

PRESS RELEASE from Dunbeath Preservation Trust: community@dunbeath-heritage.org.uk

'FLOWS TO THE FUTURE' - WRITING WORKSHOP with GEORGE GUNN

Venue: **DUNBEATH HERITAGE CENTRE**

Date: **Sat. 20th June 2015**

- PRESS RELEASE BEGINS -



Photo © Dunbeath

Preservation Trust

Have you finished cutting your peat yet this year?

Some of you will have; most of you probably find the question irrelevant. More than likely this early summer you've been more preoccupied with whether or not to fill the oil tank early, or eat into tight budgets by burning gas or electricity at a time of year it's normally safe to switch the settings to 'OFF'. You might even be looking to alternative, DIY energy-production, by building a wind turbine - or objecting to one.

Peat is more than a source of fuel, much as generations of Caithnessians have depended on it for heat and cooking fuel. This year sees the start of a five-year local project by the Peatlands Partnership, called 'Flows to the Future', which takes a much broader look at the natural matter of peat. The project will restore historical damage done to the peatland, natural habitat for a myriad birds, plants and animals.

Dunbeath Preservation Trust is host this Saturday to one of the 'Flows to the Future' summer programme events. Writer George Gunn is no stranger to peatland: cutting it, carting it, walking on (or through)it, talking about it, and of course writing about it. Literally and metaphorically, Gunn has spent his life mining the culture, people, land and sea-scapes of Caithness for creative inspiration, and the Flow Country accounts for a fair chunk of it. Some years ago, BBC Radio 4 featured Gunn reading his own script on the Flows for a programme called 'The Peatbog Diaries', including poems literally dripping off the page as he and producer Mark Rickards stood in the rain that feeds the largest blanket bog in Europe.

Who better, then, to lead a writing workshop on the theme of Peatland? As a working writer, George Gunn is clear about what Dunbeath has to offer the imagination: *'Dunbeath is probably the most beautiful strath in Scotland - It's a poem in itself. Let's just observe it. All I want people to bring is notebooks and pencils. That'll make my life a lot easier.'*

Starting at Dunbeath Heritage Centre, Gunn will invite participants to take a very short walk along Dunbeath Water, the '**Highland River**' made so famous by Neil M. Gunn, to consider the river as highway to the peatlands that contain the river's source. Of course, from its source the river runs to the sea, to which the Atlantic salmon returns after its epic struggle inland to spawn. Participants will also have the option of spending time at Dunbeath Preservation Trust's other sites at the harbour: a boatshed with its restored Stroma yawl, fishing stores, ice house and authentically maintained salmon bothy. Photographs from the Trust's collections, showing how the people of Dunbeath have interacted with the peatland over generations, will be available as prompts. The Heritage Centre's museum collection of archaeology will remind participants of how the peatland has been habitat to man of Dunbeath since before the Bronze Age. Of course, some may prefer to find inspiration in the floor-map interpretation of Neil Gunn's Highland River.

Plenty of scope, then, for writers to spend an enjoyable day and produce a piece of writing to remember it by.

The workshop is FREE. Meet Dunbeath Heritage Centre 10am-4pm. Participants will need to bring their own lunch. Tea, coffee and hot chocolate can be bought at the Centre.

To book: Tel. 07860 927839

To contact Dunbeath Heritage Centre:

Tel. 01593 731233 or e-mail community@dunbeath-heritage.org.uk

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