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STIRLING Observer



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READER COMPETITION

WIN

A STYLISH SCRUMPTIOUS SUNDAY OVERNIGHT STAY AT THE GRAND CENTRAL HOTEL

Weekends are wonderful, but when Sunday evening creeps in, so do the 'back to work blues'. You can banish those blues and fall in love with Sundays again with this fantastic prize, courtesy of The Grand Central Hotel, Glasgow.

We have teamed up with this fabulous four star hotel to offer an exclusive one-off Scrumptious Sunday for one lucky winner plus a guest. What better excuse to book a Monday off work?

The prize includes an overnight stay for two in a classic room, Scottish breakfast, two-course dinner and a glass of fizz at Champagne Central before checking out, fully refreshed, on Monday morning.

There is no better place to spend a Sunday than The Grand Central Hotel. Close to everything Glasgow has to offer, the hotel enjoys an enviable position in the heart of the city whilst offering luxury bedrooms, a stylish bar and restaurant and the very warmest of Scottish welcomes.

Those not lucky enough to win can still take advantage of the unique Scrumptious Sunday offer. The iconic Grand Central Hotel offers a two-course dinner, overnight accommodation, a glass of fizz in the glamorous Champagne Central and full Scottish breakfast. From just £119 per room, per night (based two people sharing).

Simply visit www.thegrandcentralhotel.co.uk for more information.

To be in with a chance of winning this fabulous prize, simply answer the question below:



Q: Which band had the hit single Sunday Girl?

(1) Beatles (2) Blondie (3) Fleetwood Mac

TO ENTER, CALL 0901 307 7928 and follow instructions (51p/call) OR TEXT the word STOWIN to 85858 (50p/text).

Terms and conditions: Lines close noon June 8, 2016. Landline calls cost 51p each plus network extras. Mobiles and payphones will be higher. Texts cost 50p each plus one standard network rate message. For SMS you may receive details of other related promotional offers and services. If you do not wish to receive these add NOINFO to the end of your message. Prize as described. Std Trinity Mirror plc rules apply. J Media UK Ltd, SW4 7BX. Helpline 0207 720 7130 (local rate). Usual competition rules apply. See www.dailyrecord.co.uk/rules. The editor's decision is final. 1 winner will be selected at random after the closing date and will receive the prize as stated: a Scrumptious Sunday package at The Grand Central Hotel. The prize includes overnight accommodation for two in a classic room, glass of fizz at Champagne Central, two-course dinner in Tempus Restaurant and full Scottish breakfast the following morning. Prize non transferable, non exchangeable, no whole/part cash alternatives, delivered within 28 days of competition closing date. Winners must be happy for publicity. Prize must be redeemed for a Sunday evening by 31st July 2016 and booking is subject to availability.

Bert gears up for big book launch

Staff Reporter

A Stirling author has travelled 1000 miles and sold around 500 books on a whistle-stop tour of Scotland.

Bert Mitchell, who pens crime novels under the name RJ Mitchell, has just completed a 12-date signing tour of WHSmith stores.

It has been the perfect build up to the release of his latest novel *The Shift*, which will be published on June 23 - and launched in conjunction with The Stirling Observer at a special event in the city on June 30.

The former Wallace High School pupil started out with a book signing in the Thistles Centre in March and finished up with an appearance in Aberdeen at the weekend to take his character of Detective Sergeant Gus Thoroughgood to a wider audience.

Bert said: "The tour has also set things up very nicely for the launch of my new book.

"For all of that, I owe a huge debt of thanks to WHSmith, and in particular their Central Scotland stores co-ordinator Garry Torrance, who have backed me to the hilt."

However he admits it wasn't all smooth sailing.

"At The Glasgow Fort, just outside Easterhouse, being an ex-cop proved anything but a good selling point," he laughed.

Bert is set to release *The Shift* and *The Blood Acre* - prequels explaining the background to his current novels, *Parallel Lines*, *The Hurting* and *The Longest Shadow*.

The former police officer has been snapped up in a four-book deal with publisher McNidder & Grace, which is planning to take his work to America and the rest of Europe.

The Shift is the fourth in the



Book tour Author Bert Mitchell

Thoroughgood series which is set in 1989, involving a more autobiographical account of some of his experiences as a Glasgow cop, against a backdrop of The Ice Cream Wars and the Troubles in Ireland.

Bert, who draws upon his experiences with the Strathclyde force at that time, is also writing *The Heist* and *Private Investigations*, about a Stirling-based SAS hero who finds himself in Barlinnie Prison. *The Heist* should be hitting book stores by the end of this year.

WHSmith and publishers McNidder

& Grace are hosting a special launch party and book signing at The Royal Hotel, Bridge of Allan, on June 30 at 7.30pm to celebrate the release of *The Shift*.

The Stirling Observer will also be there, as our very own reporter Donna White will be introducing the author and hosting a Q&A session as well as interviewing him on stage.

Bert will also be signing copies of his new book *The Shift* at WHSmith in The Thistles shopping centre on July 2, from 11am to 3pm

Nan's novel looks at family life in the old Fallin Blocks

A writer has brought back to life a land from the past.

The Fallin Blocks were built at the beginning of the 20th century when mining in the village started.

More than 180 families could be housed in one single block and several blocks were built between 1906 and 1908.

The blocks were not well built and suffered from damp and infestations of woodlice and beetles - with the estate torn down in the 1950s and 60s.

Nan Holcroft, who lived on the estate when she was a young child, has released a new novel *The Pit Block*, which looks at what life there was like.

Writing under the name Agnes Kirkwood, Nan's book looks at a family living there in the 1930s - with the characters living in squalor and with the dangers of working down the mine.

She said: "The book is not about my life growing up, but there are a few things in the book that

I remember.

"The setting is exactly how it was when I lived there, and I remember it so vividly."

Nan, who is 72 and has lived in Yorkshire for many years, said that she had always wanted to be a writer and thinks that the book will be enjoyed by those who live in the area.

"I was brought up in one of the blocks," she said. "I was there till I was seven or eight years old."

"It was a very unique place, and even though it was knocked down in the 50s and 60s, many people will remember it."

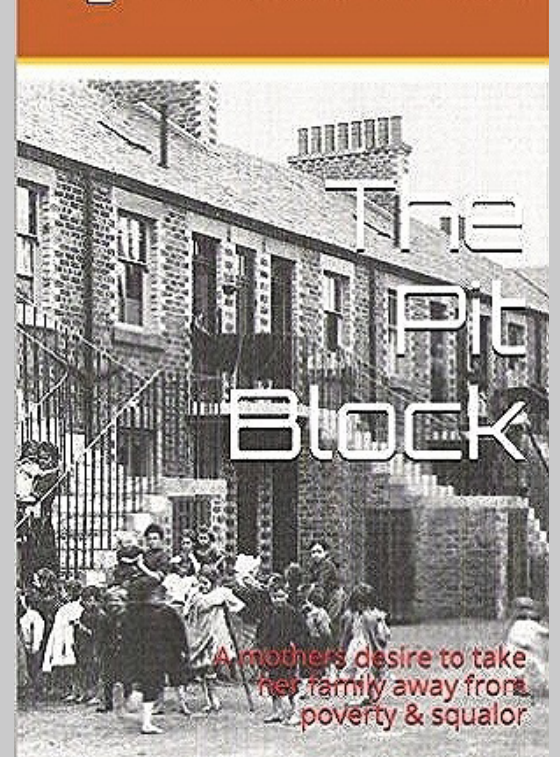
"I found living there was like being in an adventure playground."

"There was everything there that you shouldn't play with."

The Pit Block by Agnes Kirkwood is available to purchase as an e-book on Amazon.

Novel idea Nan's novel focuses on family life in the Fallin Blocks in the 1930s

Agnes Kirkwood



A mother's desire to take her family away from poverty & squalor