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PRESS RELEASE



The Royal Society of Literature

Writer's exceptional legacy secures future of non-fiction award

The Royal Society of Literature is establishing annual awards for first-time writers of non-fiction – in perpetuity – because of a significant bequest from author and RSL Fellow Giles St Aubyn.

Giles St Aubyn, who died in 2015 aged 89, wrote 14 non-fiction books and taught history for nearly 40 years at Eton College. A nephew of Vita Sackville-West, he counted John Betjeman, John le Carré and The Queen Mother among his friends.

Entries open today for the first year of **The RSL Giles St Aubyn Awards for Non-Fiction**. Two awards – one of £10,000, one of £5,000 – are offered to support writers to complete their first commissioned works of non-fiction. This year's judges are:

- **Richard Holmes** – biographer and RSL Fellow (chair),
- **Afua Hirsch** – journalist whose first book *Brit(ish)* will be published in 2018,
- **Fiona St Aubyn** – author and niece of Giles St Aubyn.

The new awards build on the RSL's experience of a previous form of non-fiction awards, generously supported by **Jerwood Charitable Foundation** from 2004 to 2016.

Lisa Appignanesi, Chair of the RSL, comments:

“In these straitened times, it is good to be able to announce a permanent award for that bold and various form of writing that non-fiction is. To see an act of such exceptional literary philanthropy from an author and RSL Fellow marks an important moment. We applaud Giles St Aubyn's generosity and foresight, and trust that the new awards in his name will become a highly regarded fixture in the literary calendar.”

Fiona St Aubyn, awards judge and niece of the late Giles St Aubyn, comments:

“As a teacher Giles sought to find potential and bring it out in others, and as a writer he fully understood the importance of research and having time to write. The RSL Giles St Aubyn Awards for Non-Fiction encompass these three things: they encourage exceptionally gifted authors, give them the wherewithal to research and, importantly, they can buy them time to write. Giles's family is so pleased and proud that his memory lives on in the RSL Giles St Aubyn Awards for Non-Fiction.”

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Notes to Editors

The Hon. Giles Rowan St Aubyn LVO FRSL (1925-2015) was the author of 14 works of non-fiction, on subjects including Lord Macaulay, Edward VII, Queen Victoria, religion, science and 19th century poisoners. He spent childhood holidays with his aunt Vita Sackville-West at Sissinghurst Castle, and later recalled lying on its lawns watching the Battle of Britain.



He had a life-long love of cars, and as a youth did not always appreciate his literary connections. During one Bloomsbury Set lunch at Sissinghurst he asked to be excused to go and chat instead with the chauffeur: “Well”, remarked **Virginia Woolf**, “it’s not often people are so bored by my conversation.”

When Giles was 16, his parents inherited St Michael’s Mount in Cornwall, becoming Lord and Lady St Levan. Giles went on to read history at Oxford, where his circle included Isaiah Berlin, AJP Taylor and AL Rowse. Later he counted John Betjeman and John Le Carré among his friends. During nearly 40 years as a much-loved Master at Eton, his pupils included later Prime Minister David Cameron and members of the Royal Family. He was with his friend The Queen Mother on the Royal Yacht Britannia when it visited Guernsey, the island that became his home for the last 30 years of his life. Giles St Aubyn was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature in 1964.

The Giles St Aubyn Awards for Non-Fiction

In leaving his bequest to the RSL, Giles St Aubyn wrote:

“I wish to help aspiring authors to get their works published, particularly authors of works of non-fiction which require a good deal of preliminary research. The sort of authors I have in mind would be those who have not already been published and who are struggling to get their feet on the first rung of the ladder.”

The RSL Giles St Aubyn Awards for Non-Fiction are for writers engaged in writing their first non-fiction book for a mainstream audience. They must already have a publisher’s contract. The award will then buy them time or resources for writing or research, as well as raising the profile of the book when published. Full details can be found on the RSL website (rsliterature.org). The deadline for entries is 2 October. The winners will be announced on 29 November.

Jerwood Charitable Foundation supported a previous version of RSL non-fiction awards from 2004 to 2016. The success of these awards has been invaluable in shaping the Giles St Aubyn Awards. Both Jerwood Charitable Foundation and the RSL are delighted that Giles St Aubyn’s legacy secures the future of this unique literary opportunity, and the two organisations are committed to continuing their close relationship. Afua Hirsch, one of the first Giles St Aubyn judges, won an RSL Jerwood Award in 2016.