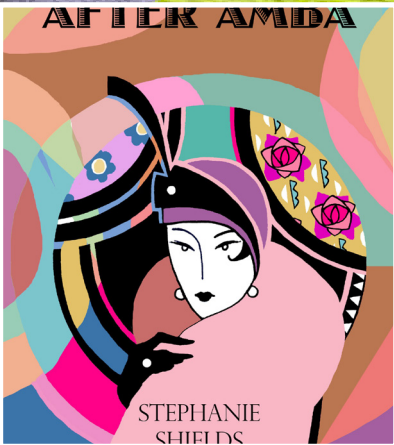




Stephanie Shields with the gold medal she has won for her novel, After Amba

Gold medal win for family saga rooted in Bradford



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A NOVEL with strong Bradford connections has won the gold medal in the Wishing Shelf Independent Book Awards 2025.

“A smartly plotted drama with a wonderfully unpredictable plot and a memorable cast of characters. What a delightful novel this is” says The Wishing Shelf. The awards attract hundreds of entries internationally and out of 70 Adult Fiction finalists, the 34 judges chose After Amba, by Yorkshire author and sheep farmer Stephanie Shields, for gold.

“For once I’m lost for words,” says Stephanie. “No awards ceremony, no fancy frock, but you get the gold medal.” After Amba is set in two periods - the Jazz Age and now. The action-packed family drama is a tale of passion and possession, and how one woman’s extraordinary life can change another

life, 70 years after her death.

During a flight from Sweden, Amba, a fashion and travel writer, reflects on her privileged childhood as the daughter of a wool rich Bradford family and her oppressive father, bitter at the birth of a daughter rather than a longed-for son. Amba is shaped by her quiet, patient and loving mother; her outrageous Aunt Rania and a sequence of female teachers. Amba is no angel. She flouts conventions, especially in her love affair with Ida in the 1920s and early 1930s. Seventy years after her death a young research librarian, Frasey Fisher, is hired by Amba’s younger brother to bring order to Amba’s archive. Frasey becomes captivated by Amba, and her life takes an extraordinary turn.

After Amba has strong Bradford roots. Amba’s father’s factory is in Bradford and she and her mother visit the Alhambra in December 1918, taking tea at newly opened Betty’s and choosing fabric from the swatches in Brown Muffs.

Amba even writes articles for the T&A, with a shameful piece on fashion called ‘Would Wallis have worn it?’ Amba is a great fan of Mr Simpson, and the editor insists on toning down her piece so not to offend the readers.

The family home, The Mount, is in Menston. This is a proper house through time saga.”

Stephanie’s debut novel, The Strange Woman, has sold all over the world, especially in Yorkshire “where it has something of a cult following”. It brings together the lives of women and their challenges, from a 17th century Yorkshire witch trial to the present. It’s based on the 1622 Timble Witch Trials, reimagined from the accused women’s point of view. The book has been a best-seller book at Wave of Nostalgia bookshop in Haworth for the past four years and owner Diane Park has been a champion of it.

Says Stephanie: “In many ways, my two novels are linked. Both feature strong women and how they respond to cruelty



For more about Stephanie and her books visit The Sheep Shed Press: sheepshedpress.com

and oppression. Although four centuries apart, both are carefully researched historic fictions as well as contemporary love stories. I had great fun writing these books and setting them in a place I know so well.’

* After Amba and The Strange Woman are published by The Sheep Shed Press, with covers by artist and cartoonist Jacky Fleming. Available from local bookshops, Waterstones, online and as an eBook