University of Leicester marks Adrian Mole’s 50th Birthday with programme of free events

Day of activities on Sunday 2nd April 2017 will culminate with birthday bash and a cake created by Great British Bake Off winner Frances Quinn

The University of Leicester and publishers Penguin are celebrating Adrian Mole’s 50th Birthday on Sunday 2nd April with a day of special events which are free and open to the public.

Everyone is invited to join in the 50th birthday celebrations of local hero Adrian who was created by Leicester writer Sue Townsend. The author introduced readers to Adrian with the publication of *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole Aged 13 ¾* in 1982. She then achieved worldwide success with her books about the Leicester teenager.

The day of special events will include an illustration workshop for all the family, a chance to hear from friends and collaborators of Sue Townsend, a birthday tea, Adrian Mole goody bag and a cake made by Great British Bake Off winner Frances Quinn. The day will also showcase three Mole-inspired five-minute radio monologues from new writers which have been commissioned by the University’s Centre for New Writing. People attending can choose from any of the events happening throughout the day, or attend all of them. The party starts with ‘The Art of Adrian Mole’ a family workshop with artist and original Adrian Mole illustrator Caroline Holden Hotopf at the Attenborough Arts Centre from 10.30am-11.30am. Caroline will discuss her career and collaboration with Sue Townsend, and then offer the audience a chance at designing their own book cover.

This day of celebration supports a whole host of exciting publishing from Penguin to mark the occasion. For the first time, they have published the collected poems of misunderstood intellectual and tortured poet Adrian Mole in a single volume. Published by Penguin’s brand new imprint – Mole Press – *Adrian Mole: The Collected Poems* is available from 16th March in time for World Poetry Day. From his timeless first documented poem – ‘The Tap’ – via classic odes to his muse, first and only true love Pandora (I adore ya), we follow Adrian’s life in verse form. All eight diaries are also being re-published to mark the occasion, with new anniversary covers, and the first two books in the series, *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole, Aged 13¾*, and *The Growing Pains of Adrian Mole*, brought together in a single edition for the first time.
Back to the day itself, and from 1.15pm to 2.15pm in the Peter Williams Lecture Theatre writer, actor and director Carole Hayman and actor Janette Legge will reflect on Sue Townsend’s contribution to British Theatre and television. The event will be chaired by Leicester author Bali Rai.

Reunion: The Birth of Adrian Mole with Colin Broadway, John Tydeman, Geoffrey Strachan and Caroline Holden Hotopf takes place in the Peter Williams Lecture Theatre from 2.45pm to 3.45pm. Chaired by Radio Leicester’s Bridget Blair, this is a unique opportunity to discover the origins of one of Leicester’s most famous sons, as four of the key figures in the Adrian Mole story are reunited.

And finally, Adrian Mole’s 50th Birthday Bash from 4.15pm to 5.45pm will include a birthday tea, Adrian Mole goody bag, and birthday cake baked by Great British Bake Off winner Frances Quinn specially for the occasion. Plus a chance to hear from Simon Schatzberger, the original Adrian Mole on stage, and the premiere of three short new monologues specially commissioned for the occasion. There will also be readings by students from local schools, introduced by Bali Rai.

Dr Simon Dixon, Archives and Special Collections Manager at the University of Leicester, said:
"Adrian Mole is one of the greatest literary creations of the late 20th century. In celebrating his 50th birthday we will be reflecting on the significant contribution of Sue Townsend to English literature. I’m delighted that so many people who knew and worked closely with Sue will be speaking at the event."

Dr Corinne Fowler, director of The University of Leicester's Centre for New Writing which has commissioned the three five-minute radio plays to be performed at Adrian Mole's birthday bash, said when the search for writers was launched: "The party and commissioned work seemed like the perfect way to celebrate Adrian Mole as a central cultural phenomenon. He is very much a Leicester figure and we want to remind everyone that Sue Townsend was a Leicester writer through and through with a regional sensibility. The birthday party will have the same spirit of playfulness that the novels had."

Louise Moore, Michael Joseph MD and Sue Townsend’s long-time publisher said, “Sue Townsend was a brilliant, funny woman, who wrote such intricate and hilarious fiction. It’s seen as easy, and I think that’s extraordinary, when it’s so hard to do. The fact that we are celebrating Adrian on his 50th birthday, and what would be Sue’s 71st, shows how deeply placed Adrian is in the public consciousness. I couldn’t be prouder that Michael Joseph is launching Mole Press to both celebrate his landmark year and finally put him out of his angst-ridden misery as a published poet.”

Sue Townsend kindly deposited her papers with the Special Collections in the University Library in 2005, and in 2008 she became a Distinguished Honorary Fellow, the highest honour that the University can bestow. She died at her home in Leicester on 10 April 2014.

Adrian Mole’s 50th Birthday Celebration is on 2 April 2017 from 10.30am to 5.45pm at the University of Leicester Peter Williams Lecture Theatre and Attenborough Arts Centre.

All events are free, but advanced booking is required. To reserve your place please visit the Adrian Mole's 50th Birthday Celebrations Eventbrite page: www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/adrian-moles-50th-birthday-celebrations-registration-32501416612

For more information about the events and speakers please visit Adrian Mole's 50th Birthday Bash at: www2.le.ac.uk/library/find/specialcollections/mole50
To find out which three commissioned pieces will be performed at Adrian Mole's birthday party go to www2.le.ac.uk/departments/english/creativewriting/centre/new-commissions-to-commemorate-adrian-moles-fiftieth-birthday

To find out more about *The Collected Poems* and *The Secret Diary & Growing Pains of Adrian Mole Aged 13 ¾* please visit www.penguin.co.uk/authors/sue-townsend/21814/