



SCOTTISH
CHILDREN'S REPORTER
ADMINISTRATION

AUTHOR “HONOURED” TO READ AT SCRA EVENT

The SCRA-sponsored author event at this year’s Edinburgh International Book Festival was an outstanding success.

One hundred and seventy five invited guests and members of the public enjoyed SCRA’s now annual event at the Edinburgh International Book Festival.

At the event on Friday 17 August, Scottish author Nicola Barry read from her critically acclaimed book, *Mother’s Ruin*. The book tells the story of how alcohol ruined a respectable Edinburgh family.

Nicola Barry grew up in Murrayfield - her father was a hospital consultant, her mother was medically trained, her brothers boarders at public school. However, behind the closed doors of their imposing family home, her mother Monica was drinking herself to death.

The book describes how Nicola’s mother became a prisoner to the bottle, and how - with her father at work, and her brothers away at school - Nicola spent a lot of her childhood as her mother’s unofficial carer: hauling her from the bath when she was too drunk to function and running errands to buy her booze.

Although the book is full of harrowing incidents, it is also warmed by a touching humour and explains how Nicola battled with her own alcoholism as she grew into a young adult.

A former editor of the *Big Issue Scotland*, Nicola is an award winning journalist who is well known for her writing on social issues in many of Scotland’s newspapers.

The event was chaired by Scottish journalist and broadcaster Ruth Wishart who encouraged Nicola to talk about her experiences.

Nicola said she was initially apprehensive about the event as the audience was filled with guests of SCRA – many of whom work in this field. However, the author said she enjoyed the event and the many questions from the audience afterwards.

Nicola said:

“Despite my initial nerves, I really enjoyed SCRA’s event.

“For the first time at a reading, I felt my audience were completely in tune with me and that made it so much easier. Thank you for asking me to do the event – it was a real honour.”

SCRA chose the book as it highlights one of the many reasons why children are referred to the Children’s Reporter.

Deputy Chair of SCRA’s Board, Anne McNeill personally thanked Nicola after the event and praised the author for her honesty and courage.

Anne said:

"We were delighted to sponsor this event, giving SCRA the opportunity to welcome partner organisations to this informal yet stimulating event. Nicola's ability to raise the issues she faced throughout childhood both in her 'warts and all' book and in her conversation with Ruth at the Book Festival gave all of us involved in children's services much food for thought.

"I had the benefit of reading Nicola's book before meeting her, but hearing her read passages from the book was a profoundly moving experience. She is a real survivor and an inspiration to us all!"

Both Nicola and Ruth Wishart attended SCRA's reception for guests afterwards. Eddie McConnell, Director of Reporter Operations welcomed guests to the reception, speaking afterwards he said:

"This event is an excellent opportunity for SCRA to enhance our relationship with partners and raise public awareness of the Children's Hearings System. We are delighted by the response from guests, staff and members of the public who attended the event. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Nicola and Ruth, and everyone else who made the event such a success."

The feedback from guests and staff has been extremely positive.

Malcolm Schaffer Reporter Manager for East Region, said:

"SCRA's event at the book festival was as absorbing experience. I could have listened to the dialogue between Ruth and Nicola for ages. It was great to have so many partners there and speaking to people from other agencies afterwards they were clearly impressed by the author and the event."

Gerard McEneaney, Chair of Fife Children's Panel and the Children's Panel Chairman's Group, said:

"It was a really enjoyable event - I thought the choice of Nicola Barry was exceptional. She was humorous, poignant and inspiring and I cannot wait to start reading the book. The social event afterwards was also very enjoyable and a good opportunity to meet colleagues and friends in a relaxed setting that we seldom get the opportunity to do and of course the organisation of the whole event was first class. Thank you and well done for a very well organised and enjoyable evening."

If you'd like to hear more about the event, you can listen to Nicola reading from her book recorded live at SCRA's event at the Edinburgh International Book Festival on www.edbookfest.co.uk.