

PRESS RELEASE



**The Royal Society
of Literature**

Winners announced of the inaugural RSL Giles St Aubyn Awards for Non-Fiction

The 2017 RSL Giles St Aubyn Awards for first commissioned works of non-fiction, were judged by **Richard Holmes** (chair), **Afua Hirsch** and **Fiona St Aubyn**.



£10,000 - DAVID FARRIER - *Footprints: In Search of Future Fossils* (4th Estate, 2019). *Footprints* will tell the story of the search for the fossils of our haunted future. It will imagine what an anthropologist would make of these clues in 10,000 years, or a geologist a million years from now whether they will simply be evidence of a calamity, or if there will also be messages of care and hope. In **Richard Holmes** view 'David Farrier has proposed a big visionary book, combining environmental sciences and world literature in a highly original and imaginative way'.

David Farrier lives in Edinburgh, where he teaches literature at the University of Edinburgh. His work on deep time and future fossils has appeared in magazines including *Aeon* and *The Atlantic*. In 2016, he was an adviser to the Edinburgh International Festival's opening event, 'Deep Time', which was seen live by 25,000 people. David says of his Award 'I am thrilled and delighted to receive an RSL Giles St Aubyn Award. The story of the future fossils we're making and the world we will leave behind for future generations is one of the most important there is, and I feel honoured to have the support of the Royal Society of Literature in telling it.'



£5,000 - LISA WOOLLETT - *Scavenging* (John Murray, 2019). Structured as a series of beachcombing and mudlarking walks, Lisa Woollett traces members of her family who were once dustmen and scavengers. Starting on the Thames in central London and following the river out to the sea, the book will combine social history, family memoir and nature writing. For **Fiona St Aubyn** it is a 'gem of a book and a find in itself. In an intimate and evocative narrative she describes how the landscape has changed over the centuries, and gives a unique perspective into the curious objects she finds when the tide is out.'

Lisa Wollett worked as a freelance documentary photographer for 12 years. In the past four years she has self-published two books, winning a Holyer an Gof Publisher's Award 2014 and The Rubery Book Award. Current projects include a children's book due out in spring 2018. Lisa says of her Award 'I am delighted. To have the support and encouragement of the award at this stage of the book is wonderful and will allow me the time to make it as good as I possibly can.'

Judges' Special Commendation - awarded to **Joanna Jolly** for her work in progress ***From the Red River: The Story of the Murder of a Canadian Aboriginal Girl, Tina Fontaine*** (Virago, 2018). **Afua Hirsch** commented that the 'book promises to be a gripping and humane account of the disappearance and murder of First Nation women in Canada.'

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Notes to Editors

The Royal Society of Literature has established annual awards for first-time writers of non-fiction – in perpetuity – thanks to a significant bequest from author and RSL Fellow **Giles St Aubyn**. The RSL Giles St Aubyn 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.

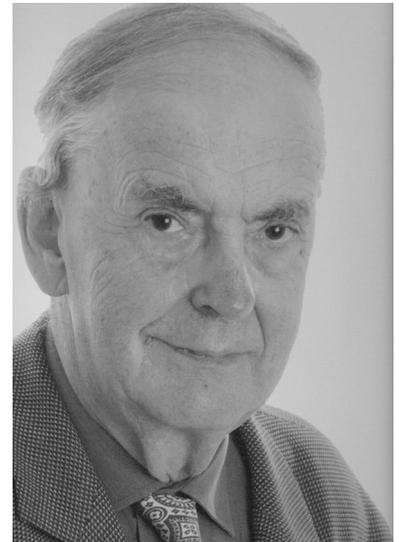
The authors were presented with their awards on Wednesday 29 November 2017 by HRH The Duke of Kent at an event held at John Murray's house, 50 Albermarle Street, London, W1.

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 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 Royal Society of Literature

Founded in 1820, the RSL is Britain's national charity for the advancement of literature. We encourage and honour writers, engage people in appreciating literature, and act as a national voice for the value of literature. The RSL's other annual awards are the V.S. Pritchett Memorial Prize, the RSL Ondaatje Prize, the RSL Encore Award and RSL Literature Matters Awards. For more information on the RSL, visit rsliterature.org.