

# New Angle Prize for Literature

Press Release: 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2009

## New Award Winner Announced

Last night, at an exciting ceremony at Ickworth House, the winner of the first-ever New Angle Prize for Literature was announced.

Norfolk-based writer Mark Cocker has won the £2,000 prize for "**Crow Country**" with runner up, Meg Rosoff, receiving £500 for "**What I Was**". A surprise 'Highly Commended' award went to the late Roger Deakin's "**Notes from Walnut Tree Farm**".

Well-known broadcaster and author, Paul Heiney, joined supporters, sponsors, shortlisted authors and editors, to hear the announcement of the prizes for 'recently published books of literary merit, associated with or influenced by East Anglia' from prize judges Dr Ronald Blythe, D J Taylor and Anne Parry.

Each shortlisted author captured the essence of the area in their own way - through its people or its nature and landscape - but after lengthy deliberations the judges were unanimous in their decision.

In the words of the judges 'Crow Country' is "a wonderfully arresting book that combines several elements, including geography, natural history and straightforward personal observation into a practically unique whole".

Meg Rosoff's 'What I Was' is described as "a novel redolent of the Suffolk coast with its marshes, cliffs and shore, that tells with perception and humour about a teenage boy and his unusual friendship".

The judges felt the need to create a 'highly commended' category for the posthumously published 'Notes from Walnut Tree Farm'. "Roger Deakin's work is unique in Nature Writing. Simple, profound, it is his wonderful farewell to us" said Ronald Blythe.

Receiving the award on behalf of Mark Cocker (who unfortunately couldn't be present due to a long-standing commitment in Australia) was Mr Alex Bowler, publishing editor at Jonathan Cape. He conveyed what he knew would be the author's delight at winning the award and his pleasure at gaining the judges recognition for 'Crow Country'.

The Ipswich Institute, who organised the new biennial literary award, have been delighted with the response to New Angle Prize. Mr Hugh Pierce said "the quality and breadth of the publications entered completely justifies the Institute's decision to celebrate the literary heritage of the region in this way. We are already looking forward to the next award in 2011 and very much hope that Gotelee and Goldsmith (the sponsors of this year's prize money) stay with us".

The finalists, in alphabetical order of author, were:

- "Suffolk Boy" by Alasdair Eoin Aston. *Orphean Press 2009*  
Twenty poems reflecting the author's childhood in a naturalist's paradise.
- "Scapegallows", by Carol Birch. *Virago Press 2007*  
Novel based on the real-life story of Margaret Catchpole, C18<sup>th</sup> deportee from Suffolk.
- "Story of the Southwold-Walberswick Ferry" by Dani Church with Ann Gander. *Holm Oak publishing 2009*  
The history of the popular River Blyth crossing from C13<sup>th</sup> told through anecdotes from its ferrymen and women.

- “Crow Country” by Mark Cocker. *Jonathan Cape 2007*  
Prose poem in a tradition of English pastoral writing and a celebration of the Norfolk countryside.
- “Notes from Walnut Tree Farm” by Roger Deakin (edited Alison Hastie & Terence Blacker). *Penguin Books 2008*  
Discursive writings from the author’s last notebooks with his personal observations on the natural and human worlds.
- “Constable in Love” by Martin Gayford. *Fig Tree 2009*  
The story of the artist’s long courtship and ultimate marriage to his neighbour’s granddaughter, Maria Bicknell
- “What I Was” by Meg Rosoff. *Penguin Books 2008*  
‘Coming of age’ novel set in a 1960s Suffolk coastal boarding school, seen through now grown-up eyes.
- “Coke of Norfolk (1754-1842)” by Susanna Wade Martins. *Boydell & Brewer Ltd 2009*  
Biography of one of a small circle of landed grandees who were of major influence during a period of agricultural change.

**Further information and Images of the books** are available from Hugh Pierce at the Ipswich Institute (01473 236160 or [library@ipswichinstitute.org.uk](mailto:library@ipswichinstitute.org.uk) )

Notes for editor:

**The New Angle Prize for Literature**, a new biennial competition organised by the Ipswich Institute, is being sponsored by law firm Gotelee & Goldsmith and accountants Scrutton Bland, with support from the Ganzoni Charitable Trust. Entry was open to ‘recently published books of literary merit, associated with or influenced by East Anglia’. Competition judges Ronald Blythe, Anne Parry and D J Taylor distilled the shortlist from a field of over 40 entries submitted before the closing date of 31 March 09.

**The Ipswich Institute Reading Room & Library**, founded originally as a Mechanics Institute in 1824, is now an independent charity offering educational courses, talks and visits as well as a well-stocked lending library. Membership is open to all who live or work in Ipswich and the surrounding area, for a moderate annual subscription. The Institute is a member of the Association of Independent Libraries. See [www.ipswichinstitute.org.uk](http://www.ipswichinstitute.org.uk)

**Judges’ Biographical Details:**

- Ronald Blythe - writer and editor, best known for “Akenfield: Portrait of an English Village” (1969), former Booker Prize judge and editor of Penguin Classics for more than 20 years.
- Anne Parry - spent all of her working life as a publishing editor and was Chairman of the Suffolk Book League, recently researching and writing “Literary Suffolk” for their 25th anniversary.
- D J Taylor - Norwich-based writer and critic, author of six novels and two acclaimed biographies, “Thackeray”, and “Orwell: The Life”, which won the 2003 Whitbread Biography Prize.

**Awards Host:**

- Paul Heiney, Suffolk-based broadcaster and presenter, writer, farmer, and enthusiastic sailor