

Grant Fund Report, August 2017

The Barbara and Philip Denny Charitable Trust

Registered Charity number: 306694



"I found my Arvon week quite life changing. It has given me the confidence to carry on writing." – Grant recipient 2017

Arvon is extremely grateful to the Trustees of The Barbara and Philip Denny Charitable Trust for your generous support of the Grant Fund. We value the Foundation's ongoing commitment, enabling the most diverse range of voices possible to attend our courses and providing many writers from disadvantaged backgrounds with the opportunity to develop their writing and potential.

Impact on grant beneficiaries

By the end of the year, we will have delivered over 80 courses across our three rural centres developing writers' skills in a variety of forms, ranging from Fiction to Poetry, Playwriting to TV Screenwriting. There continues to be a high demand for financial assistance from writers to attend Arvon courses. This year we have awarded over 75 grants to date. Grant applications reopened in August for courses running from September to December.

Attending an Arvon week can have a transformative effect on an aspiring writer, with the supportive environment of the course boosting participants' confidence in themselves and their writing ability. Below is a selection of individuals who have benefited from your generous support so far this year:

One grant recipient from Bradford was awarded a grant to attend a playwriting course in May 2017. The course was led by Elinor Cook, winner of the George Devine Award for Most Promising Playwright 2013 and Evan Placey, who was listed on the inaugural BBC New Talent Hotlist 2017. The grant recipient has lived with chronic Crohn's disease since childhood but the condition has worsened in recent years and she is now unable to work full-time. She reflected on the success of the week: *"My aim is to write a play about Crohn's with the goal of raising awareness about this invisible disability... [The course] was as magnificent as I had hoped it would be, and the seclusion and detachment from the everyday intrusions of the cyber world induced a clarity I don't ever remember feeling elsewhere. The tutors were incredible – so generous with their time, energy, expertise and encouragement – and the lessons they imparted were invaluable... I can honestly say that when the week ended, I didn't want to leave."*

A grant recipient from Devon was awarded a grant to attend a *Starting to Write* course in May 2017. The course was led by the poet Karen McCarthy Woolf, who was shortlisted for the Felix Dennis Prize 2015 and the novelist Courttia Newland (*The Gospel According to Cane*). In her grant application, she explained what had driven her to return to writing: *"I've wanted to do an Arvon course since my early 20s - I'm now 45... Last year, a family health crisis led to a profound personal crisis. I have begun the process of taking myself apart and rebuilding again. Learning to write again will be a powerful tool in this rebuilding."* She thoroughly enjoyed the course and found that the week boosted her confidence: *"I was previously too nervous and apprehensive about the quality of my writing to put pen to paper at all... [By the end of the week] I had the confidence to read my work out loud to the group. I never thought I'd be able to do this but I had enough confidence in my work being good to read it out. My work on the course is definitely the*

strongest work I have ever produced." Following the course, she plans to begin submitting her poetry to competitions.

A grant recipient from Merseyside was awarded a grant to attend a Children's and Young Adult Fiction course in April 2017. The course was led by Lucy Christopher (*The Killing Woods*) and Melvin Burgess whose acclaimed novel *Junk* is often credited with kick-starting the UK Young Adult fiction movement. The grant recipient explained that she had spent much of her career working with young people in care, but left her full-time position last year to look after her elderly father. *"I spent a week in my kind of heaven. It was a writer's paradise! I came back home feeling that I am now really a writer! I learnt so much from the tutors and from the friends I made on the course. I cannot thank Arvon enough for giving me a grant that allowed me to have this amazing, creative experience. I would never have been able to afford to pay the full amount. I was so inspired that I have now applied to study an MA in Writing at John Moore's University in Liverpool."*

Achievements of Grant Fund Alumni

Your long-term commitment has helped to support many promising writers at the beginning of their careers such as **Andrew Thompson** who received a grant to attend a playwriting course in 2014:

"Arvon has helped me to see myself as a writer. I work as an administrator for a doctors' surgery in Edinburgh. The grant was vital as I couldn't have afforded to attend the course without it. The course was hugely beneficial and has had a major impact on my writing. Previously I enjoyed writing and hoped I could achieve a standard of work but now I feel I have the confidence to say I write and I am worthy of being heard.

Following the Arvon course, I applied for a place on the prestigious Jerwood/Arvon Mentoring programme. I was mentored by David Eldridge and developed my play 'In Event of Moone Disaster' over the course of the scheme. The play won the first Theatre503 Playwriting Award and will premiere at the London theatre in October 2017. All of this would not have been possible without the grant from Arvon."

Carol Donaldson's first book *On the Marshes* was published in April:

"Back in 2010, I was given a grant by Arvon to attend the narrative non-fiction course at Totleigh Barton. During the week I produced a piece which I read out on the final night called 'The Caravan', based on my experience of living in a caravan on the North Kent Marshes. I am happy to tell you that I expanded this idea and my first book, 'On the Marshes', was published by Little Toller in April 2017. I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity... [which] gave me the time and thinking space to come up with this idea."

We are indebted to the Trustees of the The Barbara and Philip Denny Charitable Trust for your generous support which continues to make a substantial contribution to the Grant Fund enabling a diverse range of writers from across the UK to participate in an Arvon residential course.



Totleigh Barton, Arvon
Centre in Devon



The Hurst, The John Osborne
Arvon Centre, Shropshire



Lumb Bank, The Ted Hughes
Arvon Centre, Yorkshire