

THE JOURNALIST WHO WATCHED SADDAM HUSSEIN OUTDRINK THE FLEET STREET PRESS CORPS JOINS THE WRITERS COLLECTIVE

Veteran Fleet Street correspondent Adel Darwish brings nearly six decades of frontline reporting and extraordinary encounters with the people who shaped the modern Middle East - as The Writers Collective expands its commitment to preserving eyewitness history for the next generation



Adel Darwish, Quentin Drummond Anderson and Colonel The Right Honourable Bob Stewart DSO at Portcullis House, Westminster.

LONDON, September 2026 - The Writers Collective is delighted to announce that veteran Fleet Street journalist and author **Adel Darwish** has joined its growing group of writers.

There are journalists who write about history - and there are journalists who were actually in the room when it was being made.

Adel Darwish most certainly belongs to the latter group.

One story from the early years of his remarkable career perhaps sums it up better than any other.

In 1972, Darwish was in Baghdad as part of a small group of Fleet Street journalists when they met Saddam Hussein, years before Saddam became President of Iraq and one of the world's most notorious dictators.

Saddam produced two bottles of Johnnie Walker Black Label and introduced the whisky to his British visitors as "**Iraq's national drink.**"

Among those present was John Bulloch, who would later become Darwish's co-author on *Water Wars*. As the senior journalist in the group, Bulloch seemed to delight Saddam with the suggestion that he was entertaining "**Her Majesty's press corps.**"

What followed was one of those extraordinary encounters that could only belong to another age of Fleet Street journalism. Saddam proved a formidable drinker and proceeded to outdrink the Fleet Street group.

It is a wonderful story. But in the context of Adel Darwish's career, it is almost incidental.

For nearly six decades, Darwish has reported on the wars, revolutions, dictators, assassinations and political upheavals that transformed the modern Middle East.

Born in Alexandria during the Second World War, he began his journalistic career in Africa in the second half of the 1960s before becoming one of Fleet Street's most experienced Middle East correspondents.

His career took him across the region and brought him into direct contact with many of the personalities who shaped its history. He reported on Black September in Jordan, the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Lebanese Civil War, the Iran-Iraq War, the assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, Saddam Hussein's Iraq and the Gulf War.

His journalism has appeared in some of Britain's best-known newspapers, including *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Times*, *The Independent*, *Daily Mail*, *Daily Express* and *The Scotsman*, as well as international publications.

He became known not simply as a foreign correspondent but as a journalist with an exceptional network of contacts and a deep understanding of the political forces shaping the Middle East.

Darwish has also been a familiar figure in British political journalism and broadcasting, bringing decades of first-hand experience of the region to audiences in Britain and internationally.

As an author, his books include *Unholy Babylon: The Secret History of Saddam's War*, written with Gregory Alexander, and *Water Wars: Coming Conflicts in the Middle East*, written with John Bulloch.

Now The Writers Collective is delighted to welcome Darwish and to bring another part of his remarkable story to readers - *Alexandria Adieu*.

At its heart is Alexandria, the extraordinary Mediterranean city in which Darwish grew up.

The Alexandria of his childhood was one of the great cosmopolitan cities of the Mediterranean: a meeting place of nationalities, religions, languages and cultures. *Alexandria Adieu* captures both the city itself and the passing of a remarkable world, seen through the eyes of someone who experienced its transformation at first hand.

Telling History as It Was

Darwish's arrival at The Writers Collective also reflects an increasingly important part of the imprint's purpose: **preserving first-hand testimony and telling history as it was, rather than as subsequent generations might find it convenient to remember it.**

At a time when history is increasingly contested, simplified or interpreted through modern political divisions, The Writers Collective believes there is particular value in preserving the testimony of those who were actually present.

A foreign correspondent who sat across from Saddam Hussein before he became president possesses something no archive alone can provide. A soldier who witnessed events on the ground possesses something different from the historian examining them decades later. Neither replaces serious historical

scholarship, but their testimony forms part of the evidence from which history is written.

That principle increasingly connects the work of The Writers Collective's authors.

Quentin Drummond Anderson, Chairman of The Writers Collective, said:

"Adel Darwish represents something increasingly rare in journalism: a reporter with an extraordinary depth of first-hand experience.

"He didn't discover the Middle East from behind a desk. He was there. He reported its wars and revolutions, encountered many of its political figures and has spent nearly sixty years explaining an extraordinarily complicated region to readers around the world.

"And then there are the stories.

"The image of a young Adel sitting in Baghdad in 1972 with a small group of Fleet Street journalists as Saddam Hussein produces two bottles of Johnnie Walker Black Label, announces that it is 'Iraq's national drink', is told that he is entertaining 'Her Majesty's press corps', and then proceeds to outdrink them is extraordinary.

"But that is what makes Adel's writing so compelling. Behind the wonderful anecdotes is a serious journalist with an extraordinary memory and a lifetime of first-hand experience.

*"We are tremendously pleased to welcome Adel to The Writers Collective. His memories are not simply entertaining stories. **They are eyewitness history, and they deserve to be preserved for another generation.***

"That last point is becoming increasingly important to everything we do. History matters, and telling it as it actually happened matters. We should not sanitise the past, nor should we reshape it simply because the reality makes us uncomfortable. We have a responsibility to preserve the testimony of those who were there and make it accessible to the generations that follow."

History Heard - Bringing History into Schools

That philosophy also lies behind **History Heard**, The Writers Collective's developing educational initiative designed to bring history directly to young people through historical audiobooks.

As the generation with first-hand memories of the Second World War disappears, and even conflicts such as Bosnia become events that today's schoolchildren know only from books and screens, The Writers Collective believes new ways must be found to make history immediate and human.

History Heard aims to bring its historical audiobooks into schools, allowing pupils to encounter the people, experiences and choices behind the events they study.

Rather than seeing history solely as a sequence of dates, treaties and battles, young people can hear the stories of soldiers, journalists, witnesses, survivors, political figures and ordinary people caught up in extraordinary events.

For The Writers Collective, audiobook publishing therefore has a purpose beyond commercial distribution. It offers a means of preserving voices and stories and carrying them into classrooms in a form particularly accessible to a new generation.

Darwish's extraordinary career exemplifies exactly what History Heard seeks to preserve.

His memories span almost six decades of modern history. They range from encounters with some of the Middle East's most consequential political figures to the experience of reporting wars and revolutions as they unfolded.

And behind that journalistic career lies an even earlier story - the vanished cosmopolitan Alexandria captured in *Alexandria Adieu*.

It is history not merely researched, but remembered.

About Adel Darwish

Adel Darwish is a British journalist and author, born in Alexandria during the Second World War.

He began his journalistic career in Africa in the second half of the 1960s and went on to become a veteran Fleet Street foreign correspondent specialising in the Middle East. His career has encompassed frontline reporting, investigative journalism, political commentary, broadcasting and Westminster journalism over nearly six decades.

His books include *Unholy Babylon: The Secret History of Saddam's War*, with Gregory Alexander, *Water Wars: Coming Conflicts in the Middle East*, with John Bulloch, and *Alexandria Adieu*, his personal account of the Alexandria of his childhood and the transformation of one of the Mediterranean's great cosmopolitan cities.

About The Writers Collective

The Writers Collective is an independent publishing imprint bringing together distinctive voices from history, memoir, politics, journalism, current affairs and fiction.

Its authors include **Quentin Drummond Anderson**, author and historian of the bestselling *The Fearless Fifteen* and *Lions and Foxes*; **journalist and historian Simon Courtauld**, whose work encompasses journalism, history, biography and travel writing; and **Colonel Bob Stewart DSO**, the former British Army commander, Member of Parliament, author and broadcaster whose writing draws extensively upon his experiences of military operations, international affairs and public life.

The arrival of veteran Fleet Street journalist **Adel Darwish** further strengthens The Writers Collective's commitment to publishing authors who have not simply studied or commented upon history but, in many cases, **experienced and witnessed it at first hand**.

The Writers Collective combines traditional publishing with international digital and audiobook distribution, bringing remarkable stories, eyewitness accounts and distinctive voices to readers and listeners around the world.

Through **History Heard**, it is also developing the educational dimension of that mission: **preserving history, making it accessible and ensuring that the experiences of those who witnessed it are heard by the next generation**.

History should not merely be remembered. It should be heard.

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