



South Downs Poetry Festival

FOCUS ARTS CHI UK ANNUAL REPORT: 2024

CHARITY NUMBER: 1200784

TRUSTEES: Barry Smith, Joan Secombe, Ian Barnett, Lesley Amanda Gravett.

South Downs Poetry Festival, SDPF, is an annual pop-up festival which – uniquely – spans many miles: the length and breadth of the beautiful South Downs National Park and the surrounding area. The festival is organised by Focus Arts, a registered charity (number 1200784).

2024 has been another action-packed year with the festival in full swing in locations around the South Downs with exciting events taking place in our usual eclectic choice of venues, including museums, churches, galleries, community spaces and even a jailhouse. We began at St John's Chapel, Chichester, to mark the bicentenaries of the Romantics, this year with a special emphasis on Lord Byron in his bicentenary year. SDPF poets gave a dramatic reading of Byron's Childe Harold's Pilgrimage. A new event this year was Roman Poetry and Music at the Novium Museum, featuring translations of Horace's Odes by Timothy Ades together with two new compositions for a specially-tuned guitar by Linda Kelsall-Barnett recreating Roman music under the mentorship of Armand D'Angour, professor of Classics at Jesus College, Oxford. The setting of the Roman remains was a stunning backcloth to the performance. An unusual addition was a link-up with Portsmouth FC supporters club for a celebration of sports poetry held at The Spring Arts Centre, in Havant, Hampshire, which brought together novice and experienced poets.

Our contributions to the annual Festival of Chichester were the Poetry & Jazz Cafe with guest poets Maura Dooley and Jeremy Page at the Assembly Room and Poetry and Music with the legendary actor Steven Berkoff reading from Byron's Don Juan at the Novium. At St John's Chapel, Pastoral Idyll featured the poetry of Barry Smith set to music by Linda Kelsall-Barnett on classical guitar. We maintained our partnership with the Shelley Memorial Project, contributing to the words and music programme at St Mary's Church, Horsham,

which contains memorials to the Shelley family. Louis de Bernieres was the special guest poet/performer with support from South Downs writers. Shoreham Wordfest hosted Poetry in Motion with Chris Hardy on guitar, Charlotte Glasson on sax and Barry Smith with words for National Poetry Day at St Mary de Haura Church. This year saw the SDPF on tour at Dimbola gallery and teashop, Freshwater, Isle of Wight. And the jailhouse? That was part of the Arundel Festival – Jazz and Poetry at the Jailhouse. We finished the year in style at grade 1 listed Guildhall in Priory Park, Chichester, with the Festive Jazz Cafe featuring actor Paula Tinker and Big House jazz.

2024 saw the publication of the sixteenth issue of Poetry & All That Jazz magazine featuring new work by South Downs poets and special guests. A complimentary review by Sam Smith appeared in The Journal magazine online.

Poets featured in the 2024 festival included Timothy Ades, Louis de Bernieres, Maura Dooley, Stephanie Norgate, Amanda Waring, Jeremy Page, Lou Beckerman, Barry Smith, Chris Hardy, Naomi Foyle, Mandy Pannett, Maria Jastrzebska, Janice Dempsey, Denise Bennett and George Marsh amongst others. Actors included Steven Berkoff, Emily Rose Smith and Paula Tinker. Musicians included classical pianist Elena Toponogova, violist George White, guitarists Linda Kelsall-Barnett and Chris Hardy, jazz saxophonist Charlotte Glasson, and Mike Carey's Big House Jazz Band. All in all, it was certainly another hectic and thoroughly enjoyable poetical year in the South Downs.

Additionally, we maintained our monthly Open Mic Poetry events in the Jubilee Hall, New Park Centre, Chichester, putting the focus on developing the appreciation of poetry within the community. After a reading by a visiting guest poet, local poets of all ages read their own new work to a supportive audience. The festival also contributed the poetry element of Arts Junction at Arundel, a mix of the arts including music, theatre and spoken word. Each month, two poets read their work bringing the best of new writing to the local community.

Barry Smith

Festival Director

ACCOUNTS

Income: (£'s)

Donations	500
Charitable Activities	3558
TOTAL INCOME	4058

Expenditure: (£'s)

Public Liability Insurance 240

Events costs 4779

TOTAL EXPENDITURE 5019

Cash at Bank: (£'s) 4624