

# DURHAM BOOK FESTIVAL

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## **Durham Book Festival is back! Programme announced for three-day festival in Durham City and online this October**

Book-lovers rejoice as Durham Book Festival returns for its annual outing of ideas, culture and entertainment in the heart of Durham City.

Taking place at Gala Durham, Clayport Library and Collected Books between 13-15 October, the festival offers 35 events with more than 40 authors over a bustling long weekend.

Durham Book Festival is a Durham County Council event, produced by New Writing North with support from Durham University and Arts Council England.

Highlights of the programme include a chilling evening of modern ghost stories with the internationally acclaimed writer **Jeanette Winterson**; North East political thinkers **Chris Mullin and Sebastian Payne** on what might be next for the region as we approach devolution; and broadcaster **Melanie Sykes** on her autism diagnosis aged 51 and experience of being a neurodivergent person in a neurotypical world.

Audiences will also enjoy a sense of escape – whether it is a deliciously cosy foray into *Comfort Eating* with food critic **Grace Dent**; the day in the life of a Lake District farm, as seen through the eyes of farmer's wife **Helen Rebanks**; or an afternoon of the most exciting new crime fiction, curated by number one bestseller **Ruth Ware**, and featuring **Trevor Woods** and **Nasheema Lennon**.

There is a real Durham flavour to this year's programme. In a world exclusive, the festival presents an abridged dramatic live reading of *Cuddy*, Durham author **Benjamin Myers'** acclaimed novel, directed by Live Theatre's Jack McNamara. *Cuddy* traces the story of St Cuthbert through the centuries, through the voices of ordinary people, to his final resting place in Durham.

In celebration of *Cuddy*, the festival plays host to bestselling historian **Janina Ramirez**, who will talk about the lives of the female saints, including those who were Cuthbert's contemporaries. The festival will also host a special guided walk, ***Cuddy's Corse***, following St Cuthbert's journey from Chester-le-Street into Durham.

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This year's Festival Laureate – supported by Durham University – is the Faber poet and author of *England's Green*, **Zaffar Kunial**. Kunial will read from new work inspired by Durham and commissioned especially for the festival.

Durham writer **Pip Fallow** was destined for the pit – but the closure of his village's mine in the 1980s saw him at the back of the dole queue, like so many of his contemporaries. His book, *Dragged Up Proppa*, tells the story of that lost generation and where they are today.

Elsewhere, the festival invites us to look ahead. In *What Does the Future Hold?* social anthropologists from Durham University, curated by **Professor Simone Abram**, invite us to explore ideas about the future as seen from the perspectives of different people, whether they are athletes, refugees or engineers.

Meanwhile this year's Little Read title – the beautiful picture book, *Moth*, by **Isabel Thomas and Daniel Egnéus** – inspires the youngest readers to understand and care for their planet. 500 free copies will be distributed to children and families through County Durham libraries this autumn.

The Little Read book giveaway is accompanied by fun events for families at Clayport Library, including storytimes with Seven Stories, a science workshop, and even the chance to get crafty with mushrooms with 'climate hope' organisation, Threads in the Ground.

**Rebecca Wilkie, Director of Durham Book Festival, New Writing North, said:** "We're thrilled to be bringing Durham Book Festival back to Millennium Place for a long weekend of brilliant writers, speakers and creative workshops for all ages.

"We're celebrating the history of Durham and St Cuthbert, as well as exploring themes ranging from North East politics to the NHS and neurodiversity to the joy of food. Climate change and evolution are the themes of our Little Read picture book, *Moth* by Isabel Thomas, which will be available for young readers and their families to pick up in libraries across County Durham.

"All our events at Gala Durham will be live-streamed and live-captioned, so if you can't make it to Durham we hope you'll join us from home."

**Cllr Elizabeth Scott, Durham County Council's Cabinet member for economy and partnerships, said:** "Durham County Council is delighted to be commissioning

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New Writing North to bring back Durham Book Festival for 2023. This much-loved festival is a central part of our events programme. Each year the festival brings incredibly exciting writers to Durham but also nurtures local talent. We are confident that there's something for everyone with the wide variety of events and talks scheduled."

**Professor Janet Stewart, Executive Dean of the Faculty of Arts & Humanities, Durham University said:**

"As an institution of learning, it is a pleasure to welcome the wealth of talent and creativity that the Festival brings to our city. This talent and creativity enriches both the work of the university and the local community."

Accessibility is key at Durham Book Festival. All events at Gala Durham will be live-captioned by Stagertext and all venues are fully accessible. Can't make it to Durham? Let the festival come to you. All Gala Durham events will be available to livestream for just £5 per household.

*The full programme will be available at [durhambookfestival.com](http://durhambookfestival.com) from Thursday 17 August, with tickets on sale from 10am.*

**ENDS**

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## **About New Writing North**

New Writing North is the development agency for creative writing and reading in the North of England.

Based in Newcastle upon Tyne since 1996, it is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation. The organisation works in partnership with regional and national partners to produce a range of literary and performance activities including flagship projects such as the Northern Writers' Awards, Young Writers, the Gordon Burn Prize and Durham Book Festival.

New Writing North specialises in developing and investing in writers of all ages and act as a dynamic broker between writers, producers, publishers and broadcasters

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across the creative industries. Current partners include BBC Radio 3, Channel 4 Drama, Faber and Faber, Hachette Children's Group, Northumbria University and Durham University.

As a producer of new work, New Writing North commissions a wide range of writing from topical essays and publications to award-winning dance theatre productions, short films, live literature and broadcast projects.

New Writing North's extensive and award-winning Young Writers programme develops the creativity and skills of young people. Work in schools with children and their teachers is complemented by a large and diverse out-of-school programme that is open to all, with a special focus on areas with fewer opportunities.

As a promoter and producer of festivals and literary events and through its partnerships with schools, libraries, universities and prisons, New Writing North engages audiences with enriching and creative reading experiences.

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