

Activities of the Society of Authors in Scotland

In Scotland, we know how to enjoy ourselves and enrich our minds in equal measure. We always put on an array of events, whether social, “improving” or of general interest. We organise 15-18 events a year, more if you include the ones we organise during the Edinburgh International Book Festival, where our role is to develop the Writing Business strand - aimed at authors at varying stages of their careers, including unpublished. During the rest of the year, as well as the “official” events organised by our energetic committee, members all over Scotland enjoy regular social gatherings in hostels from Kelso to Inverness and many places in between.

We see behind the scenes at places as varied as the High Courts, Police HQ, galleries, theatres, medical research centres. We hone our public speaking skills at expertly tutored workshops. Websites and podcasting have our attention, and our bank balances are improved by useful talks from an accountant.

One memorable evening was spent wandering with a private guide through the wynds and closes of Edinburgh’s Old Town, following in the footsteps of RL Stevenson. Fascinating fact of the day was that the great man had wooden false teeth: in those days, the rich had porcelain, the less well-off had wood, and the poor had ... other people’s teeth. For at least one person, the high spot of the tour was discovering that John Knox is buried underneath a carpark; she encouraged several of the monstrous regiment of our members to take great pleasure in standing on the spot in heavy shoes.

Another evening, unforgettable for different reasons, was our Amazon Event. We invited two senior people from Amazon UK to talk to us, producing an exceptionally interesting evening. The speakers were clearly very used to selling their product and very unused to having an hour of piercing and sometimes not wholly adulatory questions. They may be reluctant to come north of Hadrian’s Wall again, which would be a shame as there are many more questions we would like to ask.

We aim to continue with this hectic programme and expect to enjoy many more events with meals, talks with meals, various other things with meals, and meals. Occasionally, drink is taken with these meals, but only, of course, in very appropriate moderation. In addition, we enjoy excellent partnerships with Publishing Scotland Scottish Book Trust, and the Scottish Poetry Library, and others. Our agreement with Publishing Scotland gives our members a considerable number of free places at all PS network events and reductions on all their training courses. This and our role in the Literature Forum and the Scottish Parliamentary Cross Party Group on Culture and Media give us a strong voice for authors in Scotland.

Members of the SoA who live in Scotland are automatically members of the thriving SoA in Scotland and will therefore have the opportunity to be as well-dined and well-informed as we are.

Do join us!

Nicola Morgan (SOAIS Chair 2006-2009)