

NEW WRITING NORTH

Press release

For release 8am Friday 9 July 2021

27 writers share £47,000 worth of awards at Northern Writers' Awards

Almost 2000 writers across the North entered the Northern Writers' Awards in 2021, a record-breaking number of applicants for England's largest writer development programme. Twenty-seven writers have received awards this week (5-9 July) worth over £46,000 to enable their new writing in progress, across forms including prose, poetry and television.

Founded by New Writing North in 2000, the Northern Writers' Awards exist to recognise talent and foster new work towards publication or broadcast, offering support to writers at all stages of their careers, including mentoring, developmental opportunities and cash awards to buy time to write. Based in Newcastle upon Tyne, New Writing North celebrates its 25th anniversary in 2021 and champions writers and readers through a diverse range of projects, including the recently-announced A Writing Chance initiative with Michael Sheen.

The Northern Writers' Awards are sponsored by headline supporters Arts Council England and Northumbria University along with a host of publishing, media and higher education partners including Channel 4, Hachette Children's Group and the University of York.

Judges for this year's awards included the writers Cathy Rentzenbrink and Jacob Ross, who judged fiction and narrative non-fiction categories, and poet Andrew McMillan, a previous Northern Writers' Award winner for his debut poetry collection, *physical*, who judged the poetry categories.

The Northern Writers' Awards have an unrivalled reputation for identifying some of the country's best unpublished writing. 2021 has already seen several acclaimed titles published by previous Northern Writers' Awards winners, including *The Biscuit Factory* by James Harris (Hachette Children's Group), *The Muslim Problem* by Tawseef Khan (Atlantic); *The Lightning Catcher* by Clare Weze (Bloomsbury Children's); *Diamond Hill* by Kit Fan (Dialogue); and *Castles from Cobwebs* by J.A. Mensah (Saraband).

Other previous winners include the crime writers CJ Cooke and Mari Hannah; short story writers Carys Davies and Angela Readman; and poets Phoebe Power and Vidyan Ravinthiran.

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The awards also support aspiring television writers through a successful partnership with Channel 4 which is now an established pipeline into writing for television and has discovered new writers including Jayshree Patel, Taiba Amla and Luke Delaney.

Channel 4 Writing for Television Awards

This year's Channel 4 Writing for Television Award winners, KB Jacobs and Lucy Burke, each win a £3000 award and will spend 9 months on a placement with independent production companies Bonafide Films and Lime Pictures, respectively.

KB Jacobs is an emerging writer and actress who most recently played Hermione in Erica Whyman's production of *The Winter's Tale* at the RSC.

KB Jacobs said: "Writing gives you a voice in a way that the spoken word in the world doesn't often allow. There is no one to silence you, talk over you or ignore you; it's just you and the page, it's a safe, private and freeing place to be. So when you share your work with perfect strangers it's a daunting experience. To then have your work recognised to the point of winning this award is such an incredible moment. To know that Bonafide, Channel 4 and New Writing North all believe that my work shows promise is just the best feeling. I cannot wait to start the process. Thank you."

Caroline Hollick, Head of Drama at Channel 4, said: "The brilliant work that New Writing North do in seeking out the most talented writers in the North is unsurpassed, and every year they discover exciting and distinctive new voices. This award enriches our industry, and it's a privilege for us at Channel 4 to support it."

Claire Malcolm, Chief Executive of New Writing North, said: "Our partnership with Channel 4 is now in its seventh year and it has been wonderful to see previous winners of this award continue to develop and find their space in the highly competitive world of television. Channel 4 has been a fantastic partner in recognising how essential it is to invest in nurturing new talent from outside London and from underrepresented backgrounds. It is exactly this kind of early-stage investment which could be threatened if the broadcaster is privatised."

Awards for publication

This year two awards were made for two full-length manuscripts and both result in a publishing contract. They are:

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Hachette Children's Novel Award

The Hachette Children's Novel Award was awarded to Andy Ruffell, a head teacher from Harrogate, who had previously never shared his writing beyond the classroom walls. Andy wins an advance of £5000 as part of a publishing contract with Hachette Children's Books. This award is exclusively for debut children's authors. It is now in its third year and has previously discovered James Harris and Hannah Durkan.

Andy Ruffell said: "I will be covered in bruises for weeks as I haven't stopped pinching myself. Winning the Hachette Children's Novel Award has given me the enormous luxury of being able to believe in myself as a writer. I just can't wait to get started on my sequel!"

Hilary Murray Hill, Chief Executive Officer, Hachette Children's Group, said: "At Hachette, we are committed to recognising, nurturing and developing creative writing talent in the North and our work alongside the New Writing North Team has been a deeply rewarding manifestation of that commitment. Publishers are always hoping to find exciting new authors and there's a wealth of them in the North. Our relationship with NWN feels like a genuine collaboration in every sense and a real team effort. We look forward to a brilliantly creative and successful publishing relationship with Andy, and send many congratulations to all the winners."

NorthBound Book Award

Adam Farrer won the NorthBound Book Award, which is supported by the University of York. He wins £5000 plus publication with Saraband for his book of linked essays about his family and the community in the Yorkshire coastal town, Withernsea. *Approval*, the novel by the 2020 NorthBound Book Award winner John D Rutter, will be published by Saraband in August 2021.

Adam Farrer said: "During the writing of my manuscript, I lost count of the times when I wondered why I was doing it. There I was, an up-and-coming writer, working away on these stories about my family and my experiences in an area of the East Yorkshire coast that few people seemed to know or care about. But the motivating force that pushed me past this always came from my belief that the people and the place I was focusing on were valid and deserved to be written about. Winning the NorthBound Book Award, and getting to work with a renowned publisher like Saraband, has given me the confidence to believe that these stories, and my voice, deserve to be heard."

Dr JT Welsch from the Department of English and Related Literature at the University of York commented: 'The Department is thrilled to be sponsoring and

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involved with the NorthBound Book Award. New Writing North and Saraband are major features of the North's literary landscape: the support they provide for writers and writing is invaluable. The NorthBound Book Award is an important intervention into the UK's wider book culture and the careers of its winners. We're particularly delighted to build on our partnerships with New Writing North and Saraband in a year with this extraordinary prize winner. Adam Farrer's manuscript brings extraordinary care, humour, and honesty to places and lives that are often overlooked.

The 2021 Northern Writers' Awards in full

Hachette Children's Novel Award

Andy Ruffell - Harrogate

NorthBound Book Award

Adam Farrer – Manchester

Channel 4 Writing for Television Awards – Bonafide Films

KB Jacobs – Stockton on Tees

Channel 4 Writing for Television Awards – Lime Pictures

Lucy Burke - Manchester

Northern Writers' Awards for Fiction and Narrative Non-Fiction

CD Rose – Calderdale

Patricia Grace King - Durham

Northern Writers' Awards for Poetry

Harry Man – Middlesbrough

Suzannah Evans – Sheffield

Northern Debut Awards for Fiction

Gareth Hewitt – Ormskirk

Sarah Brooks - Leeds

Rob Schofield – North Yorkshire

Andrea Badenoch Fiction Award

Harminder Kaur - Hull

Northern Debut Awards for Poetry

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New Writing North is a registered charity in England & Wales
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Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
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Amelia Loulli – Penrith
Jade Cuttle – Doncaster
Katie Hale – Penrith

The Sid Chaplin Award

Gary Evans – North Shields (winner)
Greg Forrester – Sunderland (highly commended)

Northumbria University Student and Alumni Award

Shaun Wilson - Cumbria

The Word Factory Award

Amy Stewart - York

TLC Free Reads Scheme

Katharine Goda - Durham
M.B. Shah – Bradford

Arvon Award

Sarah Corbett – Hebden Bridge

Young Northern Writer Award

Megumi Hoshiko – Wirral (winner, Year 7-9)
Lily Tibbitts – Amble (winner, Year 10+)
Connie Schoales – Northumberland (highly commended, Year 7-9)
Jennifer Mabbott – Manchester (highly commended, Year 10+)

Matthew Hale Award

Lacey Williamson – Barnsley

Will Mackie, Senior Programme Manager (Writing and Awards) at New Writing North, said: “We’re thrilled to announce the winners of the 2021 Northern Writers’ Awards and look forward to supporting these writers through the varied elements of our programme. Our nurturing approach to working with writers gives them the opportunity to enrich their craft and make meaningful connections to the publishing and broadcasting industries. The Awards have an extraordinary track record of not only identifying talented writers based in the North but also of helping to develop work-in-progress into exciting and adventurous finished books.

We are massively grateful to our partners for their continued support. Each one of them contributes to deepening and diversifying the rich portfolio of opportunities

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that we offer. We believe strongly that collaborations between the literature sector, publishers and broadcasters are needed more than ever in such uncertain and challenging times.”

Professor Katy Shaw, Professor of Contemporary Writings and Faculty Director of Partnerships at Northumbria University, said: “For more than a decade, Northumbria has been the proud sponsor of The Northern Writers’ Awards. The Northern Writers’ Awards profile the best new talent in writing from our wonderful North of England.

Our sponsorship of this year’s awards comes at a particularly special time. The events of the last year have made us acutely aware of how much we rely on writing – in novels and plays, and on tv and film – for our entertainment and wellbeing and to bring us together in shared experiences at times when we are physically far apart. Today, we need culture and the arts more than ever. This year’s NWA winners show how the next generation of creative talent has the potential to help us re-frame a post-pandemic world and better understand ourselves and our society. We look forward to following their writing and careers in the years ahead and offer our warmest congratulations and elbow bumps to all the winners of 2021.”

-- ENDS --

NOTES TO EDITOR

For all winners’ bios and quotes see attached document.

The Northern Writers’ Awards 2021 were produced by New Writing North with support from the following organisations:

Headline supporters: Northumbria University and Arts Council England

Award partners: Channel 4, Hachette Children’s Group, University of York, Newcastle University, The North Literary Agency

Literature and broadcast supporters: Arvon, The Literary Consultancy, Oneworld Publications, The Society of Authors, Saraband, Bonafide Films, Lime Pictures, Madeleine Milburn Agency, The Word Factory.

Ends

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For all media enquiries, please contact **Laura Fraine**
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NOTES TO EDITORS

New Writing North is the writing development agency for the north of England, and is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation www.newwritingnorth.com. The Northern Writers' Awards are its central platform for discovering and developing new writers from across the region, and were founded in 2000. More information about the Northern Writers' Awards is available at www.northernwritersawards.com. New Writing North works with writers to develop career opportunities, new commissions, projects, residencies, publications and live events.

Northumbria University, Newcastle is a research-rich, business-focused, professional university with a global reputation for academic excellence.

One of the largest institutions in the UK with almost 34,000 students from more than 132 countries and over 200,000 alumni worldwide, Northumbria is empowering a new generation of innovators, visionaries and change-makers to transform lives, to make a remarkable impact on the world, and to take on tomorrow. Northumbria has invested more than £250 million in its estate since 2005 to improve the student experience. Northumbria is ranked top 50 in the UK for research power and had the 4th largest increase in quality research funding (REF 2014). According to Times Higher Education, Northumbria had the biggest rise in research power of any university in the UK. Northumbria's cultural partners include New Writing North, Live Theatre, BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Tyneside Cinema, and Tyne & Wear Archives and Museums.