

NORWICH

Celebrate the joy of books at the Hostry

By EMMA KNIGHTS

HOSTRY FESTIVAL

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People can join in with a celebration of the written word during a special day focusing on Norfolk authors this autumn.

Norfolk Authors in Profile is part of this year's Hostry Festival which takes place at Norwich Cathedral from October 26 until November 4.

In the year that Norwich received the Unesco City of Literature status, the Hostry Festival organisers have teamed up with independent book store The Book Hive and Writers' Centre Norwich to bring a selection of local authors to the stage to talk about their work on November 2.

Among the writers looking forward to taking part is Itteringham-based Elspeth Barker whose first acclaimed novel was *O Caledonia*, and who will be talking about her new book, *Dog Days*, a collection of selected writings, at the Hostry Festival event.

She said: "I am delighted to be involved in anything that furthers the written word. It is good for literature in general to be on display in festivals, it gets people to notice books and not just think they are something boring from the days before computers arrived – reading and hearing books aloud can inspire people to want to read more."

"Writing can also be very solitary and nothing beats being face to face with your readers."

Her new book, published by Norwich-based Black Dog Books, is due out in October and is an eclectic mix of her writings over the last 20

DIARY DATES

The 2012 Hostry Festival will take place from October 26 until November 4. Topping the bill is *Hamlet: The Undiscovered Country*, a newly-created sequel to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Before each of the shows inclusive theatre company Total Ensemble will perform a piece of movement theatre exploring *Hamlet's* themes. Other highlights are staged readings of *A Visit to the Villa Edouard VII* by Julian Maclaren Ross and *Voices: Moments from the Lives of Others* by Adrian Drew. Five *Marys Waiting*, a new play by David Banks, is being presented as a staged reading in a double bill with a concert starring cellist Clare O'Connell and violinist Marcus Barcham-Stevens. Younger audiences can enjoy *Thumbelina* presented by Norwich Puppet Theatre and also *Tilly the Talespinner* and *Obee Joyful*. The closing event will be a free screening of the classic *Hamlet* film starring Laurence Olivier.

years or so. It takes its title from a piece of writing looking at four-legged friends that have featured in Elspeth's life.

Elspeth explained: "It is about dogs that really mark important parts in one's life."

"I remember being 18 and the dog that had been there all my life – a golden retriever called Rab – died, and I remember that, far more than being allowed a gin and tonic or going to university, the death of that dog signalled the end of my childhood."

Seventy-one-year-old Elspeth, a



Picture: DENISE BRADLEY

PLEASED TO MEET YOU : Elspeth Barker will be one of the authors at the Hostry Festival in October.

mother of five and grandmother of four, and whose children include novelist Raffaella Barker, shares other snapshots of her life through the book – everything from growing up in Drumtochty Castle in Scotland to her garden and her appreciation of the Norfolk landscape.

"I think the thing that everyone is struck by in Norfolk is the sky and the extraordinary coast and the birds, they are quite wonderful," she said.

Elspeth, now married to the writer Bill Troop, also includes in her new book some writing about the loss of her first husband, the

poet George Barker.

And as well as the memoirs and autobiographical work, readers are also offered some literary criticism and essays.

The book also includes introductions to East Anglian writers and painters and reviews of the work of some of Elspeth's contemporaries – Angela Carter, A S Byatt, Toni Morrison, Beryl Bainbridge and William Trevor among others.

Summing up the collection, Elspeth said: "I hope some of it is funny, some of it is quite dark. It is a very varied book, the sort of collection that is diverse enough to enjoy dipping in and out of."

With *Dog Days* now finished, Elspeth is now turning her attentions to a novel which she has given the working title *Some Hope*.

"It is about trust and abuse of trust, and grief and ways of coping with a difficult and fractured way of life."

"It is set mainly in East Anglia with bits in Ireland and London," she said.

Norfolk Authors in Profile is at Norwich Cathedral's Hostry on Friday, November 2, from 1.30pm. Tickets cost £10 (concessions £5). To book call the box office on 01603 218450.

For more information visit www.hostryfestival.org

emma.knights@archant.co.uk

AUTHORS IN PROFILE

■ Simon Gough, who lives in north Norfolk, has revelled in changes of career; from washing up to writing for the BBC, to acting, to selling the finest antiquarian books in London and Holt. This month his book, *The White Goddess; An Encounter*, is being published. It concerns events surrounding his relationship with his great uncle, Robert Graves.

■ Sarah Ridgard, who lives in Norwich with her husband and two children, spent some years travelling and then working with Amnesty International, Oxfam and Oxford University Press before graduating from the University of East Anglia with an MA in Creative Writing. Her debut novel, published this month, is called *Seldom Seen*.

■ Doug Stroggins is writing a new book – called *180 Degrees Out* – looking at why we have moved away from the life we are meant to live, and how to enjoy the life we desire and deserve.

■ Hostry Festival founder and artistic director Stash Kirkbride and the event's co-producer Peter Beck, wrote the headline show *Hamlet: The Undiscovered Country*. The play is edited by Peter Barrow.

HONOUR OUR LOCAL ARTISTS

THE 2012
NORFOLK
ARTS
AWARDS

in association with the

Eastern Daily Press

The cream of Norfolk's creative scene will be honoured at a new awards ceremony opening this year's Hostry Festival.

The 2012 Norfolk Arts Awards, in association with the EDP, will start the arts festival on October 26 and features 12 awards spanning the different aspects. EDP readers have the chance to nominate their favourite local artist, performer, venue, show or organisation for one of the awards – the EDP People's Choice Award. The main criteria is that all nominees must be based in or have produced work in Norfolk.

To nominate, visit www.norfolkartsawards.co.uk and submit the details. Nominations must be received by September 14.

A shortlist will be selected and published on the website where people will be able to vote for their favourite. The 2012 Norfolk Arts Awards will take place on October 26 at Norwich Cathedral's Hostry from 7pm. The red carpet awards event will also include an after-show reception.

Tickets cost £20. To book call 01603 218450.