for this day in October. We are still in the planning stage but there will be a full day of events appealing to all ages. More next time.

Schools Events

The Literary Festival will hold two 'meet the writer' events for children, made possible by the good work of the Hayling Island Bookshop and Warblington School. Vanessa Curtis, author of 'Zelah Green: Queen of Clean' and the poet Earnest Yelf will meet their young audiences in the Summer Term.

The 2010 Poetry Competition

The poetry competition has underpinned the last two festivals as an event drawing entries from all over the country and overseas. We will be holding a 2010 Competition. The theme for the entries this year is 'Transition'. Our judge this year will be the distinguished poet Charles Bennett, perhaps best known for his collection 'How to Make a Woman out Of Water'. Full details of prize money, the rules of the competition and how to enter will be available on the festival website in May, with a final submission date in August.

Havant Literary Festival Quiz Night

There will be a fund-raising Quiz Night in the Function Room of 'The Star', at the top of North Street in Havant, on Tuesday 18 May at 7.30pm. Teams will be limited to a maximum of six members each – and there will be a prize for everyone in the winning team. There will also be a raffle.

Tickets are £6.50 each, including a buffet. They can be bought by sending a cheque [made out to The Havant Literary Festival] to HLF Quiz Night, Nineveh, 11 The Pallant, Havant, PO9 1BE. If you enclose a stamped-addressed envelope, we will send them to you. Otherwise, they will be kept on the door. So, get up a team and start mugging up that trivia.

HLF in partnership with the Havant Transition Network

Havant Transition Network is a new initiative that aims to help Havant move from high consumption, high energy, high waste, towards becoming a more self-reliant and resilient community. Harnessing the power of local creativity is the means to this end. It's not just about local produce and recycling - the arts, including literature, are central to this transformational project, which is why Havant Literary Festival is pleased to say that it has become a partner.

Other literary events we are happy to support

For readers aged 9 to 15: Derek Landy, author of the best selling Skulduggery Pleasant series will be at the Central Library Guildhall Square on Sunday April 25th to give a talk about his new book - **Dark Days**, the fourth in the series. This event is organised by The Hayling Island Bookshop and Portsmouth School Library service and starts at 2pm. Tickets are £5, all of which can be redeemed off a book bought at the event for signing by Derek. The first 60 people buying **Dark Days** will also receive a free publisher's poster which Derek will also sign. Tickets are available from The Hayling Island Bookshop [Tel: 02392 466620].

Portsmouth Festivities: Here's just a taster for you. Among those appearing at The Portsmouth Festivities this year are Andrew Motion, Sandi Toksvig and Julian Fellowes.