

THE BETJEMAN SOCIETY

Patron: Jonathan Glancey

Past President: Bevis Hillier Founder and Vice-President: Philippa Davies
Vice-Presidents: Tim Betjeman, Barry Humphries CBE, Edward Mirzoeff CVO CBE, John R. Murray,
Martin Revill and Jonathan Stedall

NEWS RELEASE

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BETJEMAN SOCIETY AWARD 2021 ANNOUNCED

**Novelist and playwright Jonathan Smith wins Betjeman Society's Award for
"intensely personal" book *Being Betjeman(n)* and "lifelong obsession"**

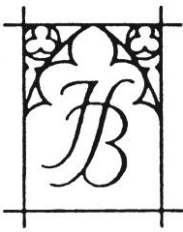
The Betjeman Society has today (28 August, Sir John Betjeman's birthday) presented the novelist, playwright and educationalist **Jonathan Smith** with its annual Betjeman Society Award for "the most significant recent contribution to the understanding or enjoyment of the life and work of Sir John Betjeman."

Jonathan Smith is the author of *Being Betjeman(n)*, published in 2020 by Galileo, and two radio plays, *Mr Betjeman's Class* and *Mr Betjeman Regrets* which were broadcast by BBC Radio 4 in 2017. He was presented with his Betjeman Society Award by Sir John's biographer, Bevis Hillier, at a ceremony held at London's St Pancras Station, the Victorian architectural masterpiece that Betjeman helped to save from demolition in the 1960s.

The Betjeman Society (www.betjemansociety.com) – which exists to celebrate the life and achievements of the poet, writer, broadcaster and conservationist John Betjeman – describes Jonathan Smith as having had "a lifelong obsession with Betjeman" leading up to last year's publication of *Being Betjeman(n)*.

In the citation for the Award, the judges state of *Being Betjeman(n)*: "The book combines autobiographical elements, while at the same time presenting imagined dialogue from episodes in Betjeman's life, with some factual basis. It is a fascinating book, intensely personal, with deep introspection, and it is clear to the reader that Betjeman has got under his skin right from his early days as an undergraduate at Cambridge. Jonathan is a staunch supporter of John Betjeman's reputation and *Being Betjeman(n)* is a great and thought-provoking addition to the works about his life and achievements."

The Award winner's trophy is a limited-edition cast bronze maquette of the iconic John Betjeman statue at St Pancras Station. The trophy is mounted on a Caithness stone base. Lance Pierson, Chairman of The Betjeman Society, comments: "Jonathan Smith is a worthy winner of the Betjeman Society Award. His book is a significant new addition to Betjeman literature, even in a new composite genre. It is full of insight, as befits someone who has lived with his subject matter and reflected on it for most of his lifetime. We are all the richer for it."



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The Betjeman Society Award is presented every year to a “person, group or organisation which in the opinion of the Council has made the most significant recent contribution to the understanding or enjoyment of the life and work of Sir John Betjeman.” The large number of nominations for this year’s Award reflects the continued interest in Betjeman’s work.

Highly Commended

The Betjeman Society also announced that Steve Jackson was ‘Highly Commended’ by the Award judging panel. Steve is a Council member of the Society and has been editor of the Society’s *Newsletter* for the past 13 years. Last year he took on the additional roles of Hon. Secretary and Membership Secretary. “His interest in the poetry, conservation and architectural writing by Betjeman has led to a greater understanding of his reputation and achievements,” the Award judges write. “In the last year he has taken on onerous extra responsibilities. During Horace Liberty’s sabbatical, Steve took on the publication of the 2019/2020 edition of *The Betjemanian*, the journal of The Betjeman Society; its high standard and quality was a significant achievement in difficult circumstances.”

In addition, The Betjeman Society named Alan Nunn as the winner of its ‘Bonus Award’, reflecting long service to the Society. Alan has for his many years been actively involved in promoting interest in John Betjeman’s life and work in North Cornwall, and has been commended by the Award judges “for bringing Betjeman’s poems to life” in Cornwall.

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For further information, please contact Andy Smith (press officer) 07737 271676, email wordsmithreviews@yahoo.co.uk, or Stephen Stringer (Council member and Award coordinator), email stephenstringer5@gmail.com

Editor’s Note: The Betjeman Society was established in 1988 to advance the appreciation of the work of the poet, writer, broadcaster and conservationist **Sir John Betjeman** (1906-1984). We also exist to inform and inspire our members and the wider public through the study, awareness and enjoyment of his life, work and influence, both in the United Kingdom and internationally. The Society is a member of the Alliance of Literary Societies and works in partnership with a range of literary, conservation and heritage organisations, with which Sir John Betjeman was closely associated. They include The Victorian Society, Twentieth Century Society, Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, Churches Conservation Trust and National Churches Trust.