

# Robin Jenkins Literary Award, UK's first environmental book prize, announces shortlist

The Robin Jenkins Literary Award has announced its shortlist after what the judges describe as 'a detailed and challenging judging process.'

The prestigious national award is given for writing that promotes Scotland's cultural heritage and environment, drawing on inspiration from forestry, trees and woodlands. Forestry Commission Scotland sponsors the event with a £5,000 award prize.

Brian Morton, Chair of the judging panel, said:

"Robin Jenkins isn't immediately considered to be a nature writer - and certainly didn't consider himself to be such - but the land, whether in Scotland or somewhere more exotic, and the lives lived in it, whether by Scots or others, was central to his imagination. We've read many books and manuscripts written in that spirit. They all do honour to his memory and while any judging process is 'difficult', that old cliché disguises just how pleasurable it has been deciding on a shortlist for the inaugural Robin Jenkins Award."

The Awards shortlist in alphabetical order by author is

Myrtle and Philip Ashmole : The Carrifran Wildwood Story

Linda Cracknell : Doubling Back: Ten Paths Trodden in Memory

Louisa Gairn : Ecology in Modern Scottish Literature

Mandy Haggith : The Last Bear

Linda Gillard : Star Gazing

Gregory Norminton : Serious Things

Speaking about the Commission's role in the UK's first environmental book award, Bob McIntosh, Director, Forestry Commission Scotland, said:

"Robin Jenkins spent his service during WW2 working in forestry in Argyll and that experience is reflected in much of his writing and perhaps is best known through *The Cone Gatherers* first published in 1955.

"The Commission today delivers an increasing range of economic, environmental, activity and social benefits from the national forest estate", explained Dr McIntosh and added, "Scotland's landscape and forests continue to be a source of inspiration to many, including our writers. We are proud to be involved with this award, celebrating a former forestry worker who is now widely regarded as one of Scotland's greatest contemporary writers."

The Award is organised on behalf of Forestry Commission Scotland by Cowalfest who manage a growing list of activities associated with their core aim of developing activity, environmental and cultural tourism.

Russell Bruce, chair of Cowalfest, said "Robin Jenkins was an really significant writer and there is a particular significance in Jenkins' own sense of 'Scottishness' in this year of the Homecoming, because his appeal is worldwide, his writing insightful, and yet, like the Cowal Peninsula where he spent so much of his life, deserving to be better known and appreciated."

The Award winner will be announced at the Edinburgh International Book Festival in the Studio Theatre on 24th August at 5p.m.

ENDS

### **Notes to Editors**

1. The Robin Jenkins Literary Award was launched at the National Library of Scotland on 29th of May 2008 by Michael Russell MSP, at that time, Minister for Environment. The deadline for submissions was 31st March 2009.
2. Robin Jenkins (1912-2005) was born in Lanarkshire. He worked as a teacher, first in Glasgow and later in Afghanistan, Barcelona and Sabah returning to teach at Dunoon Grammar School in 1968. During WW2 he worked in forestry in Argyll. Retiring from teaching he spent the last 32 year of his life at Toward in Cowal. Between 1950 and 2004 thirty-three of his books were published and another posthumously in 2007. He was awarded an OBE in 1999 and a Saltire Lifetime Achievement Award in 2003.

### 3. THE JUDGES

**Brian Morton** grew up in Dunoon, where Robin Jenkins was one of his English teachers. He is a former academic, journalist, and broadcaster who nowadays combines writing with small farming and garden design. After thirty years away, he once again lives in Cowal, close to Jenkins' last home.

**Alan Taylor** is Associate Editor of the Sunday Herald and Editor of The Scottish Review of Books. He was formerly Managing Editor of Scotsman Publications, Deputy Editor of The Scotsman and Features and Literary Editor of Scotland on Sunday.

**Isobel Murray** is retired from teaching English (and Scottish) literature at Aberdeen University, where she pioneered the Writers in Residence scheme. She is now an Honorary Research Professor in modern Scottish literature. She reviewed new fiction for The Financial Times for fourteen years and has written widely on Scottish fiction, especially Jessie Kesson, Naomi Mitchison and Robin Jenkins.

**Katie Wood** is a journalist and travel writer and holds a fellowship from the Royal Geographical Society. A former Travel Editor of three national newspapers she is the author of 39 travel guides. She lives in Perthshire.

4. The Robin Jenkins Literary Award is organised by Cowalfest,- The Cowal Walking Festival Association [www.robinjenkinsaward.org](http://www.robinjenkinsaward.org)

5. Cowalfest is a Cowal wide organisation of community and business organisations promoting tourism development in Cowal with an expanding event management portfolio. It also organises Cowalfest the annual autumn walking and arts festival in the Cowal Peninsula, now in its seventh year. It is managing and presenting **Gathering Around** a programme of events, supported by Homecoming Scotland 2009, to enhance and extend the Cowal Highland Gathering Experience and is currently planning an event this September, supported by VisitScotland, *Tourism is Everyone's Business* at Ardinglas House. [www.cowalfest.org](http://www.cowalfest.org)

further imedia information from

Russell & Dorothy Bruce

Cowalfest Tel +44(0)131 208 1340

Mobiles: Russell - 07845 984250 Dorothy - 07709 948550

email [russell.bruce@bannachra.plus.com](mailto:russell.bruce@bannachra.plus.com) [dorothy.bruce@bannachra.plus.com](mailto:dorothy.bruce@bannachra.plus.com)

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