



PRESS RELEASE

The Royal Society
of Literature

JERWOOD CHARITABLE
FOUNDATION

Winners of the 2015 RSL Jerwood Awards for Non-Fiction announced

The 2015 RSL Jerwood Awards for Non-Fiction, now in their twelfth year, are judged by Jonathan Beckman, Jonathan Keates and Kate Summerscale.

The three awards, one of £10,000 and two of £5,000, are presented to authors engaged on their first commissioned works of non-fiction.

The 2015 winners are:

THOMAS MORRIS, £10,000 for *The Matter of the Heart*, (Bodley Head, May 2017). A history of the heart in twelve operations - it is a compendium of the 20th Century's greatest technological inventions and medical miracles. 'Heart-searching, heart-stopping and heart-exalting' commented Jonathan Keates, and to Jonathan Beckman it is 'a tale of dare-devil experimentation and supreme ingenuity'.

'I am thrilled to receive an RSL Jerwood Award, and to contemplate the many ways in which it will help my research. It's a great honour to be recognised in this way - I'm very grateful for this vote of confidence, which offers renewed motivation to make the book as good as it possibly can be.' - Thomas Morris, who is a freelance writer based in London.

CATHERINE NIXEY, £5,000 for *The Darkening Age*, (Macmillan, early 2017). This account of early Christians, from the Roman viewpoint, is, for Jonathan Keates, 'a powerful corrective to our view of Christianity as a religion of peace, showing how it triumphed through violence, philistinism and wholesale barbarity' and Kate Summerscale thought it 'a riveting story'.

'There is always the odd nervous moment when you wake in the wee small hours and wonder whether anyone, apart from you, will be interested in what you're doing - particularly so when it's your first book. I'm surprised, delighted, and grateful to have won this award.' - Catherine Nixey, who is a Radio Critic for *The Times*.

DUNCAN WHITE, £5,000 for *Cold Warriors: Waging Literary War Across the Iron Curtain*, (Little, Brown, September 2018). A focus on writers on both sides of the Cold War which aims to give a complete view of the relationship between writing and politics during the era. 'A nail-biting tribute to the power of words as weapons in the right or wrong hands at a key moment', commented Jonathan Keates.

'It means such a great deal to receive this award. It is a particularly generous award: not only do you receive the encouragement of such distinguished judges being enthused by your idea but also the means by which to help make that idea a reality. For both these things I'm profoundly grateful.' - Duncan White, who lectures on History and Literature at Harvard University.

The three authors were presented with their awards on Thursday 26 November 2015 at an event held at John Murray's house, 50 Albermarle Street, London, W1S 4BD.

For further information contact annette@rsliterature.org, 020 7845 4680

Notes to Editors

Past winners of **The RSL Jerwood Awards for Non-Fiction** include John Stubbs for *Donne - the Reformed Soul*; Rachel Campbell-Johnston for *The Life and Work of Samuel Palmer*; Matthew Hollis for *Now All Roads Lead to France: The Last Years of Edward Thomas*, and Paul Farley and Michael Symmons Roberts for *Edgelands - Journeys into England's Last Wilderness*.

One former winner describes what it meant to her to win an Award:

'The RSL Jerwood Award was absolutely invaluable to me. Crucially, it allowed me to spend more time on interviews and research, which was transformative for my book. It also enabled me to work on the book full-time, without being anxious about paying the bills. On another level, getting the stamp of approval from the panel - three judges whom I immensely respect - was an important and vital morale boost.'

- Ramita Navai, RSL Jerwood Award winner, 2012

The Jerwood Charitable Foundation is dedicated to imaginative and responsible revenue funding of the arts, supporting artists to develop and grow at formative stages in their careers. It works with artists across art forms, from dance and theatre to literature, music and the visual arts.

As well as the Royal Society of Literature Jerwood Awards for Non-Fiction, the Jerwood Charitable Foundation supports talented writers through the Jerwood New Playwrights programme at the Royal Court Theatre, the Jerwood/Arvon Mentoring Scheme, the inaugural White Review Short Story Prize and The Literary Platform Jerwood Fiction Uncovered Prize.

For more information on the Jerwood Charitable Foundation, visit jerwoodcharitablefoundation.org.

The Royal Society of Literature, founded by George IV in 1820, celebrates and nurtures all that is best in British literature, past and present. We organise over twenty events a year; offer prizes, awards and grants to established and emerging writers; run Masterclasses with the Booker Prize Foundation; and manage a Schools Outreach Programme. At the heart of the RSL is its Fellowship, which encompasses the most distinguished authors working in the English language. We aim to build bridges between our Fellows and those who enjoy their work, so that their unique talents are shared as widely as possible.

'Our commitment is to literature in all its diversity: to stimulate talent, to foster dialogue and to honour achievement.' Colin Thubron, President.

For more information on the RSL, visit rsliterature.org.



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with the help of
the RSL Jerwood Awards

2004

Judges: Michael Holroyd, Libby Purves and D.J. Taylor

Jim Endersby *A Guinea Pig's History of Biology* (Heinemann). The history of modern biology. *'This is a cutting-edge history of science that everyone should read.'* *New Scientist*.

Roland Chambers *The Last Englishman: the Double Life of Arthur Ransome* (Faber). A biography of an English icon and his controversial Soviet double life. *'This sombre biography absorbs from start to finish.'* *Ian Thomson, The Telegraph*.

John Stubbs *Donne: the Reformed Soul* (Viking). A biography of John Donne. *'One of the best literary biographies I have ever read.'* *Jonathan Bate, Sunday Telegraph*.

2005

Judges: Brenda Maddox, Peter Parker and Matthew Parris

Alice Albinia *Empires of the Indus: The Story of a River* (John Murray). A history of the Indus civilisations. *'A magnificent book, a triumphal melding of travel and history.'* *Financial Times*.

Christopher Turner *Adventures in the Orgasmatron: William Reich and the Invention of Sex* (Fourth Estate). The untold story of Wilhelm Reich and the dawn of the sexual revolution. *'This book will change the way in which we employ that increasingly lazy phrase "thinking outside the box".'* *Christopher Hitchens, New York Times*.

Druin Burch *Digging Up the Dead: Uncovering the Life and Times of an Extraordinary Surgeon* (Chatto). The remarkable world of Astley Cooper, surgeon extraordinaire. *'A brilliant portrait of surgical life before the coming of anaesthesia.'* *Literary Review*.

Matthew Green *The Wizard of the Nile: The Hunt for Joseph Kony* (Portobello). A history of Joseph Kony, a fugitive rebel-leader who, with an army of child soldiers, leaves a trail of devastation. *'A penetrating insight into one of the worst conflicts in the world.'* *Jon Snow, Channel 4 News*.

2006

Judges: Roland Chambers, Moris Farhi and Hilary Spurling

Carolyn Steel *Hungry City: How Food Shapes Our Lives* (Chatto). The relationship between food and cities. *'Lively, wide-ranging, endlessly inquisitive.'* *The Independent*.

Sarah Irving *Natural Science and the Origins of the British Empire* (Pickering & Chatto). How men of science used new data to build an intellectual as well as a geographical empire. *'A masterfully written history of the construction of the British Empire.'* *Jonathan Goldstein*.

Thomas Wright *Oscar's Books* (Chatto). Exploring the personality of Oscar Wilde through his reading. *'No other scholar of Wilde has succeeded so well in moving into his head.'* *Irish Times*.

2007 Judges: Hermione Lee, John Stubbs and Sara Wheeler

Andrew McConnell Stott *The Pantomime Life of Joseph Grimaldi* (Canongate). The definitive biography of Grimaldi and a highly nuanced portrait of Georgian theatre. *'Beautiful, heartbreaking and absolutely fascinating.'* Amanda Foreman, *New York Times*.

Rachel Campbell-Johnston *Mysterious Wisdom: The Life and Work of Samuel Palmer* (Bloomsbury). An intimate portrait of the artist. *'Vivid, acute, richly enjoyable.'* John Carey, *The Sunday Times*.

Daniel Swift *Bomber County, The Lost Airmen of World War Two* (Hamish Hamilton). A narrative of the author's search for his lost grandfather. *'Strikingly original and beautifully written.'* Antony Beevor.

2008 Judges: Alice Albinia, Piers Brendon and James Meek

Rachel Hewitt *Map of a Nation: A Biography of the Ordnance Survey* (Granta). A tale of revolutions both scientific and political. *'A brilliant book ... History at its best.'* A.N. Wilson, *Reader's Digest*.

Matthew Hollis *Now All Roads Lead to France: The Last Years of Edward Thomas* (Faber). An account of the poet's last five years. *'A brilliant and superbly written study.'* *Sunday Telegraph Book of the Week*. Winner of the *Costa Biography Prize*.

Paul Farley and Michael Symmons Roberts *Edgelands: Journeys into England's True Wilderness* (Cape). *'A delight: witty and wryly contrarian.'* Robert Macfarlane, *The Guardian*. Winner of *Foyles Best Book of Ideas Prize*.

2009 Judges: Mark Bostridge, Ferdinand Mount and Claire Tomalin

Caspar Henderson *The Book of Barely Imagined Beings: A 21st Century Bestiary* (Granta). A study of the bizarreness of many living forms we thought we knew and some we could never have contemplated. *'This is not just a beautiful book, it's an important one.'* *Independent on Sunday*.

Miles Hollingworth *St Augustine of Hippo: An Intellectual Biography* (Bloomsbury). A life of the philosopher and writer. Winner of a Society of Authors' Elizabeth Longford grant for historical biography in 2009. *'Humane and probing.'* Rowan Williams.

2010 Judges: Claire Armistead, Tristram Hunt MP and Robert Macfarlane

Alexander Monro *The Paper Trail: An Unexpected History of the World's Greatest Invention* (Penguin). The story of how paper has wrapped itself around the world. *'Page-turningly readable ... Exceedingly well informed.'* John Sutherland, *Literary Review*.

Jonathan Beckman *How to Ruin a Queen: Marie Antoinette, the Stolen Diamonds and the Scandal that Shook the French Throne* (Fourth Estate). Focussing new light on the famous affair. *'Stranger than fiction but just as gripping.'* Hilary Mantel.

2011 Judges: Andrew Holgate, Mark Lawson and Christopher Potter

Gerard Russell *Heirs to Forgotten Kingdoms: Journeys into the Disappearing Religions of the Middle East* (Simon & Schuster). A record of the past, present and perilous future of some remarkable religions. *'A subtle blend of history and reportage.'* David Sexton, *Evening Standard Book of the Year*.

Polly Morland *The Society of Timid Souls: Or How to be Brave* (Profile Books). An exploration of what it means to have courage. *'A gracious, moving and uncommon book.'* *The Observer*.

2012 Judges: Richard Davenport-Hines, Caroline Moorehead and Gaby Wood.

Ramita Navai *City of Lies: Love, Sex, Death and the Search for Truth in Tehran* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson). An exploration of the rich history and elusive character of the city of Tehran. *'Gripping - a dark delicious unveiling of the secret decadent life of Tehran.'* *Simon Sebag Montefiore, Evening Standard Book of the Year*.

2013 Judges: Damian Barr, Richard Holmes and Kathryn Hughes

Julian Mash *Portobello Road: Lives of a Neighbourhood* (Francis Lincoln). An exploration of the famous street. *"A fascinating book about a fascinating part of London.'* *Robert Elms, BBC London*.

Tom Burgis *The Looting Machine* (HarperCollins). An investigative journey into the ways the resource trade wreaks havoc on Africa. *'Excellent. Burgis ensures that we don't stop wondering who does what in Africa and how we are all party to what Western "investors" are up to.'* *Jon Snow*

2014 Judges: Lucy Hughes-Hallett, Andrew O'Hagan and Jane Ridley

Laurence Scott *The Four-Dimensional Human*, (Heinemann). An exploration of digital life. *'Scott offers layered and complex thought in a style that is elegant and artful.'* *Sophie Elmhirst, Financial Times*.

Award-winning books yet to be published

Selina Mills *Life Unseen: The Story of Blindness* (I.B. Tauris). A social history of blindness. (To be published 2017).

Roger Beam *Englandspiel* (Haynes). 'Englandspiel'- was SOE's most humiliating spy disaster of the Second World War and Germany's most successful counter-espionage operation. (To be published 5 January 2016).

James Macdonald Lockhart *Raptor: A Journey Through Britain's Birds of Prey* (Fourth Estate). A blend of natural history and travel writing. (To be published 11 February 2016).

Helen Smith *Edward Garnett: The Uncommon Reader* (Cape). Charting Garnett's life in literature. (To be published 2017/2018).

Edmund Gordon *Angela Carter -The Biography* (Chatto). The first fully authorised biography of the novelist.

Dr Gwen Adshead *A Short Book About Evil* (Jessica Kingsley). An exploration of the nature of evil. (To be published March 2017).

Minocher Dinshaw, *A Life of Sir Steven Runciman* (Penguin). A personal view and analysis of writing by the 20th-century historian. (To be published in Spring 2016).

Aida Edemariam untitled biography of author's grandmother (Fourth Estate). Edemariam explores Ethiopia's history over the past century through her grandmother. (To be published in Spring 2016).