



# WORDLIFE



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## ABOUT WORDLIFE

Formed in 2006, Wordlife has evolved into one of the leading advocates for literature in the Yorkshire region.

Wordlife started as a response to the lack of live literature events in Sheffield and since then has developed a programme across Yorkshire and beyond, including events, publications and bespoke projects designed to bring new audiences to literature. In recent years Wordlife has been particularly active in exploring cross-platform work and the meeting points between new technology and literature. Wordlife is part of not-for-profit social enterprise, Opus Independents.

**If you are interested in Wordlife running a project for you, get in touch at [joe@wordlife.co.uk](mailto:joe@wordlife.co.uk). We are always open to new conversations with organisations that share our aims and values.**



‘One of the purveyors of the new literary night out’ **The Independent**

‘An incredibly entertaining evening’ **The Yorkshire Post**

Wordlife’s regular event series is the most popular and diverse regular poetry event in Yorkshire. Wordlife have run events in a range of locations, from pubs to theatres, nightclubs, museums, parks and everything in between. We’ve featured leading poets from the UK, such as Kate Tempest, Lemn Sissay and Joe Dunthorne, and the best-known poets from the US slam scene, such as Buddy Wakefield and Derrick Brown. We’ve partnered with national organisations like Apples and Snakes, The British Council and The Arts Council alongside long-standing relationships with local festivals such as Off The Shelf Festival of Words. Our events have been featured in The Independent, The Guardian and The Yorkshire Post. We’ve helped lead the development of the literature sector in Yorkshire by creating a community of writers, audiences and like-minded organisations.



Our bespoke project series has seen Wordlife innovate with both digital and participatory projects. From **Poetry On The Trams**, putting an original poem inspired by movement on every tram in Sheffield as part of the 2012 Cultural Olympiad, to **Digital Poetry Slams**, the first integrated online poetry slams of their kind creating a literature map of individual cities, Wordlife is committed to finding new ways of reaching out to audiences and developing poetry as an art form.

## EVENTS

Wordlife have been running high-quality, innovative poetry events since 2006. We run a regular event series in Sheffield in various venues and currently also programme regular events for the Barnsley Civic Theatre and The Orangery in Wakefield. Previous clients also include The National Media Museum, Theatre In The Mill, Sheffield Council, Sheffield Museums, Off The Shelf Festival of Words, The University of Sheffield, Sheffield Hallam University



and many others. We are passionate about partnerships and regularly collaborate with national organisations like Apples and Snakes, The British Council and The Arts Council.

We have experience in running a wide range of events, from open mics to poetry slams, featured readings, pop-up events and cross-discipline shows including comedy, theatre and music. We can target events at new audiences, existing poetry audiences or particular demographics. A lot of past work has included specialising in programming for 18-30 year olds, who are often target audiences for literature festivals that usually engage older audiences.

As every event is delivered bespoke to the partner that has commissioned it, we do not have a single model event that we offer. We try and tailor our events to ensure they are high quality, bring in new audiences but also plug into the local literature infrastructure as opposed to competing with it. Our events programme is incredibly flexible to a range of budgets and can be delivered with optional extras such as marketing, branding, photography and filming.



Wordlife are an organisation who are very much a force for good for live literature in Yorkshire. They provide platforms for artists and audience development in an artform and in an area of the country where their work is very valuable and necessary. I, personally, have benefitted from this as an artist and promoter. **Kate Fox**

## PREVIOUS WORDLIFE PROJECTS

Wordlife have delivered a range of bespoke work that has been commissioned by clients and partners or we have sourced funding for ourselves directly. These projects can be rolled out in various cost models. If you are interested in us delivering one for you, get in touch and let us know what your priorities are. We're very happy to have initial discussions without charge to ensure we can deliver the right project for you. We're always excited about developing new projects.



### Poetry Light Night

#### *Large-scale Projection of Poem Films*

Wordlife have been working with poetry and film for a number of years. Since October 2015 we have led the development of several high profile projection projects. These typically involve the commissioning of newly themed work from contemporary writers which are then turned into poem films by a team of filmmakers and animators and projected onto central buildings in public locations. These projects are innovative, high impact and deliver large audience numbers, mostly reaching out to new audiences for poetry.



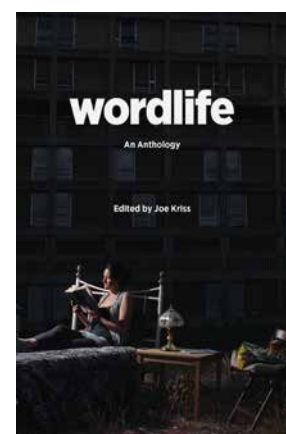


As someone who has performed professionally all over the UK and beyond I can honestly say that the Wordlife event which I performed at in Sheffield was amongst my absolute favourites. The event was very professionally run, attracted a sizeable, diverse and enthusiastic audience and provided an excellent showcase for both established and emerging poets and spoken word artists. Nights like this are exactly what the scene needs and I would heartily recommend the Wordlife team to audiences, programmers and potential funders alike. **Tony Walsh**

## 10th Birthday Anthology

To celebrate Wordlife's 10th Birthday in 2016, we published our first ever anthology, supported by a national reading tour.

The book was edited by Wordlife's Director Joe Kriss and includes 52 writers, all of whom Wordlife has worked with directly over the last ten years. Featured writers include Lemn Sissay, Hollie McNish, Buddy Wakefield, Salena Godden, Luke Wright and Helen Mort. The Anthology was launched at poetry events in London, Wakefield, Sheffield, Manchester and Lincoln, with a total audience of over 450 people.



## Year of Making



Wordlife applied to the 'Year of Making' for one of their large-scale commissions to celebrate the history and culture of making in Sheffield through poetry. We created four poet-in-residences across the city in well known public locations known for their significance in the history of making. The poems from these residencies were then given to four filmmakers to turn into poem films which were then projected onto Weston Park Museum in Sheffield.

The work from this project can be viewed at [opusindependents.com/projects/wordlife/wordlife-projects/digital-poet-in-residence](https://opusindependents.com/projects/wordlife/wordlife-projects/digital-poet-in-residence)

## Poetry Light Night

Wordlife commissioned poets Tony Walsh and Rommi Smith to create original poems inspired by John Ruskin's writings. John Ruskin was a prominent writer, social activist and philanthropist who was extremely influential and wrote on a huge and varied set of subjects as diverse as architecture, poetry, classical texts and politics. Rommi Smith and Tony Walsh researched John Ruskin's works and were tasked with writing an original poem based on



their interpretations of his writings. These poems were then given to two filmmakers, Annie Watson and Rob Speranza to be turned into poem films that were then projected onto the frontage of the Upper Chapel building.

A short documentary video of Poetry Light Night can be seen at [youtube.com/watch?v=SJz8OvBu5q8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SJz8OvBu5q8)

## Queen of Air



**Queen of Air** was a poem film made for large-scale projection for the Amy Johnson Festival in Hull. The poem was written by poet and Wordlife Director Joe Kriss and the short film was made by BAFTA-nominated filmmaker Annie Watson. Amy Johnson was one of Hull's most famous daughters, an aviatrix who broke world records in flying times from England to Australia, Cape Town and across the world. The Amy Johnson Festival marked seventy years since her first world record-breaking flight.

Poet Joe Kriss researched Amy Johnson's life through biographies and copies of letters written to her family and wrote a poem examining Amy's fearless solo flights around the globe. Filmmaker Annie Watson used this poem to inspire a short film that included some archive footage of Amy, alongside stylised movements from dancers and moths that represented the fragility and frailty of aviation at the time and the bravery with which Amy confronted these risks.

This film can be seen at [youtube.com/watch?v=HKt5txJ0ScU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HKt5txJ0ScU)



Off The Shelf Festival of Words have worked with Wordlife for a number of years. Wordlife have organised events for the festival including open mics, closing and opening party style events with words and music. We have also collaborated on some major projects and commissions. The work produced has always been excellent and we continue to be impressed by the quality of their work and the artistic ideas they come up with.

**Off The Shelf Festival of Words**

## Unity Words

Our monthly programme of events held at Unity Works in Wakefield in partnership with A Firm Of Poets and part-funded by Arts Council England.

The event has a standard format of one nationally-known headliner, followed by a regional or local support poet and five open mic spots who attend a workshop earlier in the day before performing in the evening. 2016 saw us bring some of the biggest names in spoken word to Wakefield including Hollie McNish, Buddy Wakefield, Luke Wright and Salena Godden, while also supporting and developing local talent. Our 2017 programme was successful in obtaining further Arts Council England funding and



throughout the year we will be running events on the last Wednesday of every month in the Unity Works Cafe Bar.

For up to date listings and more information, go to [wordlife.co.uk](http://wordlife.co.uk)



### Word On The Street

Our outreach literature programme based in Hull, run in partnership with **Freedom Festival** and **A Firm of Poets** and funded by the James Reckitt Trust and the Arts Council.

In 2016 we ran an audience development project for Freedom Festival in Hull for spoken word, ahead of them designating a full spoken word stage for the first time at Freedom Festival itself, held from 1-4 September. We ran three large-scale spoken word events in venues across the city alongside a workshop programme for local poets. Each event was in collaboration with a pre-existing live literature night or arts organisation in the city to help form new partnerships.

### Digital Writing Maps

Wordlife has led the creation of digital literature maps which are bespoke online maps designed to showcase the culture and history of writing in specific locations. These online maps can house multiple types of content including text, images, videos and information about the local literary infrastructure. They are designed to encourage the cross-pollination of audiences from local literary events, students, heritage trails, universities and literature organisations by providing content from all of them in one place. These websites help build audiences, deepen local collaboration and provide information for aspiring writers in the region to find new opportunities.



We have developed writing maps for Sheffield and for Manchester supported by Sheffield Hallam University and Manchester Metropolitan University respectively.

You can view the websites at [writingsheffield.com](http://writingsheffield.com) & [writingmanchester.com](http://writingmanchester.com)



Wordlife was a brilliant event to perform at and to go to. It really stood out as an event that attracted new audiences to poetry, using a perfect local venue that isn't normally a poetry centre. For me, that's the perfect combo, because people find poetry there, and young people aren't intimidated to come and give it a try. The crowd was super, welcoming and so enthusiastic. Not your standard poetry night for sure. **Hollie McNish**



## VR Poetry Installations

Wordlife have created two Virtual Reality Poetry Installations. These involve filming poets in 360 degree film. We then create a bespoke interactive interface which acts as a menu screen for the VR videos. Users are able to watch the videos using Samsung Gear VR technology which involves playing the videos from the most recent Android phones which are then plugged into a headset providing the pop-up VR experience.

In both of these projects we filmed poets in locations that synced up with the work themselves, filming Helen Mort's title poem from her collection 'Division Street' on Division Street in Sheffield. The second project involved commission work directly for the VR experience. Poets were asked to imagine the camera as a character. Users feel as if they are a person present in each location and that the poet is talking directly to them. This work has toured several literature festivals and is currently available at all of our live literature events.

## Distant Lands

Wordlife was commissioned to develop a project by Off The Shelf Festival of Words marking the centenary of the creation of stainless steel in Sheffield by Harry Brearley. The brief was to create a poetry project that celebrated the Steel City and created original work that would be translated into other languages. Wordlife researched where Sheffield stainless steel was exported and used across the world, finding examples in London, New Zealand, France, and Spain. We commissioned the creation of five original pieces of work inspired by the use of stainless steel in each location by local writers Gav Roberts, Gevi Carver, Joe Kriss, Helen Mort and Steve Scott. These poems were then translated into the destination language of each poem, and performances were filmed in old industrial locations in Sheffield, such as old steelworks and canals.



These videos are hosted at [opusindependents.com/2013/10/distant-lands](https://opusindependents.com/2013/10/distant-lands)

## Picture The Poet



An event in collaboration with the National Portrait Gallery, Apples and Snakes and Museums Sheffield, we hosted two high-profile, sold-out poetry events at the Graves Gallery in Sheffield. With a combined audience of nearly 500 people, these events were centred around featured spoken word performances from local and national performers in an intimate atmosphere. Performers included Derbyshire poet laureate Helen Mort, US touring poet Buddy Wakefield and the critically-acclaimed poet and broadcaster Lemn Sissay.

A short documentary video of Picture The Poet can be seen at [youtube.com/watch?v=Jz-5TcEBR94](https://youtube.com/watch?v=Jz-5TcEBR94)

## Off The Shelf Slam

Each year we work closely with Sheffield's largest annual celebration of reading and writing, Off The Shelf Festival of Words. As well as bespoke commissions each year, we are tasked with running a celebratory closing event marking the end of the festival.

For the last four years we've hosted the largest poetry slam in Yorkshire. We follow traditional slam rules with two rounds and up to 3 minutes per round for each poet. The event is judged by three random members of the audience. These events often feature comedians and live music alongside poetry to try and reach new audiences. Previous headliners have included Hollie McNish and Mark Grist and have been held at a range of locations across the city including Shakespeares, Queens Social Club and Theatre Delicatessen.



More information on Off The Shelf Festival of Words at [offtheshelf.org.uk](http://offtheshelf.org.uk)



It was great to work with Wordlife. Their artistic and aesthetic standards are high and the live event they organised worked really well. The two new poems and films projected onto a beautiful building were stunning. Wordlife researched the subject well - they understood the value of collaborating with Ruskin's ideas, and provided all the partners involved with an opportunity to work together in new ways. **Ruth Nutter, Ruskin in Sheffield, on Poetry Light Night**



## Artistic Development & Mentoring

Wordlife have been leading the development of poetry and spoken word as an art form in Yorkshire for the last ten years.

We have run a whole range of event and workshop programmes, alongside artistic development projects for local poets, which have included commissioned work, professional development and mentoring. As a result of this long-standing work, we are often asked to run programmes developing poetry as an art form.

## Workshops

Wordlife is able to deliver creative writing workshops for both one-off and ongoing projects aimed at either introductory or advanced levels. Our facilitators have many years of experience delivering workshops in a range of community, professional and educational settings. From primary schools to universities and retirement homes, our facilitators have the ability to create and design their own programme of work or provide workshops to particular specifications or outcomes. All of our facilitators are DBS checked and covered by the company's public liability insurance.

Previous projects include being a delivery partner for True Grit Digital Poetry, a poetry outreach programme funded by the Yorkshire Festival that included both digital and participatory elements. We workshopped a group of 12 local poets to create a collective piece themed around Yorkshire and 'True



Grit', which was then filmed in a variety of locations across Sheffield and shared via the Welcome To Yorkshire YouTube channel. We've also provided workshops for Off The Shelf, both Hallam and Sheffield universities, and a range of other arts organisations.

More information on Wordlife and past projects can be found at [wordlife.co.uk](http://wordlife.co.uk)



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## Contact Us

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