

DURHAM BOOK FESTIVAL

Free books for County Durham as LJ Ross pens new story for Durham Book Festival

With Durham Book Festival just around the corner, readers across County Durham are sharing the joy of a good book as author LJ Ross writes a brand new short story ahead of her headline appearance.

The Mystery of the Vanishing Mayor, a new DCI Ryan short story, has been written by LJ Ross as part of a long-running Durham Book Festival campaign, The Big Read. The author has gifted her story to Durham Book Festival and 3000 copies of the book will be available to readers in County Durham. Free books can now be picked up from County Durham libraries or borrowed as e-book titles from BorrowBox. Copies have also been distributed to local businesses, Durham University staff and students, and the prison service.

Durham Book Festival is a Durham County Council festival produced by New Writing North with support from Durham University and Arts Council England. Running from 13-16 October 2022, it features authors including Alexander McCall Smith, Marina Hyde, Kit de Waal, Laura Bates and Jeremy Vine, as well as fellow crime writers Janice Hallett and Lucy Foley. LJ Ross will be appearing at Gala Durham on Saturday 15 October, where she will talk about her impressive career and about some of the books that have been most important to her throughout her life.

Northumberland-based LJ Ross's books have sold over 7 million copies worldwide. Her debut, *Holy Island*, was released in 2015 and became an instant, international bestseller. Since then, a further 20 of her novels have gone on to take the coveted number 1 bestseller spot. The first novel in her Alexander Gregory Thrillers series, *Impostor*, was shortlisted in the British Book Awards 2020. In 2021, LJ was shortlisted for the prestigious Crime Writers' Association 'Dagger in the Library' award, which is voted for by librarians and recognises an author's entire body of work and their longstanding support of libraries.

LJ Ross said: "I was absolutely delighted when the organisers of Durham Book Festival invited me to write a short story as their 'Big Read' this year; not only is Durham a place that's close to my heart, having been born and bred in the North East, but I'm glad to do anything I can to support and promote literacy and wider outreach in our communities. I hope readers enjoy *The Mystery of the Vanishing Mayor* (A DCI Ryan Short Story) and look forward to meeting some of them at the Gala Theatre on 15th October!"

Rebeca Wilkie, Director of Durham Book Festival said: "Every year Durham Book Festival gets people across County Durham sharing the same great book, as we know that reading for pleasure helps to increase well-being and to connect communities. LJ Ross's crime books are rooted in the landscape and culture of the North East of England. So, it's no surprise that her exclusive short story: *The Mystery of the Vanishing Mayor* has such an instantly recognisable and uniquely Durham

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setting. We hope this short story will inspire people to read more of LJ Ross's books and explore some of their beautiful locations from Durham Town Hall to Holy Island."

Cllr Elizabeth Scott, Durham County Council's Cabinet member for economy and partnerships, said: "We are delighted to be hosting LJ Ross as the author for this year's Big Read. As a talented writer from the North East, LJ Ross' short story brings County Durham to the heart of an exciting tale and we can't wait for readers to enjoy it. Literature has a fantastic way of bringing people together, where they can share the experience of reading the same stories and being captivated by the same moments. Durham Book Festival is a key part of our cultural programme and our plans to continue investing in culture throughout the county, so we encourage everyone to come along and be inspired by what the festival has to offer."

Tickets for The Big Read with LJ Ross at Durham Book Festival are on sale now via the [Durham Book Festival website](#) or the Gala Durham box office.

Get 50% off tickets for Murder and Mystery with Janice Hallett and Lucy Foley when you buy tickets for The Big Read with LJ Ross.

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