

2019 People's Book Prize presented

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Stationers' Hall ceremony last night as prize celebrates 10th anniversary; winners in five categories including fiction, non-fiction, children's and debut writers

Nearly 100 authors and publishers gathered in the august surroundings of Stationers' Hall last night for the 10th anniversary award ceremony of The People's Book Prize. Founded in 2009 by Tatiana von Saxe Wilson with the support of Dame Beryl Bainbridge DBE - who sadly died on the eve of the first Awards - and Frederick Forsyth CBE, still a Patron today, the People's Book Prize finds, supports and promotes new and undiscovered works in three categories, fiction, non-fiction and children's, with the winners voted for exclusively by the public. As well as supporting small and independent publishers, the organisation also aims to eliminate illiteracy.

Introducing the shortlist for the fiction prize, Frederick Forsyth endorsed the objective of The People's Book Prize in bringing new writers to the public's attention. "It was only by luck that I managed to get someone interested in publishing [*The Day of the Jackal*], the wonderful Harold Harris of Hutchinson. And it shouldn't be down to luck, it should be down to merit." The winner, Alice Allen, author of *Open My Eyes*, was not able to be at the ceremony; the prize was accepted on her behalf by Martin Wagner, managing director of her publisher, Pinter & Martin.

The People's Book Prize for Children, presented by Lady Barran, went to Clive Mantle, author of *The Treasure at the Top of the World* published by Award Publications. The author thanked his fantastic literary agent and publisher - and expressed the wish that "next week, bookshops up and down the country would have vast displays of all our work."

The People's Book Prize for Non-Fiction, presented by the winner of the very first non-fiction award in 2009, Brett Alegre-Wood, went to David Haviland, author of *How to Remove a Brain*, published by Thistle. "When I told my wife I wanted to write a book about a man with no brain", the author told guests, "she said I was uniquely qualified to do so..."

The Beryl Bainbridge Award for a first time author, presented by Tatiana von Saxe Wilson, went to Clarissa Forster for *Understanding BRCA: Living with the breast cancer gene*, published by Hammersmith Health Books.

Presenting the prize for Best Publisher to Anthony Werner of Shephard Walwyn, Christopher McKane, Past Master of the Stationer's Company, pointed out the Caxton window in the hall, "with William Caxton standing in the middle, rather humbly offering a page proof to King Edward IV and Queen Elizabeth Woodville, both looking profoundly unimpressed." That would have been in about 1480, and five and a half centuries later, he noted, "publishers have to be a great deal more assertive than Caxton was, as well as brave in backing their hunches."

Anthony Humphreys, director of the People's Book Prize, closed the evening by presenting the Best Achievement Award for outstanding content/topic of excellent benefit to the community to Christina Gabbitas, author of *Share some Secrets*, published by Poems and Pictures. The book, now endorsed by the NSPCC, is, said the author, "about an issue that gets pushed under the carpet; I felt that we needed to educate children about abuse in a more simplistic way."

Humphreys also paid tribute to founder Tatiana von Saxe Wilson for 10 successful years of The People's Book Prize: "It's not a small thing to put this kind of event together...to promote authors and publishers and give wider accessibility to authors that may not have a voice or be able to find traction in what is a very competitive field."

The finalists for The People's Book Prize for Fiction category:

Closing Shop by Darren Walker published by Blossom Spring

Corkscrew by Peter Stafford-Bow published by Thistle

Narcissism for Beginners by Martine McDonagh published by Unbound

Open My Eyes by Alice Allan published by Pinter & Martin

The Pursuit of Ordinary by Nigel Jay Cooper published by Roundfire Books

The Scratching Post by Susan Delaney published by Olympia Publishers

The Tyre by CJ Dubois & EC Huntley published by Thistle

The finalists for The People's Book Prize for Children's category:

I Am Me, Sue Hampton published by TSL Publications

Nickolai of the North by Lucy Daniel Raby published by Tinkerbelle Books

Odd Socks by R. A. Powell published by Blossom Spring

Oscar the Ferry Cat by Molly Arbuthnott published by Jelly Bean Books

TJ and His Wheelable Chair by Amanda Kehoe published by Austin Macauley

The Angry Giant by Nigel Womack published by Poems and Pictures

The Treasure at the Top of the World by Clive Mantle published by Award Publications

Where Are You Hiding Charlie Dog by Sue Pavey published by Blossom Spring
Widurok by Clare Osborne published by King's England

The finalists for the People's Book Prize for Non Fiction category:
Hope With O.C.D by Lynn Crilly published by Hammersmith Books
How To Remove a Brain by David Haviland published by Thistle
Lady Sue Ryder by Tessa West published by Shephard-Walwyn
Landscapes of The Heart by Juliet Grayson published by Jessica Kingsley
The Hidden Girl by Marika Henriques published by Shephard-Walwyn
The Infection Game by Sarah Myhill & Craig Robinson published by Hammersmith Books
Through a Mother's Tears by Cathy Broomfield published by Thistle
Understanding BRCA by Clarissa Foster published by Hammersmith Books

Pictured (l-r): David Haviland, Clive Mantle, Clarissa Forster, Martin Wagner and Christina Gabbittas, with Patron Frederick Forsyth and Best Publisher Anthony Werner

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