

## UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK PROFESSOR WINS THE WOLFSON HISTORY PRIZE 2018

Peter Marshall, Professor of History at the University of Warwick, has won this year's Wolfson History Prize with his book *Heretics and Believers: A History of the English Reformation* published by Yale University Press.

The Prize, which is awarded annually, recognises and celebrates books which combine excellence in historical research with readability for a general audience.

The winner was announced at a reception at Claridge's Hotel in central London this evening. Marshall received £40,000, with all other shortlisted authors receiving £4,000 each.

An expert on religious belief and practice in early modern Britain and Europe, Marshall was born and raised in the Orkney Islands. He joined the University of Warwick in 1994 having previously worked as a history teacher in Yorkshire.

In a book which took seven years to complete, and stands on more than two decades of research, Marshall's hope was to give full voice to the fears and hopes of ordinary women and men:

'A paradox near the heart of my account is that while English people often experienced religious change as coercive and traumatic, the Reformation simultaneously educated and empowered them, and recast the relationship between rulers and ruled.'

Winning this year's Wolfson History Prize builds on a career in which reaching beyond the academic world has always played a central role:

'The dialogue between professional scholarship and reading public that the Prize seeks to promote is one to which I have always been cheerfully and wholeheartedly committed.'

This year's winner was selected from over 150 books by a panel of four eminent historians. Expert in Islamic history, Professor Carole Hillenbrand, of the Universities of Edinburgh and St Andrews, joined the judging panel this year alongside Professor Sir David Cannadine (Chair), Professor Sir Richard Evans and Revd Professor Diarmaid MacCulloch.

**Professor Sir Richard Evans**, who presented the Prize on behalf of the judges said:

'Appearing on the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's launching of the European Reformation in Wittenberg, this is a sweeping retelling of what we thought was a familiar story. How wrong we were. Covering every level of the lived experience of the Reformation, from the policymakers to the ordinary parishioners in the Tudor countryside, Peter Marshall shows how Henry VIII's actions opened a Pandora's box from which violent confrontation and religious diversity emerged to shape the destiny of modern England.'

**Paul Ramsbottom**, Chief Executive of the Wolfson Foundation which awards the Prize said:

'The Wolfson History Prize celebrates outstanding, accessible history writing. We offer our warm congratulations to Peter Marshall who joins a remarkable rollcall of winners dating back to 1972. His wonderful book about the English Reformation is beautifully written, extensively researched and ambitious in its range. It helps us to look at this turbulent, pivotal period in fresh ways.'

This year's other shortlisted books were:

*Out of China: How the Chinese Ended the Era of Western Domination* by Robert Bickers (Allen Lane, Penguin Press)

*The Butchering Art: Joseph Lister's Quest to Transform the Grisly World of Victorian Medicine* by Lindsey Fitzharris (Allen Lane, Penguin Press)

*A Deadly Legacy: German Jews and the Great War* by Tim Grady (Yale University Press)

*Black Tudors: The Untold Story* by Miranda Kaufmann (Oneworld)

*Heligoland: Britain, Germany and the Struggle for the North Sea* by Jan Rüger (Oxford University Press)

All six authors can be heard talking about their books on BBC Radio 3's 'Free Thinking' programme, hosted by historian and broadcaster, Professor Rana Mitter on the BBC Arts and Ideas [podcast](#).

This is only the second year that a shortlist for the Wolfson History Prize has been announced. Christopher de Hamel won the Prize in 2017 with his book *Meetings with Remarkable Manuscripts* (Allen Lane, Penguin Press) which presented 12 medieval manuscripts in the form of a 'conversation' with the reader. Other past winners have included Mary Beard for *Pompeii: The Life of a Roman Town*, Sir Antony Beevor for *Stalingrad* and Simon Schama for *Patriots and Liberators: Revolution in the Netherlands*.

### **Notes to Editors**

First awarded by the Wolfson Foundation in 1972, the **Wolfson History Prize** remains a beacon of the best historical writing being produced in the UK, reflecting qualities of both readability and excellence in writing and research. Over £1.1 million has been awarded to more than 90 historians in its 46-year history. To be eligible for consideration, authors must be resident in the UK in the year of the book's publication (the preceding year of the award), must not be a previous winner of the Prize and must have written a book which is readable, scholarly and accessible to the lay reader.

You can find out more at [www.wolfson.org.uk/history-prize](http://www.wolfson.org.uk/history-prize), and connect via [#WolfsonHistoryPrize](#) and [facebook.com/WolfsonHistoryPrize](https://facebook.com/WolfsonHistoryPrize)

**The Wolfson Foundation** ([www.wolfson.org.uk](http://www.wolfson.org.uk)) is an independent grant-making charity that aims to promote the civic health of society by supporting excellence in the arts & humanities, education, science and health. Since 1955, almost £900 million (£1.9 billion in real terms) has been awarded to nearly 11,000 projects and individuals across the UK, all on the basis of expert peer review. The Wolfson Foundation is committed to supporting history and the humanities more broadly. Since 2012, awards across the UK of more than £10.7 million have been made to 186 Postgraduate Scholarships in the Humanities at universities, and some £11 million to museums and galleries, as well as numerous awards for historic buildings.

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**Further information about the winner, including judges' comments, can be found at the end of the Notes to Editors. [Images of the authors and books are available here.](#)**

**The winning author, the judges, and Paul Ramsbottom, Chief Executive of the Wolfson Foundation are available for interview. For all press enquiries please contact: Alex Hippisley-Cox +44 (0)7921 127077 / [ahipcoxpr@btconnect.com](mailto:ahipcoxpr@btconnect.com)**

### **ABOUT THE WINNING BOOK**

#### ***Heretics and Believers: A History of the English Reformation***

Peter Marshall (Yale University Press)

*"A beautifully judged account of the English Reformation. Marshall weaves a single narrative through a contentious century without loss of detail or depth of understanding. Full of wise and humane analysis, this is ambitious in scope and brilliant in execution."* – Wolfson History Prize judges

Centuries on, what the Reformation was and what it accomplished remain deeply contentious. Peter Marshall's sweeping new history—the first major overview for general readers in a generation—argues that sixteenth-century England was a society neither desperate for, nor allergic to change, but one open to ideas of "reform" in various competing guises. King Henry VIII wanted an orderly, uniform Reformation, but his actions opened a Pandora's Box from which pluralism and diversity flowed and rooted themselves in English life. With sensitivity to individual experience as well as masterfully synthesizing historical and institutional developments, Marshall frames the perceptions and actions of people great and small, from monarchs and bishops to ordinary families and ecclesiastics, against a backdrop of profound change that altered the meanings of "religion" itself. This engaging history reveals what was really at stake in the overthrow of Catholic culture and the reshaping of the English Church.

**Peter Marshall** is Professor of History at the University of Warwick, and a leading expert in the history of the Reformation and its impact in the British Isles and beyond. He is a winner of the Harold J. Grimm Prize for Reformation History, and has been shortlisted for the Longman/History Today Book of the Year Award. His many books include *Reformation England 1480–1642* (2003), *Mother Leakey and the Bishop: A Ghost Story* (2007), *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (2002), *The Reformation: A Very Short Introduction* (2009) and *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Reformation* (2015).