Press release

15 December 2016

2017 is the Year of the Literary Hero - a subject celebrated in Norwich, the City of Stories

VisitEngland has cited 2017 to be the year of the Literary Hero, a subject Norwich knows much about considering its rich literary history spanning over 900 years and its status as UNESCO City of Literature (awarded in 2012); it was the first English city to achieve this.

Norwich was home to Julian of Norwich - the first woman to be published in the English language - as well as the first recognisable novel, the first blank verse, the first provincial library and newspaper, the first British MA in Creative Writing, the first UK City of Refuge for persecuted writers, and so it continues. The literary arena today in Norwich is vast, with the University of East Anglia and Writers’ Centre Norwich behind much of the literary offering - Writers’ Centre Norwich is due to open the National Centre for Writing in April 2018, in their beautiful medieval merchant’s house – Dragon Hall.

Norwich celebrates its literary legacy with a host of annual and one off events, workshops and author lectures throughout the calendar year, from the University of East Anglia’s (UEA) Spring and Autumn Literary Festivals to the City of Literature programme at the Norfolk & Norwich Festival in May, and the 4-day crime writing extravaganza Noirwich in September.

During 2017 Norwich, the City of Stories blog by VisitNorwich will be writing about Literary Heroes from Norwich or with Norwich connections. The aims of these posts are to inspire people who love literature, history and travel, to visit the city to learn more about authors such as Anna Sewell of Black Beauty fame, as well as writers most will not have heard of, from the Meir of Norwich, a 13th century Jewish persecuted poet whose works are held in the Vatican archive in Rome, to Harriet Martineau, a determined 19th century author of
political essays and 35 books who had close friendships with Charles Darwin, Charles Dickens, Charlotte Bronte and Florence Nightingale. Martineau is also widely recognised as being the world’s first female journalist.

All twelve fascinating writers to be featured in the blog have interesting tales to tell, with places and memorabilia to visit or see, which brings the story to life even more. There are further plans for a new guided walking tour to take visitors through the City of Literature, organised by the Tourist Information Centre.

2017 Literary Events

UEA LIVE

Dragon Hall, 115 – 123 King St, Norwich

26 January – 23 March 2017

Contact: Philip Langeskov (P.Langeskov@uea.ac.uk) / Writers’ Centre Norwich (01603 877177)

Doors open for all events at 6.30pm for a 7pm start. All events are free and all are welcome - no booking necessary.

UEA LIVE, in collaboration with Writers’ Centre Norwich, brings you a series of readings from the historic Dragon Hall, showcasing the past, present and future of UEA writing talent. All headline authors will be supported by writers from across the current UEA Creative Writing programmes. Bookselling duties will be performed by Norwich’s legendary independent, The Book Hive.

Thursday 26 January Rory Gleeson - Rockadoon Shore

Thursday 23 February Julianne Pachico - The Lucky Ones

Thursday 23 March In Memory of Rebecca McManus

UEA Spring Literary Festival

University of East Anglia

22 Feb – 3 May 2017

Season Ticket: £48* (all seven events)
Individual Ticket: £8* / £4* students *Ticket price includes a booking fee
www.uea.ac.uk/litfest  | www.uea.ac.uk/litfest/tickets

The University of East Anglia's (UEA) first literary festival took place in 1991 and over the last twenty two years has welcomed a host of award-winning authors, journalists, illustrators, scientists, economists, broadcasters and more. The UEA hosts two festivals each year; one in the spring and the other in the autumn, and these are attended by over 6,000 people. All events are ticketed and open to the public.

**SPRING LITERARY FESTIVAL 2017** ‘It was the worst of times, it was the worst of times.’ So begins Ali Smith’s Autumn, misquoting Dickens. The times in question are now – strange times and getting stranger by the day. In times such as these, what is the role of the writer, the politician, the actor? Each of our guests at the festival is adept, in their own distinctive way, at looking at the world: they notice its oddities; they know its power games; they see its spaces for hope. Do join us to hear them speak – about their work, about themselves and about this strange old world we live in.

Wed 22 February - Lionel Shriver

Wed 1 March - Elif Shafak

Wed 8 March - Louise Doughty

Thurs 16 March - George Saunders

Wed 22 March - Michael Pennington

Wed 26 April - Ed Balls

Wed 3 May - Ali Smith

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**Norfolk & Norwich Festival**

**Various locations**

**12 – 28 May 2017**

The Norfolk and Norwich Festival is held each year in May - internationally renowned it has become a highlight of the region’s cultural calendar. Over seventeen packed days the
Festival presents more than 100 performances featuring a superb line-up of companies and ensembles from all over the world. The Norfolk & Norwich Festival programme takes in music, theatre, dance, circus, literature and visual arts as well as a host of spectacular free outdoor events.

City of Literature Programme by Writers’ Centre Norwich at NNF17

2016 saw the biggest programme to date from England’s first UNESCO City of Literature, with Writers' Centre Norwich transformed into a Story Machine, Live Literature from some of the UK's foremost performance artists and a weekend of ideas and debate from some of the most original thinkers, activists and writers of our time. Watch this space 2017 announcements soon...

Noirwich – Crime Writing Festival
Writers’ Centre Norwich & UEA
14 – 17 September
http://www.writerscentrenorwich.org.uk/

Britain’s boldest, bloodiest crime writing festival returns to the medieval lanes of Norwich. Noirwich is an annual crime fiction festival featuring the best crime authors, writing workshops and social events. The festival mixes together author talks and Q&As with workshops for aspiring writers. Whether you’re a reader, a writer or a bit of both you’ll find something at Noirwich. Each year the Fringe introduces visitors to Norwich as bars, restaurants, castles and other local establishments embrace the lure of noir.

UEA Autumn Literary Festival
University of East Anglia
October – December 2017, exact dates to be announced.

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Notes to editors

For high res images and further information please contact Melanie Cook, PR Manager, melanie.cook@visitnorwich.co.uk, 01603 727939. @visitnorwich #cityofstories #visitnorwich | Instagram Norwich_cityofstories.

For further information on Norwich and its surrounding area visit www.visitnorwich.co.uk & www.cityofstories.co.uk.

Featured Literary Heroes in 2017 on www.cityofstories.co.uk;

1. Meir ben Norwich (13th century)
   A 13th century Jewish persecuted poet whose works are held in the Vatican archive in Rome

2. Julian of Norwich (1342-1416)
   The first woman to be published in the English Language – Revelations of Divine Love

3. Robert Greene (1558-1592)
   Playwright best known for a posthumous pamphlet; Greenes, Groats-worth of Witte, bought with a million of Repentance, widely believed to contain an attack on William Shakespeare.

4. Sir Thomas Browne (1605-1682)
   Writer and intellect who studied medicine at Oxford, most famous for his book Religio medici who also contributed several new words to the English language; electricity, computer, literary, medical, pathology and hallucination.

5. Elizabeth Bentley (1767-1839)
   Anti-slave trade campaigner and poet. Lived in Georgian Norwich.

6. Amelia Opie (1769-1853)
   Leading abolitionist and another very strong female writer. Best known for her romantic novel Adeline Mowbray published in 1804.

7. Elizabeth Fry (1780-1845)
   One of the most respected women's prison reformers in the world.

8. Harriet Martineau (1802-1876)
   A big campaigner fighting from women’s rights to the abolition of slavery; she was cited as the world’s first female journalist. Friends with Charles Darwin, Charles Dickens, Charlotte Bronte and Florence Nightingale.

9. Anna Sewell (1820-1878)
   Author of one novel Black Beauty, which went on to sell 50 million copies making it one of the bestselling books of all time.
Author of *The Rings of Saturn* and UEA lecturer.

Writer and co-founder of the first British MA in Creative Writing at the University of East Anglia (UEA).

12. **Ian McEwan (1948-)**  
Novelist and screenwriter. The Times in 2008, featured him on their list of “The 50 greatest British writers since 1945”. First student on the first British MA in Creative Writing at the University of East Anglia.

- To keep up with the story, sign up to the City of Stories e-newsletter featuring four new posts each week www.cityofstories.co.uk.
- In 2012 Norwich became England’s first UNESCO City of Literature and the sixth in the world joining other great cities; Edinburgh, Dublin, Melbourne, Iowa City and Reykjavik. This accolade is a permanent status.
- VisitNorwich is the destination management organisation for the Norwich area. It is a private/public sector partnership and a not for profit organisation whose sole focus is to promote and develop the destination and support its members through collaborative marketing, research, information and business advice.
- In 2014 VisitNorwich- funded by the Norwich Business Improvement District (BID) - launched Norwich, the City of Stories a digital campaign which reached finalist status in the EDP Norfolk Tourism Awards 2015.
- In 2014 Norwich was named as one of Britain’s Top 10 cities in The Telegraph Travel Awards.
- In 2014 The Norwich Lanes was crowned Great British High Street of the Year in the city category.
- The Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts was one of the six finalists for the prestigious Art Fund Prize for Museum of the Year 2014.
- VisitNorwich Ltd is a company limited by guarantee, a private/public sector partnership and a membership organisation representing the interests of a broad range of businesses across the visitor economy. Its principal public sector stakeholders are Norwich City Council and South Norfolk Council.