

# Onwards!

---

AND WE'RE OFF AGAIN - FOR THE FOURTH IRON PRESS Festival!  
What was planned in 2013 as a one-off celebration to mark forty years of IRON Press went on to win Best Event Tyneside in The Journal Culture Awards and has now become a regular feature round the harbour of our distinctive seaside village. As far as I know, it's the country's only literary festival built round a small press.

We're small and that's how we intend to stay. Non-stop growth is a naked capitalism philosophy we don't buy into. Just as the press itself some years back found its natural publication level at four or five books a year (a level it's remained at), so too the festival is happy to settle on four days, once every two years.

Nor is our programme a random selection of famous names or celebs-cum-authors plucked from some national touring list. Festival writers are almost all associated with the press or the region or often both. We *have* been delighted to welcome the likes of Ian McMillan, David Almond and Melvyn Bragg but they all have links to IRON.

You may well never have heard of many of our featured writers. But the over these festivals the public have slowly come to trust us - the writers are all worth turning up for. Rather than buying tickets for well-known telly faces, you're on a journey of discovery.

Thus in 2019, you can have the gently intelligent humour of poet **John Robert Brown's**, new book, *Odd Socks*, or *Jack and Bill & The Fogrunt Amulet*, the controversially irreverent poetry of **The Brothers Grime**. Try *The Bairn*, **Elaine Whitesides'** beautifully written evocation of a 1950s Cullercoats upbringing (reprinted for the festival) or a breakfast lecture by **Doctor Joyce Leeson**, the widow of South African activist **Zola Zembe** that brings the apartheid struggles of South Africa to The Boat Yard.

Try the combustible Tyneside poetic legend, **Tom Pickard**, or **Zephaniah Haddock & The Stolen Star** a brand new commissioned play, written by yours truly and performed by pupils of **Cullercoats Primary School**. On the same bill is the intoxicating music of the famous **North Tyneside Steelband**. There's poetry and prose from our two anthologies inspired by UK islands, powerful verse from persecuted writers world-wide (*Voices of Conscience*), plus the launch of *This Cullercoats*, a new book featuring six working writers from the village. And on Saturday you can *Sing Yer Bloody Head Off!* in the good hands of Cullercoats diva **Ruth Lambert**.

