

Report to the Barbara and Philip Denny Charitable Trust

Arvon's Grant Fund Report, August 2018

Registered charity number: 306694



"The grant made it financially possible for me to come and made me feel supported too."
– Grant recipient, 2018

Arvon remains incredibly grateful to the Trustees of The Barbara and Philip Denny Charitable Trust for your kind and ongoing support of our Grant Fund. The Foundation's contributions continue to be a significant component of the Grant Fund, enabling people from all backgrounds to attend Arvon's courses, ensuring their personal and creative development and a bright and varied future for British Literature.

Impact on Grant Beneficiaries

By the end of 2018, we will have delivered over 80 courses across three Centres in Devon, Yorkshire and Shropshire, covering genres from TV drama to spoken word to literary thrillers, and for writers of all levels and stages, from very beginners to those who are at the point of editing their work. We have already awarded over 100 grants in 2018, with some grant funding still available.

Participating in an Arvon week can have a life-changing effect, inspiring writers to confidence in their work, providing access to leading industry figures who offer career guidance, and introducing them to people with whom they can make connections and form life-long friendships. This year, we have extended our grant evaluation process to ensure that we can collect additional feedback from recipients relating to the impact of the course. As well as completing a grant report at the end of their course, grant recipients are now also required to complete a survey three months after their course. This new survey has demonstrated the sustained, sometimes rapid progress writers make after they attend their course, with notable achievements from this year's grant recipients including being accepted onto MA Creative Writing courses; being awarded the Kevin Elyot Grant for aspiring writers from the University of Bristol; and delivering workshops in their hometowns themselves using techniques from their Arvon courses.

Below is a selection of writers who have benefitted from your generous support this year:

A woman from Devon received a grant to attend Fiction: Tutored Retreat at Lumb Bank in August 2018. The tutors were novelist and screenwriter Helen Cross and novelist and short story writer Stuart Evers. The woman applied for the grant after being made redundant from her job at a newspaper and she also volunteers for a local arts organisation and writers' group. Her eldest of three daughters is disabled, and she said, *"we struggle most months to pay bills, food, transport and essential items for the girls"*. She reflected on what she gained from her Arvon week: *"It has helped me to see the value in the work I do... As a writer, I think the week at Arvon gave me a clearer sense of myself, of what I have that is unique to me, and persuaded me that my work is publishable."* Penny described how helpful tutor and peer feedback was and said the course was instrumental in her decision to apply for an MA in Creative Writing.

A mature student based in Edinburgh, was awarded a grant for the Narrative Non-Fiction course at Totleigh Barton in July 2018. The tutors were travel writer Rory MacLean and author and historical consultant Julie Summers. When she applied for a grant, the applicant was unemployed and studying a Masters in Creative Writing with the Open University part-time. She specifically chose the Narrative Non-Fiction course because it was relevant to her dissertation. She explained how *"Arvon is the gold standard for writers"* but *"I used to think going to a course was out of my reach so I was grateful Arvon offered a grant."* She says that the support from the tutors on her course made *"a big improvement"* to her dissertation, and that she *"loved being amongst like-minded people who loved writing"*. The course has given her the confidence to pursue a career in writing and she is donating income from her new freelance work back into Arvon's Grant Fund *"to show my appreciation for giving me a grant when I needed it most"*.

Achievements of Grant Fund Alumni

The inspiring and motivating effects of an Arvon week last well beyond the five days of the course, and many grant recipients continue to gain in confidence and accomplishment. Below is one such recent grant recipient who has gone on to achieve recognition for her writing:

A woman from Wolverhampton received a grant to attend a Poetry course in 2016. She was working part-time for the NHS when she applied for a grant and said that without it she *"wouldn't have been able to take the course or develop my writing skills"*. She found the tutoring *"most beneficial ... I learnt to develop my editing skills, and the tutors were very encouraging and supportive, which allowed me to gain more confidence in my writing, and to strive more to improve my standards of writing."* The fact that she had been on an Arvon course, which she wouldn't have been able to go on without a grant, enabled her to apply to become a mentee on the Jerwood/Arvon Mentoring Programme 2017-18. She described this as *"the most advantageous and career-changing programme I have experienced so far"*. She is seeing increasing success, having recently won awards from the Manchester Writing Competition, Battered Moons, Creative Future, and the Saboteur Awards. She is currently working towards her first full collection for publication.

We are incredibly grateful to the Trustees of the Barbara and Philip Denny Charitable Trust for your support, which continues to make a significant difference to the Grant Fund and contribute to our mission of keeping Arvon accessible and open to all.