

Charlotte Riley

Doctor of Letters

Durham Cathedral, 31 March 2022

Chancellor, I present to you Charlotte Frances Riley for the award of Doctor of Letters *honoris causa*.

For many in our audience today and watching Congregation ceremonies around the world, Charlotte will be familiar name and face.

In a successful and diverse professional acting career spanning two decades, she has applied her talents on both stage and screen, enjoying popular and critical success.

She is perhaps best known for her roles as Cathy on ITVs 'Wuthering Heights', or her leading role as bloodhound journo Holly Evans on BBC's 'Press', and – more recently – playing the mysterious May Carleton across from Cillian Murphy in global smash hit *Peaky Blinders*, also starring her husband, Tom.

Charlotte's passion for literature and acting began in her school years. Born in Stockton on Tees, proudly from the North-East, Charlotte came to Durham in 2000 – she read English and Linguistics, graduating with a Bachelor's from St Cuthbert's Society in 2003.

During her time at Durham, time outside of the classroom was spent honing her skills in playwriting and acting in The Assembly Rooms theatre here at the University where she joined the star-studded alumni ranks of the Durham Revue comedy group. Having sharpened her nascent talents here at Durham, Charlotte would later study at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art, graduating in 2007 shortly after which her TV and film career began in earnest.

Away from screen and stage, Charlotte has been an ambassador for a number of national and regional charities – dedicating her philanthropy to areas including Bowel Cancer UK and the Butterwick Hospice.

Her most recent enterprise has been to stop the flow of women dropping out of film and creative industries. As the co-founder of WonderWorks – an organisation dedicated to the provision of proper childcare for women working in entertainment – she has been the driving force behind the 'Keeping Families in Film' campaign. WonderWorks launched its first dedicated nursery at Warner Bros in 2020 and has

since established the first mobile childcare and educational facility to support those working on location.

For all of this, her family and her supporters can be rightly proud of the incredible talent, unrelenting dedication, and continuing achievements of our honorary graduand here today. As are all of us here across the St Cuthbert's Society and Durham University community.

And so, Chancellor, it is my privilege to present to you for the award of Doctor of Letters *honoris causa* Charlotte Frances Riley.