

THE WORLD, IN WORDS

CHARLOTTE SQUARE GARDENS
EDINBURGH
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11 – 27 AUGUST 2012

NEWS RELEASE



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Saturday 18th August 2012
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MORPURGO RECEIVES STANDING OVATION AT EDINBURGH INTERNATIONAL BOOK FESTIVAL

“I have plundered my own life for fiction to the extent that I am not quite sure if it is remembered memory, invented memory, or told memory – I have fogged the whole thing” said Michael Morpurgo, author of *War Horse*, at the Edinburgh International Book Festival where he was speaking about his new memoir *Michael Morpurgo: War Child to War Horse*.

The biography takes a unique form with seven chapters focussing on Morpurgo’s life written by acclaimed writer Maggie Fergusson, with Morpurgo writing a story in response to each chapter to make up the whole book.

Fergusson joined Morpurgo on stage in the sold-out event today, sponsored by Baillie Gifford, and told the audience how one of the author’s early school reports stated, “Morpurgo may never be bookish but he has a great rugger future.”

The children’s author told stories from his life including his foray into bell ringing at his local church, “I was always on the tenor bell, it is the one for people with no timing. I was on the second team for five years and never once on a Sunday did I make it to the first team.”

He also spoke about his time studying at University at Kings College, London, and subsequent teaching career, “When I hear Michael Gove say that all teachers should be those who got firsts or upper second class degrees, then I think ‘well, Philip Pullman and myself got thirds!’”.

Aside from his writing, Morpurgo also founded and runs the *Farms for City Children* project with his wife Clare. The project, which has been going since 1976, aims to give children a week-long farming

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experience, where the kids participate in everything from milking cows to clearing out stables. He revealed his desire to open a farm somewhere in the Scottish borders asking the audience, “It is our dream to set up a place in the North. If anybody has a rich uncle with a thousand acre estate – and a mansion – do let me know!”

Morpurgo then finished the session with a moving rendition of the song ‘Only Remembered’ from the stage play and movie of his bestselling book *War Horse*. Singing unaccompanied, Morpurgo invited the audience to join in before finishing the session with a standing ovation from members of the Book Festival audience.

The Edinburgh International Book Festival runs until Monday 27th August, and this weekend will feature authors such as James Kelman, Danny Wallace, Irvine Welsh, Liz Lochhead, Ali Smith, Anne Enright and disco legend Nile Rogers.

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