

The Branford Boase Award



STRICTLY EMBARGOED UNTIL 19.30 THURSDAY 15 JULY 2021

'This book utterly stole my heart' Young Oxford lecturer wins the 2021 Branford Boase Award for compelling, exquisitely written fantasy, *Orphans of the Tide*

- **Struan Murray and his editor Ben Horslen of Puffin win the 2021 BRANFORD BOASE AWARD awarded to the author and editor of the outstanding debut novel for children**
- **When he's not writing, Murray is a lecturer in biochemistry at the University of Oxford**

Struan Murray is the winner of the **2021 Branford Boase Award** for the year's outstanding debut novel for children for his ambitious, beautifully written fantasy adventure **Orphans of the Tide**. Set in the last city of a drowned world, the book opens with a dead whale washing in with the tide, only for a living boy to climb out. The City's religious authorities believe his body to house The Enemy, the god they hold responsible for putting the world in its watery grave but Ellie, a young inventor, is convinced he's innocent. The award is shared with Murray's editor, Ben Horslen, of Puffin.

Founded in 2000, the **Branford Boase Award** was set up in memory of award-winning author Henrietta Branford and her editor Wendy Boase of Walker Books, who both died in 1999, and is unique in honouring editor as well as author. It is regarded as one of the most important awards in children's books and has an impressive record in picking out star authors at the start of their careers. Previous winners include Meg Rosoff, Mal Peet, Siobhan Dowd, Marcus Sedgwick, M.G. Leonard and Frances Hardinge. Winning editors shape contemporary children's literature and include J K Rowling's editor Barry Cunningham, Philip

Pullman's editor David Fickling and Fiona Kennedy, publisher of Michelle Paver, Marcus Sedgwick and Sally Gardner.

The 2021 shortlist was particularly strong. Described as 'a showcase for all that children's literature can be' it featured powerful contemporary stories, a wildly energetic comedy adventure, an 'own voices' novel starring a young girl with autism, a dark story of witches and witchcraft in the 17th century, and the first verse novel to feature in the award's history. **Orphans of the Tide** was the only fantasy adventure on the list and impressed all the judges with its originality, Murray's control of the story and the beauty of his writing.

Judge **Liz Hyder**, author of **Bearmouth** and winner of the 2020 **Branford Boase Award** winner says of **Orphans of the Tide**, 'This book utterly stole my heart. Exquisitely written, it's a phenomenal page-turner with characters that leap off the page and straight into your imagination. **Orphans of the Tide** explores lots of big themes - environmental issues, friendship and xenophobia to name but a few - all wrapped up in an utterly compelling tale told by a master storyteller. Struan is an exceptional talent and I can't wait to read everything else he ever writes.'

Struan Murray says, 'I am so honoured and thrilled to have won the **Branford Boase Award**. This award is extremely special as it celebrates not only the author but the editor too, and understands and recognises that writing is a collaborative process that wouldn't be possible without the commitment, imagination and skill of the editor. Working with Ben has stretched me as a writer and his insight contributed so much to the world of **Orphans of the Tide** that I couldn't imagine it without him.'

Ben Horslen said: 'Every year I look forward to the announcement of the **Branford Boase Award** shortlist with particular excitement. The author-editor relationship lies at the very heart of our industry, and to have an award that celebrates and showcases that relationship is a very special thing indeed. To be nominated is a career highlight that every editor hopes for. To win is simply a dream come true.'

This year the judges are **Zoey Dixon**, YLG Librarian of the Year 2020; **Scott Evans**, teacher, consultant and founder of TheReaderTeacher.com; **Natasha Radford** of Chicken and Frog bookshop, Brentwood; and **Liz Hyder**, author of **Bearmouth**, winner of the 2020 Branford Boase Award. The panel is chaired by **Julia Eccleshare**, children's director of the **Hay Festival**.

Children's literature expert and chair of the judges **Julia Eccleshare** says, 'The **Branford Boase Award** has always celebrated the special role new writers play in expanding the scope of what children read. New voices telling

new stories add to the already rich seam of children's books: in the hands of skillful storytellers they are vital in giving a fictional commentary on current emotional, social and political issues. This year's shortlist includes books that show just how exciting, diverse and fresh storytelling for all ages of children can be. The level of talent among the new writers is extraordinary as is their determination to ensure all children can find themselves in a story. Congratulations to Struan and Ben and to all the authors and editors on the shortlist.'

The **Branford Boase Award** is supported by **Walker Books**.

The 2021 winners of the **Branford Boase Award** were announced by Liz Hyder on Thursday 15 July as part of a public event presented by the **LoveReading LitFest**. The event featured contributions from all the shortlisted authors plus previous winners and culminated in a discussion with Struan Murray and his editor Ben Horslen. Struan Murray receives a cheque for £1,000 and Struan and Ben both receive engraved trophies.

For further information please contact Andrea Reece on 07807893369 or andrea.reece@zen.co.uk

Notes to Editors:

Founded in 2000, the annual **Branford Boase Award** celebrates the most promising book for seven-year-olds and upwards written by a first-time novelist. It also highlights the importance of the editor in the development of new authors. The shortlisted authors may have published other books in another genre – e.g. poetry or a picture book – but eligibility for the prize requires that this is their first children's novel.

As well as encouraging publishers to find and promote new writers, the Award sets out to alert readers of all ages to the work of interesting newcomers.

Struan Murray is Scottish and grew up in Edinburgh, the youngest of a large, rowdy family of redheads. His first publication was a drawing in **Pingu Magazine**, aged seven, but his debut novel, **Orphans of the Tide** has attracted rather more critical acclaim. When he's not writing, Struan is a lecturer in biochemistry at the University of Oxford.

Ben Horslen is Fiction Publisher at **Penguin Random House Children's Books**. Authors he has worked with include John Green, Sam Copeland, Ransom Riggs and Jeremy Strong. Before joining Penguin he worked for many years as a packager of commercial fiction. In his other life, Ben co-runs professional theatre company **Antic Disposition**, which he founded in 2005. He has been shortlisted for the **Branford Boase Award** three times before.

The complete list of titles on the 2021 shortlist are:

When Life Gives You Mangoes by Kereen Getten, edited by Sarah Odedina (Pushkin Children's Books)

Witch by Finbar Hawkins, edited by Fiona Kennedy (Zephyr)
And the Stars Were Burning Brightly by Danielle Jawando, edited by Jane Griffiths (Simon and Schuster)
A Kind of Spark by Elle McNicoll, edited by Eishar Brar (Knights Of)
Run, Rebel by Manjeet Mann, edited by Carmen McCullough (Penguin)
Orphans of the Tide by Struan Murray, edited by Ben Horslen, illustrated by Manuel Sumberac (Puffin)
The Super Miraculous Journey of Freddie Yates by Jenny Pearson, edited by Rebecca Hill and Becky Walker, illustrated by Rob Biddulph (Usborne)

The Branford Boase Award was set up in memory of the prize-winning author **Henrietta Branford** and **Wendy Boase**, editorial director and one of the founders of Walker Books. They worked together on a number of Henrietta's novels, a partnership they greatly enjoyed. Both Henrietta and Wendy died of cancer in 1999.

Running alongside the Branford Boase Award, the **Henrietta Branford Writing Competition** encourages writing talent in under 18s.

The Award is the joint idea of **Julia Eccleshare MBE** and **Anne Marley MBE**. Julia is the director of the Hay Festival children's programme. Anne was Head of Children's, Youth & Schools Services for Hampshire Library & Information Service for many years and helped to found Authors Aloud UK, an author booking agency. She has served on many children's book award panels, including the **CILIP Carnegie & Kate Greenaway Awards**.

Established in 2005, **LoveReading** has over 300,000 engaged book lovers on its database, all hungry for trusted advice to help them find their next favourite author, book or genre. With a mission to encourage reading for pleasure, their sites regularly deliver one million page impressions per month. In March 2021 **LoveReading** partnered with some of the festival professionals behind the **LockdownLitFest** and created the **LoveReading LitFest** - a digitally native, year-round books and literature festival - enabling its audience to discover new authors and literature in an entirely different way.

For further information about the LoveReading LitFest please visit www.lovereadingleitfest.com

For more information about the award and the Henrietta Branford Writing Competition visit www.branfordboaseaward.org.uk .

Or contact Andrea Reece on 07807893369 or andrea.reece@zen.co.uk

[- ENDS -]