

**\*\*STRICTLY EMBARGOED UNTIL 00.01 GMT, MONDAY 7<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2009\*\***

## **CELEBRITIES REVEAL THEIR DELIGHTS IN CHARITY ANTHOLOGY**

**(Who loves motorway service stations? Which actor gets a thrill from seeing a woman with no handbag? And which former MP secretly delights in the death of his friends?)**

A stellar line-up of authors, entertainers and national treasures will this week reveal the little things in life that make them happy in *Modern Delight*, a charity publication published by Waterstone's and Faber in aid of Dyslexia Action and the London Library.

Taking its inspiration from J.B. Priestley's 1949 book *Delight* (a magical and unexpected collection of essays from a self-confessed 'old monster'), the anthology is filled with musings on themes universal, personal, eccentric and everyday - from Harry Hill on the pleasure of tormenting telemarketers and Tom Stoppard who delights in a day when nobody wants him for anything, to Jeremy Paxman on the wonder of frogspawn and India Knight who can't get enough of twitter.

The book is published to coincide with the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Priestley's original, and as the austere times in which it was first published have made of a something of an unwelcome comeback, Waterstone's hope *Modern Delight* will be something of an antidote to our current gloomy climate, providing a unique snapshot of what can make us smile in 2009.

Over 80 eminent figures, including Stephen Fry, Jo Brand, Nigel Slater, Beryl Bainbridge, Tim Rice, Tamsin Greig, Alexei Sayle and Richard Eyre have contributed to the anthology, writing on subjects as diverse as reading old restaurant guides, eating the last roast potato and polishing the silver. Actor Bill Nighy couldn't put his finger on just one delight, opting instead to write about a collection of things that brings a smile to his face, including prescription shades, a woman with no handbag, the Chelsea Bridge Pie Stall, and Michelle Obama high-fiving a North London schoolgirl.

Long known as a nation of animal lovers, it comes as no surprise that countless contributors chose to write about their two and four-legged friends: comedian Dave Spikey describes his joy at seeing the rescue chickens he saved 'transform from featherless tortured souls into happy, beautiful proud and inquisitive birds'. Elsewhere *Labyrinth* author Kate Mosse waxes lyrical about her Westie, Roy Hattersley revels in the pleasure of drying his dog Buster, novelist Philippa Gregory sings the praises of her ducklings, and philosopher Alain de Botton writes about the sheer delight of a trip to the zoo.

More unusual 'delights' include Joan Bakewell's tribute to the unsung joys of motorway service stations, John Sergeant on killing fish ("with one or two fierce blows"), and Gyles Brandreth on the 'quiet (and curiously guiltless) delight' he takes in the death of friends.

*Modern Delight* will be available exclusively at Waterstone's branches and at Waterstones.com from 10<sup>th</sup> September, priced £9.99. All proceeds from the book will go to two charities devoted to encouraging the delight of reading: Dyslexia Action, the UK's leading provider of services and support for people with dyslexia and literacy difficulties; and the London Library, the world's largest independent lending library, which is dedicated to the advancement of education, learning and knowledge.

Waterstone's Managing Director Gerry Johnson, said:

"When we set out to discover what gives people delight we never dreamed we would get such an overwhelming response. Each essay is in turn funny, inspiring and unique. We are thrilled that so many incredible talents have shared their stories with us, and by doing so will help Waterstone's raise funds for two fantastic causes".

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Notes to Editors:

1. Other contributors to *Modern Delight* include: Michael Palin, Vince Cable, William Boyd, Michael Morpurgo, Sebastian Faulks, Lynne Truss, Antony Beevor, Kate Mosse and Clive James.
2. Great Northern Books will be reissuing Priestley's *Delight* to coincide with the publication of *Modern Delight*. Topics written about by Priestley include a gin-and-tonic, the sound of a football, detective stories in bed, quietly malicious chairmanship, celebrities at parties, answering back, frightening civil servants, and smoking in a hot bath.
3. The leading bookseller is keen for the public to share what gives them delight and will invite people to do so at a dedicated webpage at [waterstones.com/delight](http://waterstones.com/delight). The site is also home to a filmed version of Dom Joly's delight - hill rolling in Gloucestershire.
4. *Modern Delight* follows on from Waterstone's What's Your Story? campaign, which saw thirteen internationally renowned authors - including J.K. Rowling and Margaret Atwood - donating original, highly-collectable stories for a charity auction. In total, the project raised over £80,000 for English PEN and Dyslexia Action.
5. Waterstone's is the UK's leading specialist bookseller with over 300 branches in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, as well as branches in Eire, in Amsterdam and Brussels, on the Isle of Man and Jersey. Its transactional website [Waterstones.com](http://Waterstones.com) was launched in 2006, and there are currently over 2 million holders of the Waterstone's Card. Waterstone's was named Bookselling Company of the Year at the Bookseller Retail Awards 2008.
6. Dyslexia Action is a national charity and the UK's leading provider of services and support for people with dyslexia and literacy difficulties. It specialises in assessment teaching and training. It also develops and distributes teaching materials and undertakes research. Dyslexia Action is dependent on fees from assessments, tuition and training courses, and income from the sale of its products, as well as the generosity of benefactors. Dyslexia Action employs over 250 specialist teachers, as well as our their chartered psychologists and support staff. Some 90 psychologists work with Dyslexia Action on a consultancy basis. Dyslexia Action services are available through its 26 centres and 160 teaching locations around the UK. Over half a million people benefit from its work each year. For more information visit [www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk](http://www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk)
7. The London Library, St James's Square, Piccadilly, was founded in 1841 and is the world's largest independent lending library. Its broad and eclectic collections cover a vast number of subjects across the humanities, with books dating from the 16th Century to the latest print and digital resources. It has over one million volumes, stored on 15 miles of open-access shelves, and 97% of the Library's books are available for loan.

With over 7000 current members, the Library has provided an invaluable resource to writers, researchers and avid readers for over 160 years. Past and present members include Charles Darwin, George Eliot, Virginia Woolf, T.S. Eliot, Bruce Chatwin, Sebastian Faulks, Jeremy Paxman, Antonia Fraser and current president Tom Stoppard. Membership of the London Library is open to all.

The Library is a registered charity and receives no government or statutory funding and is funded entirely by members' subscriptions, donations and bequests. The London Library is currently carrying out a major phase of its extension and redevelopment, designed by architects Haworth Tompkins. This will provide a greatly enhanced Library with T.S. Eliot House integrated with the St James's Square site on all five levels.

