

**Press release**

**Embargoed until Wednesday 10 August**

## **Line-up revealed for Durham Book Festival 2016**

***Leading names including Anthony Horowitz, David Baddiel, Kathryn Williams, Juno Dawson, Michael Morpurgo and Pat Barker will headline this year's festival***

The line-up has been revealed for Durham Book Festival 2016, the North East's largest literary event. Tickets are now on sale.

The festival takes place between 7 and 16 October 2016, and will see some of the country's leading writers, artists and thinkers inspiring audiences across County Durham.

The festival encompasses talks, readings and performances, including a family theatre production, *Hey Presto!*, adapted from the picture book by **Nadia Shireen** and touring 19 libraries and community centres across the county.

Durham Book Festival is commissioned by Durham County Council and produced by New Writing North, with funding from Durham University and Arts Council England.

Ten days of festival activity begins on Friday 7 October with the announcement of the Gordon Burn Prize, one of the UK's most exciting awards, which has been judged, this year, by novelists **Jenn Ashworth** and **William Boyd**, journalist and author **Rachel Cooke** and artist and author **Harland Miller**. At the event, the six shortlisted writers will read from their work, before the £5,000 prize is given to this year's winner.

A strong politics and society theme runs through this year's festival. Highlights include **Laura Bates**, founder of the Everyday Sexism project, on her latest book, *Girl Up*; **Lynsey Hanley** and **Mike Savage** explore what social class means in the 21<sup>st</sup> century; **Owen Jones** reveals his ideas on how to build societies run in the interests of working people; **Sebastian Barry** uncovers some of the stories of refugees to Britain; and **Nikesh Shukla** gathers the work of exciting new BAME voices in his crowd-funded collection, *The Good Immigrant*.

There are new memoirs to be enjoyed from festival favourites, **Alan Johnson MP** and **Chris Mullin**. **Hunter Davies**, the author of more than 50 books and a journalist for the Sunday Times, talks about his memories of growing up in the post-war North; while **James Rebanks** offers a different northern perspective with his bestselling memoir, *The Shepherd's Life: A Tale of the Lake District*.

At Durham Book Festival for Schools, comedian and author **David Baddiel** will entertain the under-12s, while award-winning Young Adult authors **Juno Dawson** and **Lisa Williamson** will be taking questions from a teen audience about the subjects of diversity and acceptance.

**Anthony Horowitz** is the internationally best-selling author of more than 40 books, including the *Alex Rider* series and two new Sherlock Holmes novels, as well as the creator of television's *Foyle's War* and *New Blood*. On 12 October he will appear in Durham for the first time to speak about his fascinating career and introduce his new crime novel, *Magpie Murders*.

Mercury Prize-nominated musician **Kathryn Williams** returns to the festival to perform *Hypoxia*, the album inspired by Sylvia Plath, which started life as a Durham Book Festival commission in 2013. Kathryn is also this year's 'songwriter in residence' and will be leading a group of acclaimed musicians and writers on an intensive three-day songwriting retreat in Durham. **Michele Stodart** from the Magic Numbers and singer-songwriter **Tom McRae** are amongst those taking part in the retreat. The artists will preview the new work in a special one-off performance at Gala Theatre on 15 October.

This year's Durham Book Festival Big Read is **Pat Barker's** seminal First World War novel, *Regeneration*. 3,000 free copies of the book will be distributed throughout County Durham through schools, libraries, shops and businesses, supported by activities ranging from book group discussions to a performance of war poetry. In a flagship event at Durham Cathedral, Pat Barker will be joined by another of our great chroniclers of the First World War, **Michael Morpurgo**, for their first ever joint event.

The launch of the Durham Book Festival programme also marks the unveiling of Durham Book Festival's **Little Free Libraries**. The Little Free Library concept initiated in the US in 2009 with a wooden box full of books in the front garden and the simple ethos 'take a book, leave a book'.

There are now Little Free Libraries in countries worldwide and, by October, there will be 15 new Little Free Libraries installed across County Durham. The Little Free Libraries are commissioned by Durham Book Festival, sponsored by Banks Group and built by communities across County Durham, including the men's CREE group at Greenfield Arts Centre in Newton Aycliffe, and volunteers at Locomotion, the National Railway Museum at Shildon. Each library is unique and starts off with a range of books donated by Durham Book Festival.

**Claire Malcolm, chief executive of New Writing North said:** "The festival returns this year with a mixture of leading authors, emerging talent and exciting new commissions. We're pleased to be taking activity right out into the county with two flagship projects. Hey Presto!, a touring musical production for families, will delight children from Seaham to Shildon; and do look out for Little Free Libraries – miniature libraries that allow you to take a book and leave a book – which will be popping up in locations all over County

Durham, with books suitable for all ages. We'll be reaching 3000 people with Durham Book Festival Big Read, the First World War classic by Pat Barker, which was published 25 years ago. Pat is a Booker Prize winner and a Durham resident, so we're delighted to be celebrating her illustrious career."

**Cllr Neil Foster, Durham County Council's Cabinet member for economic regeneration and culture, said:** "The Durham Book Festival is just one example of the many and varied cultural offerings we have here in Durham. I am delighted to see that, once again, the festival is spreading its reach into the wider county through its touring family theatre production, going into local libraries and community centres. This community engagement will undoubtedly be further re-enforced by the introduction of the exciting Little Free Libraries scheme and I look forward to hearing the feedback from local families about this innovative idea.

"The festival has gone from strength to strength over the years and it is a delight to see that the wide range of authors appearing is, once again, a star-studded line-up of local favourites, national treasures and new talent. It is also particularly pleasing to see that, through the Big Read, the festival will be commemorating the centenary of the Battle of the Somme, a poignant occasion that has been a focus for much of the county's cultural offer this summer."

***Find your nearest Little Free Library, download reading material for the Big Read, and book tickets for Durham Book Festival at [www.durhambookfestival.com](http://www.durhambookfestival.com)***

**Ends**

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