



Top Left to Right - Robbin Ferris, Cally Taylor, Caroline Theobald, Michael Brodie, Henry Kippin, and John Mark Williams.

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## **Northumbria University awards honorary degrees at Summer congregations**

Inspirational figures from the worlds of business, health, social impact, literature and politics have been honoured by Northumbria University.

Each year, honorary degrees are awarded to individuals who have obtained the very highest standards of scholarship, outstanding achievement, or distinction worthy of national or international recognition in their academic or professional field.

[Award winning crime author, Cally Taylor, awarded an honorary degree of Doctor of Letters](#)



Cally Taylor came to Northumbria to study psychology and graduated in 1995. It was during this time that she developed a particular interest in abnormal and criminal psychology. With a back catalogue that includes 10 thrilling psychological novels, two romantic comedy novels, two young adult novels and numerous short stories, Cally believes her experience at the University helped her shape and achieve her dream of becoming an author.

Her debut novel, *Heaven Can Wait*, was published in 2009 and was followed in 2011 by *Home for Christmas*, which was later made into a feature film by JumpStart Productions. She then began writing psychological thrillers under the name C L Taylor.

Her first thriller, *The Accident*, sold over 150,000 copies in the UK alone and was named 'One of the Top 10 Bestselling Debuts of 2014'. Her next book, *The Lie*, sat in the Sunday Times Best Seller Charts for five weeks and topped the Amazon charts for three months. Cally's subsequent novels have gone on to be Sunday Times best-selling thrillers, selling over two million copies in the UK alone and reaching the number one slot on several online platforms

including the Amazon Kindle.

[UK health leader, Michael Brodie CBE, awarded an honorary Doctor of Civil Law degree](#)



Michael Brodie CBE is Chief Executive of the NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA). During the national fight against coronavirus, Ashington-born Michael led NHSBSA while also becoming Interim Chief Executive at the then Public Health England (PHE), following the announcement of its pending abolition in August 2020.

Both the NHSBSA and PHE played pivotal roles in the pandemic, with the NHSBSA standing up around 50 new services to support the national effort and PHE leading on public safety and many aspects of the national response. He returned to the NHSBSA full time in October 2021 after overseeing the successful transition of PHE into the UK Health Security Agency and Office for Health Improvement and Disparities.

A Northumbria alumnus, Michael achieved a degree in accountancy at the

University in 1990 and since graduating, has gained extensive experience at board level and across the public services.

[CEO of the North East Combined Authority, Dr Henry Kippin, awarded an honorary Doctorate of Civil Law degree](#)



Born in London and raised in Gateshead, ensuring communities have a say on what happens in their region has been an essential principle for Dr Kippin throughout his career. In 2008 he was asked to manage the Government's cross-party 2020 Public Services Commission. Later, he went on to serve as a senior advisor to Accenture's global public sector practice, then as CEO for social enterprise Collaborate CIC. Collaborate is an innovative social enterprise focused on building place-based collaboration across all sectors to improve outcomes for communities.

Dr Kippin then took on his first role within a mayoral authority. As an Executive Director at the West Midlands Combined Authority, he was responsible for its work in public services, wellbeing, inclusive growth, climate change and digital.

In 2018 he returned home to the North East as CEO of the North of Tyne

Combined Authority. During his tenure, he navigated the region through the pandemic and through recovery, developed the biggest devolution deal in the country, and helped create 10,000 jobs underpinned by newly devolved skills budgets and ambitious housing and transport plans.

[Globally respected business leader, John Mark Williams, awarded an honorary Doctor of Civil Law degree](#)



John Williams graduated with an MBA from Northumbria in 2005, is respected globally as Chief Executive of the Institute of Leadership, a professional membership body for leaders and managers.

After graduating from Northumbria, John chose to stay in the North East working as International Trade Director for UK Trade and Investment in the region. In 2009 John became Chief Executive Officer of Gateway to London where he was responsible for leading inward investment into east London in 2009. He later became chief executive of the Agile Business Consortium, the professional body behind the AgilePM handbook and AgilePM, a leading certification in agile project management.

In 2020, he took up his current position of chief executive officer of the

Institute of Leadership. Since graduation, John has retained a close relationship with Northumbria, using the connections and partnerships he has developed throughout his career to support the institution.

[Tech for good social impact founder, Robin Ferris, awarded an honorary Doctor of Civil Law degree](#)



Robin Ferris is the founder of [Bankuet](#), a tech for good start-up and the UK's first zero waste food donation platform. Robin, who studied marketing management at Northumbria between 1999 and 2003, received his Honorary Doctor of Civil Law for his determination to help tackle food poverty and commitment to improving society.

Robin started out his life in the entertainment industry working for Universal Pictures, BBC, and Island Records, and is now applying his vast experience and skills to the third sector. Bankuet was born out of a simple desire to help tackle food poverty and its mission is to get food banks what they need, when they need it, and to make donating to food banks more accessible.

Set up in 2019, Bankuet has already raised £3 million to buy the essential items that food banks need. Not only is Bankuet able to negotiate a better deal via bulk purchase, but by using existing infrastructures, both on the ground and online, and developing new technology, Bankuet has brought stability to the supply chain.

[Champion of entrepreneurship in the North East, Caroline Theobald CBE, awarded an honorary Doctor of Civil Law degree](#)



Caroline Theobald CBE, is the co-founder of dedicated business network group The Bridge Club set up to connect founders with funding, management advice and new markets and to stimulate enterprise thinking in schools, colleges and universities.

For almost 25 years The Bridge Club has provided early-stage entrepreneurs with access to the money, management, skills, and markets they need to grow their businesses. That work led to another role as project lead for Connect Northumberland, building a community of Northumberland's employers to help the county transition to a vibrant post coal economy. She is also a founding director of the North East Initiative on Business Ethics, a not-for-profit organisation that aims to make the North East a good place to do business. She also became co-owner of enterprise training company, FIRST, which connects young people, start-ups, and professionals to their wider business community.

Caroline is a visiting professor at Northumbria and was Chair of the University's Newcastle Business School Advisory Board for five years from 2018 to 2023.

Northumbria is a research-intensive university that unlocks potential for all, changing lives regionally, nationally and internationally.

Two thirds of Northumbria's undergraduate students come from the North East region and go into employment in the region when they graduate, demonstrating Northumbria's significant contribution to social mobility and levelling up in the North East of England.

Find out more about us at [www.northumbria.ac.uk](http://www.northumbria.ac.uk)

--- Please contact [media.communications@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:media.communications@northumbria.ac.uk) with any media enquiries or interview requests ---

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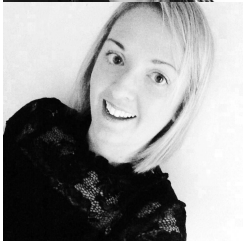


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