

DURHAM BOOK FESTIVAL

Press release

For immediate release

Durham Book Festival returns! Line-up revealed for North East's leading literary event

The annual literary festival returns this October with headline guests including LJ Ross, Marina Hyde, Jeremy Vine, Alexander McCall Smith, Kit de Waal, Hannah Lowe, Fiona Hill, Richard O'Neill and the announcement of the Gordon Burn Prize

The programme has been announced for Durham Book Festival 2022, the North East's leading literary festival. Between 13 and 16 October 2022, the festival returns to Durham's Millennium Place, illuminating the Gala Theatre and Clayport Library with leading writers, artists and thinkers.

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 festival hosts an array of talks, workshops, readings and performances, as well as new commissions, films, walks and unique experiences. In 2022, Durham Book Festival invites people to take part in the festival in a range of ways. Audiences can attend events in-person at Gala Theatre and Clayport Library or remotely by live stream. They can pick up free books as part of the Big and Little Read initiatives, borrow festival titles from County Durham libraries, and read, watch and listen to a range of free digital content.

Rebecca Wilkie, Durham Book Festival Director said: 'It's a pleasure to welcome you to Durham Book Festival this autumn, as we connect communities across County Durham through reading. This year the festival will bring Millennium Place to life with events at the Gala Theatre and Clayport Library, where you'll see bestselling writers, homegrown talent and leading thinkers discussing their work, alongside new films and commissions and the announcement of the Gordon Burn Prize.'

Be sure to pick up a free copy of our specially published (and Durham-set!) Big Read story by crime-writing sensation LJ Ross and look out for the Little Read picture book, *Polonius the Pit Pony*, by Richard O'Neill in schools and community centres across the county.

This year we are live-streaming events from the Gala and working with Stagetext to make all our events accessible to everyone. So if you can't make it to Durham, you can also join us from the comfort of your own home.'

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Cllr Elizabeth Scott, Durham County Council's Cabinet member for economy and partnerships said: 'This year's festival features another really exciting programme of talks, workshops and activities, with something for everyone to enjoy both in person and online. Durham Book Festival is full of entertainment and escapism, and is one of the key events that demonstrate the rich and dynamic cultural offer we have in County Durham.'

Professor Karen O'Brien, Vice-Chancellor and Warden of Durham University said: 'As a global top-100 university with a world-leading Arts and Humanities faculty, we believe in the power of literature to bring people together and inspire. We're pleased to be once again sponsoring the Durham Book Festival, which has become one of the most keenly anticipated dates in the calendar for the University, city, county and region. It is very good to be able to return to in-person events this year and we look forward to hosting, contributing to and supporting another successful festival.'

DURHAM BOOK FESTIVAL PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS

FREE BOOKS FOR COUNTY DURHAM

A highlight of the festival is sure to be an event with bestselling crime writer **LJ Ross**, whose books have sold over 7 million copies worldwide. *The Mystery of the Vanishing Mayor* is a brand-new short story, written especially for Durham Book Festival, which is this year's Durham Book Festival Big Read. In the lead up to the event, the festival will work with Durham County Council's library service to distribute 3,000 free copies of *The Mystery of the Vanishing Mayor* throughout County Durham. LJ Ross will be appearing at Gala Theatre to talk about her career and the books that have inspired her.

The Little Read project brings picture books to life for the under 10s, sending free copies of *Polonius the Pit Pony* by **Richard O'Neill** to every primary school in County Durham. Children and families will have the chance to take part in special storytime with the internationally acclaimed storyteller and author at Clayport Library, while schools can watch Richard's specially recorded video event from the classroom.

SOCIETY AND CURRENT AFFAIRS

Durham Book Festival has always been a space for conversation, exploration and the sharing of ideas.

In *Who Are We Now?*, *New Statesman* editor **Jason Cowley** and writer **Alex Niven** will consider what it means to be a nation poised on the brink of enormous change.

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In *Fix the System, Not the Women*, **Laura Bates** presents a blazing examination of the societal systems that fail to protect women, and a rallying cry for reform.

Time for some light relief? Journalist **Marina Hyde** will delight as she slashes her way through the hellscape of politics in *What Just Happened?!*, drawn from her spectacularly funny *Guardian* columns.

REIMAGINING THE NORTH

The North East proves fertile ground to inspire many of this year's authors. Broadcaster and writer **Jeremy Vine** will talk about his love for the poet W.H. Auden and the County Durham landscapes that inspired him. Jeremy has also produced a self-guided walk exploring the North Pennines with Ruth Robson, available to download from the Durham Book Festival website.

Former presidential advisor **Dr Fiona Hill** will share her own journey from Bishop Auckland to the US National Security Council, where she worked as a specialist in Russian affairs. **Brian Groom** will introduce *Northerners*, his authoritative new history of place and people that lays out the dramatic events that created the North. Elsewhere, an event and linked series of short films, **The New Great Britons**, produced with Durham University's Dr Natalie Mears, takes its inspiration from the BBC's 2002 campaign to find the Greatest Briton. Twenty years on, writers and academics will champion northern, working-class figures whose stories rarely make it into the traditional canon of 'greatness'.

FESTIVAL LAUREATE

Costa Book of the Year Award-winning poet **Hannah Lowe** will act as this year's Festival Laureate, appearing at Gala Theatre where she will read from her work as well as performing a new poem commissioned for and inspired by Durham. The Festival Laureate is a partnership with Durham University and Hannah will also take part in a special event for students.

Hannah Lowe's latest collection, *The Kids*, is inspired by her career as a teacher, while her 2015 memoir *Long Time, No See*, explored her relationship with her Jamaican-Chinese father, who was part of the Windrush generation.

GORDON BURN PRIZE

The announcement of the Gordon Burn Prize will this year take place on Thursday 13 October. Celebrating bold and innovative fiction and non-fiction, this is one of the UK's most anticipated literary awards with the 2022 shortlist featuring books by **Margo Jefferson, Graeme Macrae Burnet, Preti Taneja, David Whitehouse** and

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Lea Ypi. The event will celebrate the shortlisted titles before the £5,000 prize is awarded to the winner.

FABULOUS FICTION

Calling all Agatha Christie fans! Two of the most exciting contemporary crime novelists, **Lucy Foley** and **Janice Hallett** will be sharing their compulsive new mystery novels, *The Paris Apartment* and *The Twyford Code*. Come along and solve the mystery with fellow fans of the genre.

Milk Teeth by Sunderland-born **Jessica Andrews** and *Assembly* by **Natasha Brown** are two of the most talked-about novels of 2022, covering themes of precarity, shame, race and class, while examining how we allow ourselves to live. While in a **Baskerville Proof Party**, readers can access an exclusive preview of two of 2023's most anticipated novels, *Speak of the Devil* by Newcastle-born **Rose Wilding** and *Needless Alley* by **Natalie Marlow**.

With his trademark wit and warmth, **Alexander McCall Smith**, will make a joyful return to Durham to celebrate a particularly prolific year which sees the publication of several titles, including *The Sweet Remnants of Summer*, *A Song of Comfortable Chairs*, *The Exquisite Art of Getting Even*.

MEMOIR AND NATURE WRITING

Novelist and editor **Kit de Waal** grew up in a household of opposites. Her haphazard mother forbade Christmas and birthdays and believed the world would end in 1975. Her father sent barrels of goodies to his relatives in the Caribbean, cooked elaborate meals and splurged money they didn't have. Kit's memoir *Without Warning and Only Sometimes* is the story of an extraordinary childhood.

In New Nature Writing, non-fiction writers **Helen Mort** (*A Line Above the Sky*), **Nina Mingya Powles** (*Small Bodies of Water*) and **Amanda Thomson** (*Belonging*) discuss their latest works that combine memoir with an exploration of the natural landscape.

WRITING THE CLIMATE

Durham Book Festival producers New Writing North declared a Climate Emergency in 2019. The festival will host the book launch of *Startling*, the tenth poetry collection by New Writing North's climate writer-in-residence, **Linda France**, while audiences are invited to write and send a letter about their take on the accelerating climate and

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ecological crisis to whomever they wish – their MP, the CEO of Shell, their best friend or their descendants. As Linda says, ‘when you write, you hold the whole world in your hands’. Clayport Library will display a selection of the **Climate Letters** during the festival.

Could the North East be the future of green energy? Scientists at Durham Energy Institute are exploring the idea that we are sitting on an unlikely resource – abandoned mines. Such mines have huge potential for decarbonising heat, and our region’s historic mining infrastructure could put it at the heart of the green revolution. Find out more at **Green Energy in the North East**.

NEW COMMISSIONS

Every year Durham Book Festival commissions new writing and during the festival will be launching a host of exclusive films and essays. Highlights include an essay on the extraordinary life of Durham-born writer **Violet Hunt**, who founded both the Women’s Suffrage League and English PEN, as well as becoming a prolific writer and literary salon host. Co-commissioned by English PEN, acclaimed author and Durham University academic Naomi Booth will explore Violet’s story.

Letters from the World, in which Durham Book Festival has commissioned five international writers to write a letter to the people of Durham from wherever they are in the world. **Kateryna Babkina** (Ukraine), **Oyinkan Braithwaite** (Nigeria), **Mariana Enriquez** (Argentina), **Khaled Khalifa** (Syria) and **Sang Young Park** (South Korea) will write letters on the same day from four different continents, offering a window into the lives and experiences of writers and thinkers all over the world.

Following the success of Durham Book Festival-commissioned films *Writing the Missing – The River Cycle* and *Writing the Missing – All At Sea*, Lisette Auton and Rob Irish come together for the final time in the Water Trilogy to create ***Writing the Missing – Folding Water***, pushing the creative boundaries of access, words and kindness.

Award-winning Sunderland-born writer **Jessica Andrews** has written an essay inspired by the life of Eileen O’Shaughnessy Blair, George Orwell’s often overlooked first wife who was born in South Shields, which reflects on the many facets of north-eastern female identity and how it is perceived today.

The commissions will be available to watch, read and listen to throughout the festival, from Monday 10 October 2022. Tickets for Durham Book Festival are now on sale at DurhamBookFestival.com and Gala Theatre box office.

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High res images relating to festival highlights can be found [via this link](#)

For all media enquiries, including interview requests, review tickets and any other images, please contact Laura Fraine
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NOTES TO EDITORS

Durham Book Festival takes place in October 2022 at Gala Theatre and Clayport Library. Durham Book Festival is a Durham County Council festival produced by New Writing North, which is made possible by support from partners Durham University, Arts Council England and BBC Newcastle.

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