









THE ALASDAIR GRAY ARCHIVE

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2026





2026 AT A GLANCE

2026 has been a transformative year for The Alasdair Gray Archive.

It has been a year of **making, learning, research and collaboration** — and a year in which we have continued to grow the Archive as a **cultural and educational organisation.**

We expanded our **commissioning** programme, embedding making as a central strand of our work through Creative Scotland-funded residencies with Kirstin Innes and Heather Parry; launched our first **satellite archive** dedicated to Agnes Owens; developed new partnerships across **education**, **research** and the **arts**; strengthened our team; and began preparing for our move to a new home.





CREATIVE COMMISSIONS

13 new creative commissions

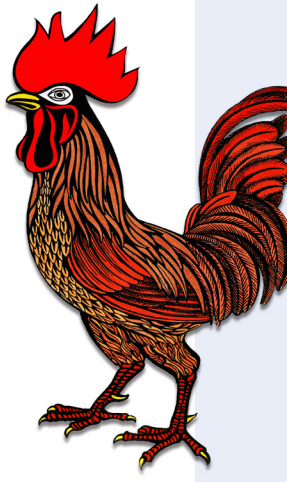
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

21 digital events
3,000 AGA visitors
1335 people reached via off-site events

EDUCATION & LEARNING

420 learners reached
6 projects initiated
18 placement students mentored





As we look ahead to 2027, here are some of the ways we have grown and worked together in 2026.

Sorcha Dallas
Curator and Custodian
The Alasdair Gray Archive and The Agnes Owens Archive



EDUCATION

- Education and learning remained at the heart of our work this year. We continued our free weekly collection tours until September, when we paused the programme to pack and prepare for our move.



- We mentored **18 placement students**, working with students and researchers from the **University of Glasgow, University of Strathclyde, Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design, The Glasgow School of Art, University of Edinburgh** and **Edinburgh College of Art**. These placements created opportunities to explore Gray's work through research, curating, education and creative practice, while bringing new perspectives and skills into the Archive.



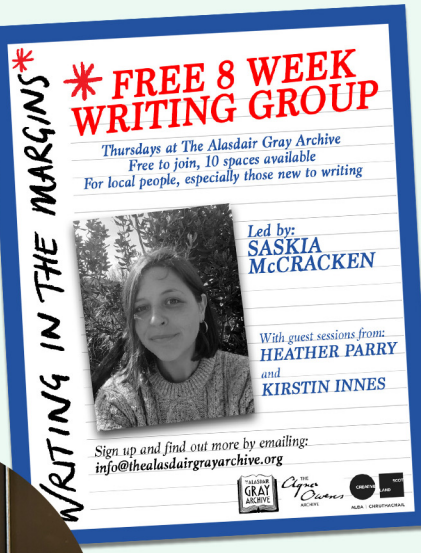
- We developed **new projects with schools, universities and community partners.** These included a pilot project with **Whitehill Secondary School**, co-delivered with the **University of Glasgow School of Education**; *Reimagining Glasgow with Alasdair Gray*; and *Our City, Our Stories,* delivered by **Lorna Gallagher** across primary schools in North Glasgow with support from **Area Partnership funding.**
- Our growing relationship with **DJCAD's Illustration Department** also created new opportunities for students to engage creatively with Gray's work and the Archive's collections.



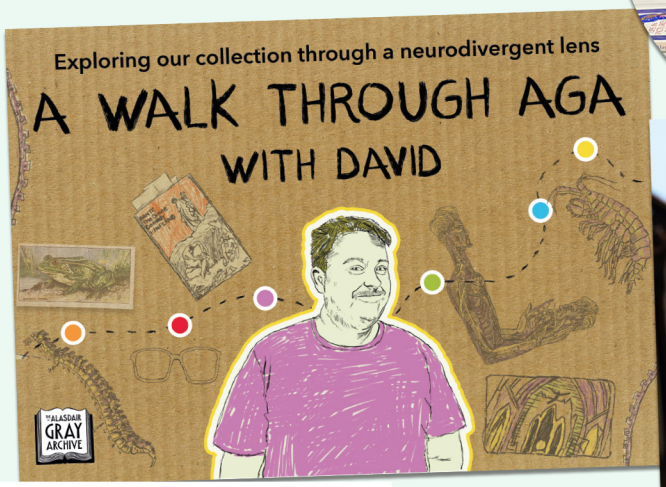




- Writing and creative practice were another important strand of our learning programme. We delivered a free eight-week **New Writers Group with Saskia McCracken**, exploring the work of both Alasdair Gray and Agnes Owens, alongside a four-week writing group in Alexandria, Owens's home town, delivered by **Kirstin Innes.**
- Together, these programmes created spaces for people to encounter the Archive through writing, discussion, making and research — connecting Gray and Owens's work with the experiences and perspectives of new audiences.
- We also continued to support emerging researchers and practitioners through **workshops, talks and research opportunities.**











Culann Mackay

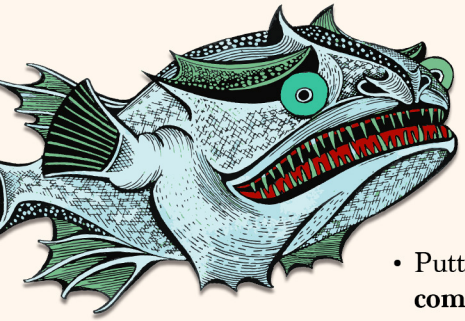




Ella Cinjarevic

Ella was inspired by the cats that occassionaly appear in Gray's work, she really liked the sensitivity and softness of the cat sketches in the ledger.

- New research shared this year included **Rosa Armstrong's** work exploring Gray and Ireland, alongside PhD researcher **David Lothian**'s new guide, which examines the Archive's collection through a neurodivergent lens. We continued our work with researchers through partnerships including the **SGSAH Collaborative Doctoral Award** programme, supporting deeper engagement with the Archive and its collections.
- Across all of this work, our aim has been to make the Archive more than a place to view a collection: **a place to learn, experiment, research, make and exchange ideas.**



CREATIVE COMMISSIONS

- Putting making at the centre of the Archive. In 2026, we **expanded our commissioning programme**, creating new opportunities for artists and writers to respond to Alasdair Gray's work, ideas and legacy, while bringing new creative voices into the Archive.



- With Creative Scotland funding, we welcomed **Kirstin Innes and Heather Parry** as Writers in Residence for an eight-month period. Their residency **embedded writing and creative practice within the Archive**, while also extending our work into the **wider community**. Kirstin and Heather each contributed to two new local **writing groups** in Glasgow and Alexandria, supporting participants to develop their own creative writing in response to place, literature and Gray's work.
- The writing produced through these groups was brought together in *People Like This,* a **new publication** launched at the Byres Road Book Festival, providing a lasting record of this **community-led creative programme**.
- We also commissioned **Rachelle Atalla**, in partnership with **Creative Writing at the University of Strathclyde**, to write a new short story inspired by the 45th anniversary of Gray's groundbreaking novel *Lanark*. The work premiered as part of Gray Day, bringing a contemporary literary response to one of Gray's most significant works.









- In partnership with **Canongate**, we supported five emerging artists — **Ann Dinh, Ollie Pearse, Yu Sun, Tintin Lindkvist Nielsen** and **Miranda Peyton-Jones** — to create **new animations** responding to Gray's work. The animations were accompanied by audiobook narration from **Alan Cumming**, creating a new way for audiences to encounter Gray's writing through moving image and sound.

- Our commissioning programme also supported **new approaches to publication and visual art**. *Rich Things*, our first publication, developed from our 2023 commission with **Chitra Ramaswamy**, was transformed into a new book designed by **Maeve Redmond**. The publication featured a new photographic commission by **Matthew Arthur Williams**, whose commissioned works were subsequently presented in the exhibition *Holding Ground* at the Archive.



- As part of our **Agnes Owens centenary programme**, we commissioned ceramic artist **Hayley Jane Dawson** to create new works responding to elements within Owens' fiction. These works offered a tangible, sculptural interpretation of her writing and formed part of our wider programme celebrating Owens' life and legacy.



- We also invited artist **Mick Peter** to reinterpret **Gray's iconic Green Chair**, transforming his drawing into a festive ornament and bringing a recognisable object into a new creative context.

- Together, these commissions demonstrate our commitment to making as a central part of the Archive — supporting artists and writers at different stages of their careers, creating opportunities for participation, and encouraging new interpretations of Gray, Owens and the wider creative worlds connected to their work.





PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT



- Increasing access, inclusion and reaching new audiences
- In 2026, we continued to explore **new ways of sharing** Alasdair Gray's work with audiences both in person and online, **extending our reach** beyond the Archive and into communities, cultural spaces, festivals, universities and professional networks.
- Our Gray Day celebrations at Òran Mór, hosted by **Josie Long**, brought together **Rachelle Atalla** and **Alan Bissett**, alongside new animations by **Ann Dinh, Ollie Pearse, Yu Sun, Tintin Lindkvist Nielsen** and **Miranda Peyton-Jones**, with audiobook narration by **Alan Cumming**. The event created new ways for audiences to experience Gray's work through live performance, animation, writing and sound.
- We also featured in *A Kick Up the Arts* Gray Day Special, with **Josie Long, Rachelle Atalla** and **Sorcha Dallas**, hosted by **Nicola Meighan**, helping to bring Gray's work and the Archive to new audiences through broadcast and digital platforms.

















- Across the year, we delivered talks, workshops, presentations and participatory events with communities, festivals, universities and cultural organisations. These included *Play with Gray*, a drawing workshop with **Sorcha Dallas** and a clay workshop with **Rhona Warwick Paterson**, developed as part of **Niamh Gordon's Scottish Graduate School of Arts and Humaties** internship.
- Our off-site programme also took us to **Palacerigg Country Park, Garnethill Multicultural Centre,** the Advanced Research Centre at the **University of Glasgow, Byres Road Book Festival,** the **Scottish Council on Archives** and the **Scottish Artists Archives Network**, alongside a wider programme of talks, workshops and events. We continued to develop our programme of conferences, webinars and case studies, sharing the Archive's approaches to collections, research, education and programming with wider professional and academic audiences.
- Together, these activities enabled us to reach audiences beyond our physical Archive, creating more opportunities for people to encounter Gray's work — and to contribute their own perspectives, experiences and creative responses.





CONNECTED ARCHIVES & NEW RESEARCH



- Expanding the Archive through connected literary and cultural histories.



AGNES OWENS
OUT OF THE MARGINS

Devised and curated by Sorcha Dallas, this exhibition celebrates the life and work of Agnes Owens, who was born in Milngavie in 1926 and died in Alexandria in 2014. Owens' life - marked by everyday hardships yet remarkable resilience - informed fiction that rejected sentimentality, laid bare structures of power, and gave voice to those so often overlooked.

In 2026, her centenary year, 'Agnes Owens: Out of the Margins' brings together newly catalogued archival material, creative responses, and reflections on the enduring relevance of her writing. At its heart is previously unseen material from the newly established The Agnes Owens Archive (AOA), generously donated by her son, John Crosbie, with support from the wider Owens family. Manuscripts, notes, letters and personal items offer rare insight into Owens' working practice and the lived experiences that informed her fiction. The archive aims to celebrate Owens' legacy, make her work accessible to wider audiences, and situate her within the broader literary and cultural networks of her time, ensuring her voice continues to be read, studied, and valued in Scottish literary culture.

FIND OUT MORE & BOOK A FREE TOUR OF AGA & AOA

AGA.SA3.23 - Framed Photograph of Agnes Owens at the 2018 Glen Award Ceremony. Photographer Iris Carlin McPherson

Since 2023, doctoral researcher Laura MacDonald, based at the University of Strathclyde, has worked with AOA to support its development. Her project, a SGSAH funded Collaborative Doctoral Award is co-supervised by the University of Glasgow and The Alasdair Gray Archive (AGA), and focuses on Owens' marginalised voice. Following the 'living archive' model established by AGA, materials have been reorganised by text and theme, arranged chronologically, and digitised. Completed in 2025 with support from Glasgow Museums and volunteers, the catalogue now holds over 700 items across 23 boxes, and continues to grow with newly donated materials.

POLYGON REISSUES

In 2026, Polygon reissues seven works by Agnes Owens, bringing renewed attention to one of Scotland's most original and under-recognised voices in short fiction. Featuring new introductions by leading contemporary writers including Dani Garavelli (*Gentlemen of the Wood*), Kirsty Logan (*Like Birds in the Wilderness*), Kirstin Innes (*A Working Mother*), Heather Parry (*For the Love of Willie*), Jenni Fagan (*Bad Animals*), William Letford (*People Like That*), and Chitra Ramaswamy (*Jen's Party*), these editions (publishing May–September 2026) introduce her work to new audiences. Each book is accompanied by artwork from Joan Eardley, whose powerful depictions of working-class Scottish life and urban experience offer a striking visual parallel to Owens' writing.

Cover artworks of 2026 Polygon Reissues of Agnes Owens titles: For the Love of Willie, Like Birds in the Wilderness, Gentlemen of the Wood, Working Mother and Jen's Party by Joan Eardley

WRITING IN THE MARGINS: 2026 WRITERS-IN-RESIDENCE

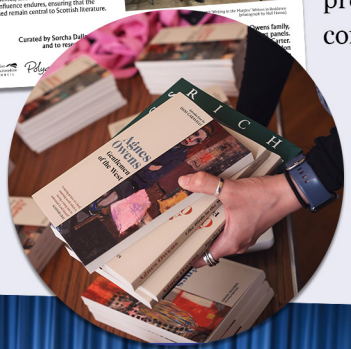
The Agnes Owens Archive has welcomed Kirstin Innes and Heather Parry, our 2026 Writers-in-Residence, in partnership with The Alasdair Gray Archive. Supported by The National Lottery through Creative Scotland, the Writing in the Margins residency celebrates Owens' legacy, exploring how class, gender, and societal expectations shape storytelling. Over eight months, Innes and Parry will engage with Owens' archive to create new fiction, exploring her methods, themes, and the lives she portrayed. Through this residency, Owens' influence endures, ensuring that the "neglected" stories she championed remain central to Scottish literature.

Writing in the Margins' Writers-in-Residence announced by Neil Gaiman

Curated by Sorcha Dallas and to re...

Owens family, ... panels, ... event.

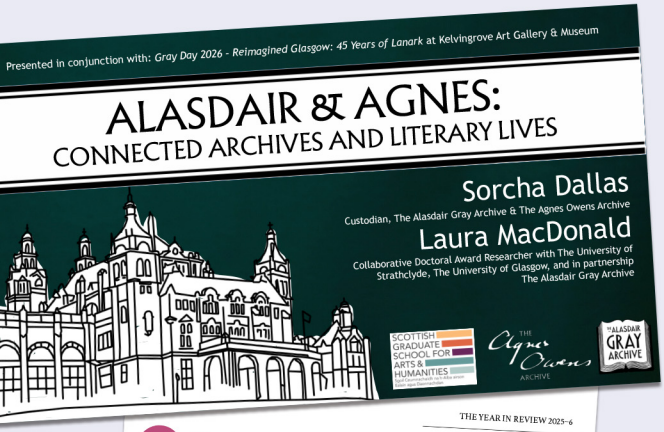
- One of the major developments of 2026 was the launch of **our first satellite archive** dedicated to **Agnes Owens**, supported by a **year-long centenary programme** celebrating Owens's life and work.
- The centenary programme brought together new commissions, archival exhibitions, writing groups, community partnerships, book launches, festival events and new merchandise, creating **multiple ways for audiences to encounter Owens's work and legacy.**
- Working across **East and West Dunbartonshire**, we developed new relationships with local communities and organisations, connecting Owens's writing to the places, people and experiences that shaped her work.
- The programme also enabled us to expand our commissioning and learning activity, with **new writing and creative responses** providing opportunities for audiences to engage with Owens's work in contemporary ways.













THE YEAR IN REVIEW 2025–6

The Agnes Owens Archive

REASSERTING AGNES OWENS'S MARGINAL VOICE: REIMAGINING AN ARCHIVE FOR THE CENTENARY YEAR

In 2026, The Agnes Owens Archive (AOA) opened a new chapter in the story of one of Scotland's most distinctive literary voices. Launched as part of a major centenary programme celebrating the life and work of Agnes Owens (1926–2014), the archive represents more than a collection of papers and manuscripts. It has become a renewed space for discovery, research, creativity, and conversation – repositioning Owens within Scotland's literary landscape and challenging the long-standing marginalisation of her work.

The centenary programme, *Agnes Owens: Out of the Margins*, was devised by The Agnes Owens Archive Custodian, Sorcha Dallas, as a year-long programme of archival development, creative engagement, and public activity. At its heart was a commitment to restoring visibility to Owens's contribution to Scottish literature while demonstrating how archives can actively reshape cultural narratives. Rather than functioning solely as repositories of the past, archives can become dynamic spaces where overlooked stories are revisited, new interpretations emerge, and connections are forged between historical collections and contemporary communities.

Agnes Owens was a remarkable chronicler of everyday life. Through her short stories and novellas, she explored working-class experiences, family relationships, social pressures, and the complexities of ordinary human existence. Her writing was characterised by sharp observation, dark humour, emotional honesty, and a deep understanding of character. Although admired by fellow writers and critics, including figures associated with Scotland's literary renaissance, Owens's work often remained outside the mainstream literary canon. Her writing had long been celebrated by those familiar with it, yet it had not always received the wider recognition it deserved.

Installation view of 'Agnes Owens: Out of the Margins', Lillie Art Gallery, 2026. All images © Alasdair Watson

The centenary year provided an opportunity to revisit Owens's writing and reconsider her place within Scottish literary history. It enabled new generations of readers, researchers, and writers to encounter her work while uncovering fresh perspectives on her creative practice and the influences that shaped it.

Central to this renewed engagement was a significant three-year archival redevelopment project that transformed the structure and accessibility of The Agnes Owens Archive. Supported through a Scottish Graduate School for Arts and Humanities Collaborative Doctoral Award with researcher Laura MacDonald, the project created a bespoke arrangement and cataloguing system designed specifically around Owens's creative legacy.

This redevelopment brought previously overlooked materials into focus, revealing new insights into Owens's writing process, literary relationships, and personal experiences. The archive provided access to a rich range of materials, including draft manuscripts, annotated texts, correspondence, notebooks, photographs, and newly recorded oral history interviews with former editors, collaborators, and members of Owens's family.

These materials offered a rare opportunity to understand the development of Owens's work beyond the published page. Drafts and annotations revealed the evolution of her stories, while correspondence illuminated her relationships within literary networks. Oral histories added further depth, capturing memories and reflections that helped place her writing within its wider social and cultural context.

By improving access to these resources, the archive supported new forms of research and creative engagement. Scholars explored Owens's methods and influences, writers responded to her storytelling approaches, and communities



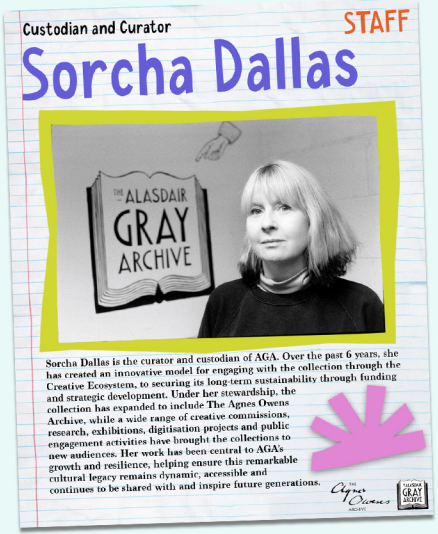


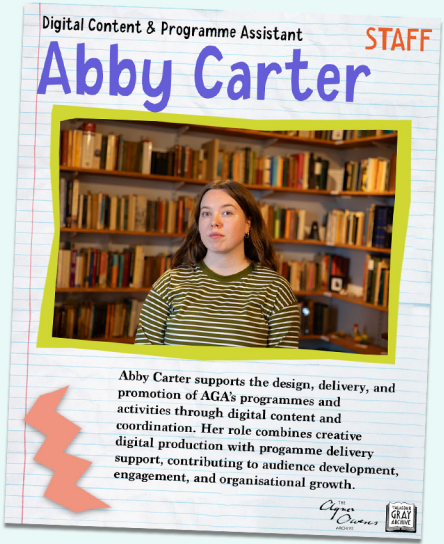
- The launch of the satellite archive expands our work beyond a single literary archive, opening up new possibilities for exploring the connections between writers, artists, places and communities.
- Our programme *Alasdair & Agnes: Connected Archives and Literary Lives* at Kelvingrove, developed with **Sorcha Dallas** and SGSAH Collaborative Doctoral Award researcher **Laura MacDonald**, brought the two archives into dialogue and explored the connections between Gray and Owens and their respective literary worlds.
- Sorcha Dallas also contributed to the **Scottish Council on Archives** conference, sharing work on Owens and the development of her archive. An article reflecting on the centenary, "Reasserting Agnes Owens's Marginal Voice: Reimagining an Archive for the Centenary Year," was also published in the Scottish Council on Archives' annual review magazine.
- Together, this work reflects our commitment to thinking about Alasdair Gray within wider cultural, literary and artistic networks, while creating new opportunities to bring overlooked and underrepresented voices into the Archive's programme.

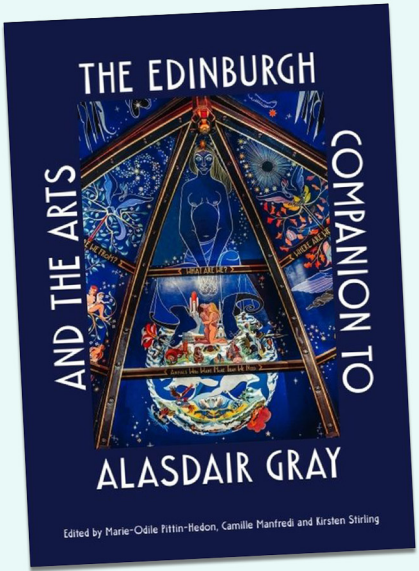
ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT



- While much of our public programme is visible, a major part of 2026 has happened behind the scenes as we have **strengthened the organisation and prepared for its next stage of development.**
- We created new roles and invested in the people needed to support the Archive's growing programme, including a formal Custodian role for **Sorcha Dallas** and Digital Content & Programme Assistant role for **Abby Carter.** These appointments have strengthened our capacity across **collections, programming, digital engagement and day-to-day operations**, while allowing us to develop new areas of work and reach new audiences.
- We continued to build partnerships across the **cultural, educational and research sectors,** working with **universities, galleries, artists, writers, researchers, schools, community organisations, archives and funders.** These relationships have helped us strengthen our local networks while also extending the Archive's profile nationally and internationally.
- We also continued to develop new income streams and organisational systems, supporting our longer-term financial sustainability and creating a stronger foundation for future growth. Alongside this, we invested in staff development and training, ensuring that the skills and knowledge within the organisation continue to grow alongside our ambitions.
- Our organisational development has also been closely connected to our research and publishing activity. We continued to support and share new research, including *The Edinburgh Companion to Alasdair Gray and the Arts*, alongside work emerging from our research partnerships.
- Together, these developments are helping us build an organisation that is more **sustainable, connected and outward-facing**, while keeping **Alasdair Gray's values** of creativity, collaboration, curiosity and accessibility at the heart of how we work.





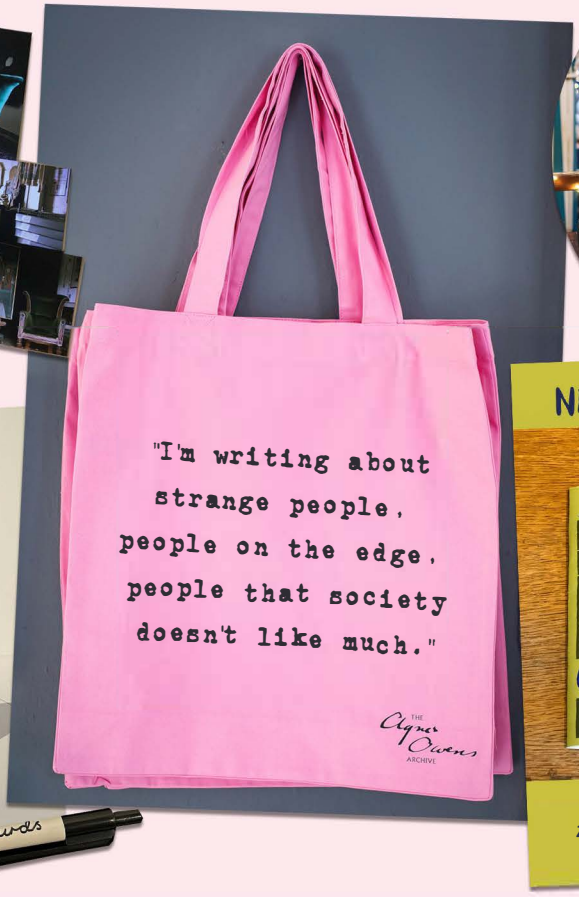




SHOP

- We continued to explore new ways of **sharing Alasdair Gray's approach to making** through merchandise, publishing and creative collaborations.









- This year we launched a **limited-edition *Lanark* notebook**, an **Agnes Owens centenary tote bag**, the ***Words Ward Wurds* pen**, a festive decoration designed by **Mick Peter**, and a boxed set of commemorative **AGA postcards**.
- We also continued to develop new **creative collaborations with DJCAD** and its students, creating opportunities to bring Gray's words, images and ideas into new formats and contexts.
- These projects extend the Archive beyond its collections and programme, giving audiences new ways to take a little piece of Gray's world with them.

A NEW CHAPTER



Perhaps the biggest project of 2026 has been preparing for our move. After years of welcoming visitors, researchers, students, artists and audiences to **The Whisky Bond**, we have spent the latter part of the year **packing, planning and preparing for the Archive's next chapter.**



The move marks an important moment in the **development of the Archive** — giving us the opportunity to think differently about how people encounter Gray's work, how we support artists and researchers, how we teach and learn, and how we build a sustainable organisation for the future. **We are incredibly excited to welcome you to our new home in early 2027.**







THE ALASDAIR GRAY ARCHIVE





THANK YOU

None of this happens alone.

Thank you to all the **artists, writers, researchers, students, teachers, partners, funders, volunteers, audiences and supporters** who have worked with us, challenged us, contributed to our programme and helped us grow throughout 2026.

2027 is about opening the doors.

