



News Release

9 May 2023

‘Best-ever’ Weaver Words Literature Festival a great success

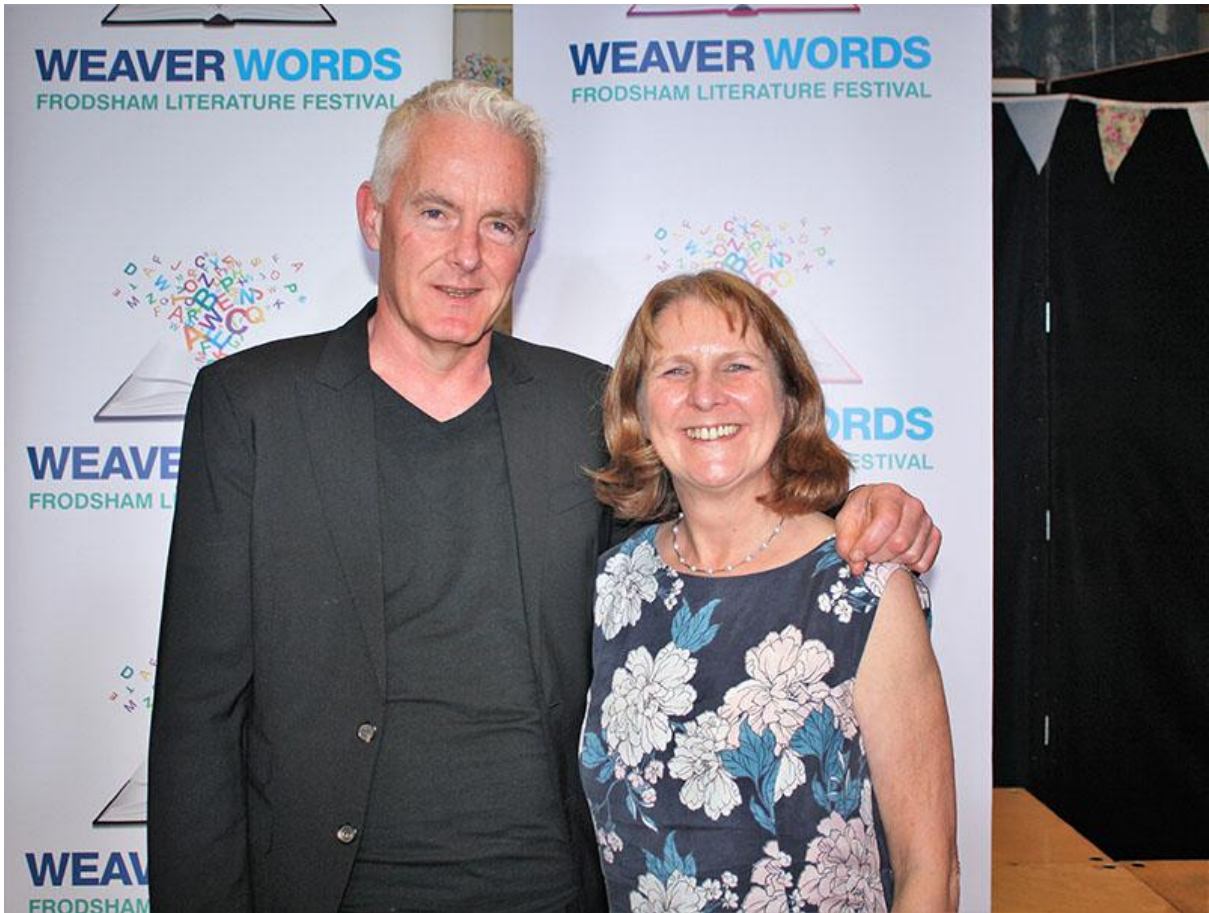
Weaver Words 2023, Frodsham’s sixth literature festival, rates as the ‘best-ever’ according to organisers, after delivering nine days of fantastic events, speakers, writing workshops and a Pop-up Poetry Wall at Frodsham Community Centre (Friday 28 April – Sunday 7 May).

Headline acts like the Poet Laureate Simon Armitage, TV drama legend Sir Phil Redmond, a Bronte afternoon tea and a Literary Cruise along the River Weaver all proved incredibly popular.

Actor Gerald Dickens, the great great grandson of writer Charles Dickens, performed a stunning, fast-paced one man show of *Great Expectations*, and on the night of the coronation, writer Sharon Wright and actor Abigail Halley took audiences to new heights in a comedy play about the first female balloonist, ‘*Fly Me: Mrs Sage and the Mile High Club*’.

A series of fascinating seminars explored a diverse range of topics, from Welsh poet R.S.Thomas and the secrets of self-publishing to recent political threats to the British Constitution, ‘*Bonfire of the Decencies*’, with London University politics professor Andrew Blick.

Promoting new writing was at the heart of the festival, with a Word Weavers event devoted to poetry from Andrew Rudd and Sarah Clare Conlon, and writing workshops delivered by poets Julia McGuinness, Jean Atkins and crime novelist Martin Edwards.



Lynn with playwright Tim Firth (Weaver Words Festival Patron)

Festival patron Calendar Girls writer Tim Firth entertained audiences on the final Gala Night with a fascinating insight into the professional theatre world. He also presented prizes for the festival's two writing competitions.

The adult Frodsham Flash Fiction prize was won by Anne Caldwell with a hard-hitting short story on sexual violence. She and second prize-winner Rose Brooke and third-placed Tiffany Siougas shared £500 prize money, sponsored by Helsby-based RSK group. Short-listed finalists were James Bryan, Sophie Flowers, Pauline Highnett, Jean Page and Mary Rourke. Judges were Prof Sue Zlosnik and Dr Zoe Lambert.

Nearly 300 entries were received for the Great Weaver Words children's writing prize, sponsored by Encirc glass manufacturers of Elton, and judged by Tim Firth. Winner of the junior category was Layla Evans, with runner-up Dara Maloney-Pugh (both Frodsham Manor). Finalists were Amalie Hayes and Ronnie Dunbobbin (Norley), Sophia McGrady-Shaw (Alvanley), Tigerlily Williamson (Frodsham C of E), Nancy Tandy and Eva Fry (St Luke's), Lily

Thomason and Kole Tague (Horns Mill), Isaac Bright and Oscar Lee (Frodsham Manor). In the senior category, winner was Chloe Jones and runner-up Victor Howarth, with finalists Phoebe Burton, James Mercer, Isobel Newby, Scarlett Pemberton, Natalya Roberts and Lily Wilson (all Helsby High School).

Festival manager Lynn Pegler said: “It has been a fantastic festival – the best we’ve ever staged. Seven events sold out, which is unprecedented, and hundreds of people enjoyed a diverse range of thought-provoking and enjoyable speakers, plays and workshops.

“Attracting the national Poet Laureate to our small market town in coronation week was a particular coup and very much appreciated by the enthusiastic audience at Frodsham Community Centre. From the launch of a new literary series at the town’s Main Street Kitchen with radio legend Mark Radcliffe to stand-up comedy with Frank Melling at Chapter Brewing, we have been delighted to explore new venues and create new opportunities.”

Many thanks again to sponsors: Arts Council England, Marshes Community Benefit Fund, RSK (Helsby), Encirc glass manufacturers, Main Street Kitchen and Chapter Brewing.

For more information and to read the winning Frodsham Flash Fiction Prize stories go to www.weaverwords.org.uk.