

Press release

Embargoed until Wednesday 9 August, 8.30am

## Line-up revealed for Durham Book Festival 2017

*The annual festival returns with headline guests including Roddy Doyle, Lionel Shriver, Robert Webb, Alan Hollinghurst, June Sarpong and Tracy Chevalier*

The programme has been announced for Durham Book Festival 2017, the North East's largest literary event. Tickets go on sale on Thursday 10 August.

The festival takes place between 6 and 15 October 2017, and will see some of the country's leading writers, artists and thinkers inspiring audiences across County Durham.

The festival features an array of talks, readings and performances, including a family theatre production, *Do Not Enter The Monster Zoo*, adapted from the picture book written by **Amy Sparkes** and illustrated by Newcastle-based illustrator **Sara Ogilvie** and touring 20 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.

The ten-day festival begins on Friday 6 October with a special screening of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* in Durham Cathedral – where some of the film was originally shot. This will be the first of three screenings across the festival's opening weekend, celebrating 20 years since the book was first published. This is the first time Durham Cathedral has hosted a Harry Potter-screening, and will prove a must-see event for all Potter fans.

Durham Book Festival is renowned for its original commissions. Amongst this year's selection is *The News as a Novel*, in which four award-winning writers respond to the extraordinary news cycle of 2017. **Lionel Shriver, Alexei Sayle, Benjamin Myers** and **Petina Gappah** will present their original pieces at Durham Town Hall on Friday 13 October. The commission is inspired by the late Gordon Burn's *Born Yesterday: The News as a Novel*; an ambitious and experimental novel written and published in 2007 in response to the news in that year.

The announcement of the Gordon Burn Prize will take place Thursday 12 October in Durham Town Hall. Celebrating bold fiction and non-fiction, this is one of the UK's most exciting awards and this year's shortlist features books by

**Kapka Kassabova, David Keenan, Denise Mina, Lara Pawson, Gwendoline Riley and Adelle Stripe.** Hosted by **Mark Lawson** the event sees the six shortlisted writers read from their work, before the £5,000 prize is awarded to the winner.

Two Booker Prize-winners feature in this year's fiction line-up, with **Roddy Doyle** and **Alan Hollinghurst** both appearing at the festival alongside their much-anticipated new novels. Other highlights include **Tracy Chevalier** and **Kamila Shamsie** sharing their retellings of classic dramas, and a special 'coffee and cake' event with award-winning author **Rachel Joyce**.

Politics and social issues continue to be a core theme of Durham Book Festival. Highlights this year include the return of festival favourite **Chris Mullin** as he examines the future of the labour party; broadcaster and author **June Sarpong** talks about her new book on social division and the ways to combat prejudice; journalist **David Goodhart** will be in conversation with the Vice Chancellor of Durham University, **Professor Stuart Corbridge**, offering his theory on the basis for Brexit Britain and Trump's America; and three contributors of *The Things I Would Tell You*, an anthology of writing from over 20 British Muslim Women, discuss the ground-breaking collection.

There are new memoirs to be enjoyed from some of the country's best-loved personalities. Comedian **Robert Webb** will be discussing his hilarious and heartbreaking story in *How Not to Be a Boy*, whilst **Sir Tony Robinson** appears at the festival to talk about his long awaited autobiography, charting his stellar career from *Blackadder's* Baldrick to *Time Team* host. Star of *Call The Midwife*, **Stephen McGann's** memoir is an exploration of his family history, and **Harriet Harman** also features on the festival programme, sharing her memoir, *A Woman's Work*.

As always, the festival has a strong poetry element, with this year's Festival Laureate **Andrew McMillan** curating a Poetry Gala featuring twelve of the most exciting new voices in northern poetry. This performance will be recorded live with a special vinyl recording to be produced by crowd-funding publisher, Unbound. Previous Festival Laureate **Sinéad Morrissey** also returns to the festival to read alongside **Colette Bryce** and **Tara Bergin** in a showcase event run in partnership with The Poetry Book Society.

The Durham Book Festival Schools' programme features the inspirational activist and writer **Gulwali Passarlay**. Gulwali will speak to a teen audience about his own experiences as a child refugee, whilst the younger students will be entertained by picture book makers **Tim Hopgood** and **Mick Manning and Brita Granström**. The schools' programme will also feature this year's Durham Book Festival Big Read author, **David Almond**.

This year's Durham Book Festival Big Read is Carnegie Medal-winning author **David Almond's** collection of short stories *Half a Creature from the Sea*. 3,000

free copies of the book will be distributed throughout County Durham to schools, libraries, prisons, businesses, and to university staff and students. As well as his sold out appearance at Durham Johnston School, David will take part in a special event at Gala Theatre, in which the local author will be reflecting on some of the books that have been most important throughout his life.

**Anna Disley, acting chief executive of New Writing North said:** “Durham Book Festival provides a shared space for people to contemplate and engage with ideas and stories that help us make sense of our increasingly complex and often tumultuous world. We are pleased once again to welcome to Durham some of the country’s most exciting writers, thinkers and artists, and we look forward to welcoming audiences to join the conversation.”

**Cllr Ossie Johnson, Cabinet member for tourism, culture, leisure and rural issues, said:** “This year’s book festival will offer up yet another exciting and varied programme of events, with talks, readings and performances from a fascinating collection of guests.

“We are very much looking forward to welcoming them to Durham and to sharing their stories and experiences.”

ENDS

**For all media enquiries, including interview requests, review tickets and high res images, please contact Laura Fraine**  
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### **NOTES TO EDITORS**

**Please note that tickets for Harry Potter screenings go on sale at 10am on Monday 21 August. All other tickets on sale from 10am Thursday 10 August.**

Durham Book Festival takes place in October 2017 at venues across County Durham with events for all ages. Durham Book Festival is a Durham County Council festival produced by New Writing North, which is made possible by support from partners Durham University and Arts Council England.

Durham Book Festival 2017 launches its programme on Wednesday 9 August. Tickets go on sale at [www.durhambookfestival.com](http://www.durhambookfestival.com) from 10am on Thursday 10 August.

New Writing North is the writing development agency for northern England, and opened in 1996. In 2012, New Writing North joined Arts Council England’s

National Portfolio Organisations and now works on projects across the greater North.

New Writing North works with writers to develop career opportunities, new commissions, projects, residencies, publications and live events. It works in partnership with a broad range of organisations, universities, local authorities, regional development agencies, sponsors and media producers to develop opportunities for writers in our region.

### **Notes on Gordon Burn Prize**

The shortlist for the Gordon Burn Prize 2017 was announced on 21 July 2017 as:

- *Black Teeth and a Brilliant Smile* by Adelle Stripe (Wrecking Ball Press)
- *Border: A Journey to the Edge of Europe* by Kapka Kassabova (Granta Books)
- *First Love* by Gwendoline Riley (Granta Books)
- *The Long Drop* by Denise Mina (Harvill Secker)
- *This Is Memorial Device* by David Keenan (Faber & Faber)
- *This Is the Place to Be* by Lara Pawson (CB Editions)

The judges for the prize in 2017 are Cosey Fanni Tutti, Petina Gappah, Allan Jenkins and Ian Sansom.