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Welcome to Hexham Book Festival 2024

Since 2006, Hexham Book Festival has brought you authors, poets, performers and pundits from across the globe and from just around the corner. This year is no exception. As always the scope of subjects is as broad as the Northumberland skies.

In a year that should feature a UK general election and will certainly see one across the Atlantic, we've politics from Will Hutton, Chris Mullin, Ian Dunt, Alan Johnson and Wes Streeting.

For those who prefer to look up to the stars we have astronomy from BBC *Sky at Night* presenter Chris Lintott.

Alongside linguistic trickery, Scandinavian parenting, Shakespearean quotations, food and philosophy, we've got detailed examinations of the peculiarities of human

relationships, whether that's in the form of the real-life bond between Harold Wilson and his secretary and advisor Marcia Williams detailed by Linda McDougall, the sisterly ties of the fictionalised daughters of painter Thomas Gainsborough in *The Painter's Daughters* by Emily Howes, or the mismatched friendship at the centre of Sarah Perry's new novel, *Enlightenment*.

Meanwhile, our poetry sessions featuring the sensational Len Pennie, Jackie Kay and Imtiaz Darker are likely to whip up such a storm the Met Office may have to find a name for it.

So take a seat and hold onto your hats.

Special Offer:

When you buy tickets to 4 events you will receive 15% off – excluding workshops.



Cathy Newman



Stuart Maconie



Jackie Kay



Queen's
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Arts Centre

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Hexham Book Festival is a Community Interest
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Pre-Festival Events

Thursday 28th March



Tyne Valley Film Festival – Children of Men

Read the book, see the film.

🕒 8pm

📍 Forum Cinema

💷 £9/£3

The Book Festival's choice of film is this future-nightmare thriller, directed by Alfonso Cuarón and adapted from the fabulous 1992 novel by PD James. It is a stunningly convincing realisation of a Beirut-ised London in the year 2027, in which terrorist bombs have become dreary and commonplace, Clive Owen and Julianne Moore excel.

To book: forumhexham.com or
01434 601144



Thursday 11th April



Susie White – Second Nature

Chaired by Linda France

🕒 7pm-8pm

📍 Library, Queen's Hall

💷 £10.50/£8.50

Discover the transformative power – for you and for wildlife – of building an outdoor sanctuary for all species to thrive in and enjoy. Tucked into an unspoiled corner of Northumberland lies a naturalist's garden, developed from scratch by award-winning gardener and author Susie White, her husband and friends. This is the story of how they created a remarkable oasis teeming with insects, birds and animals - a place that is as alive as it is beautiful. In *Second Nature* Susie takes us through the planning and construction, and describes how she designed the garden to blend harmoniously with her natural environment.

HBF Friends: Enjoy a complimentary drink at this event.

Become a Friend of Hexham Book Festival

Membership runs until 31st January 2025, benefits include £2 off most ticket prices throughout the Festival.

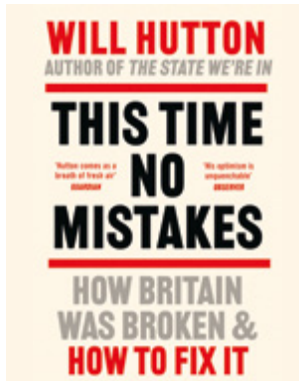
Apply online at:

www.hexhambookfestival.co.uk/become-a-friend
and for only £22 single and £33 double membership (two people at one address), you'll be helping to support the Festival going forward.





© Eva Turrell



**Will Hutton -
This Time No Mistakes**

Chaired by Richard Moss

🕒 6.30pm-7.30pm

📍 Theatre, Queen's Hall

💷 £11/£9

Every thinking person knows that a great change is needed in our country. Will Hutton analyses how the left and right have gone wrong over the course of the last century. He believes the nation's continuing inability to invest in itself is at the heart of our problems, which have their roots in the Victorian dream of laissez-faire. To ward off the wave of nihilist populism sweeping the world, we need an alternative economic and political philosophy. Hutton shows how two great traditions, ethical socialism and progressive liberalism, can be brought together to offer a different way forward and help shape a better Britain.



Jackie Kay – May Day

Chaired by Claire Malcolm

🕒 8.15pm-9.15pm

📍 Theatre, Queen's Hall

💷 £11/£9

May Day is the long-awaited new collection from Jackie Kay, former Makar of Scotland and winner of the Guardian Fiction Prize. Kay's vivid poems cast an eye over several decades of political activism, from the international solidarity of the Glasgow of Kay's childhood, through the feminist, LGBT+ and anti-racist movements of the eighties and nineties, up to a global pandemic intersecting with the urgency of Black Lives Matter. Woven through the tales of campaigners such as Paul Robeson are personal reminiscences of her recently deceased mother and father. Filled with grief and longing, yet suffused with love and hope, Kay's poetry is both challenging and uplifting.

Young Writers

We run a Young Writers group in partnership with the Queen's Hall for aspiring authors aged 11-14yrs. Topics range from writing micro fiction to using the senses and how three is an important number! This is an opportunity to flex your creativity in all things written. Group meets every fortnight.

More information at
www.hexhambookfestival.co.uk



Hexham Book Festival at Queen's Hall

A series of year-round events.

Watch out for more authors joining us throughout the year with this ongoing collaboration!

Featured in 2023:

Polly Toynbee and Gavin Estler.



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Saturday 27th April



David Wibberly – Workshop: Reading For Writers

The need to read.

🕒 10.30am-12.30pm | 📍 White Room, Queen's Hall

💷 £25 - limited spaces, please book early to secure a place

This creative writing workshop will allow you to start to incorporate reading into your regular writing practice.

Nothing is more inspirational than reading someone else's work; it strengthens your powers of communication and storytelling, increases your vocabulary, and empowers you to explore the great unknown.



Nigel Fletcher – The Not Quite Prime Ministers 1783-2020

Chaired by Gerry Foley

🕒 11am-12pm | 📍 Theatre, Queen's Hall | 💷 £11/£9

A library's worth of books have been published chronicling the UK's Prime Ministers, however short or undistinguished their tenure. But what about those who failed to make it to the top of the greasy pole? Why did they never reach the top job and do they deserve to be remembered only as losers? Dr Nigel Fletcher of the Centre for Opposition Studies offers up witty and thought-provoking profiles of the leaders who didn't make it to No. 10, from Charles James Fox to Jeremy Corbyn.



Cathy Newman – The Ladder

Chaired by Jacqui Hodgson

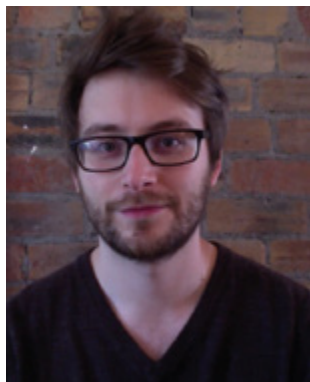
🕒 12.45pm-1.45pm | 📍 Theatre, Queen's Hall | 💷 £11/£9

Channel 4 News presenter, Cathy Newman brings us life lessons from "women who scaled the ladder and dodged the snakes" including politician Angela Rayner, scientist Dame Jocelyn Bell Burnell, activist Rosamund Kissi-Debrah, film-maker Waad Al-Kateab and broadcaster Joan Bakewell. These remarkable women offer inspiration and wise counsel, insight and solidarity. The Ladder offers illumination on ideas of change, anger, illness, imposter syndrome, self-knowledge, purpose, how to not panic in a crisis and how to stop worrying you're boring when there isn't one.

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© ITN, Peter Searle

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Paul Anthony Jones – Why Is This a Question?

Chaired by Harry Pearson

🕒 2pm-3pm | 📍 Library, Queen's Hall | 💷 £10.50/£8.50

In *Why Is This a Question?* Paul Anthony Jones delves into the nuts and bolts of language, the building blocks of speech and writing that we often never think about. He'll answer linguistic questions you may not have thought to ask: Why don't eleven and twelve end in "teen." Why do letters look the way they do? Why are some uppercase and some lowercase? Why are these words in this order? And what is a question mark doing at the end of this sentence? Jones' enlightening and entertaining approach will change the way you think about our language.



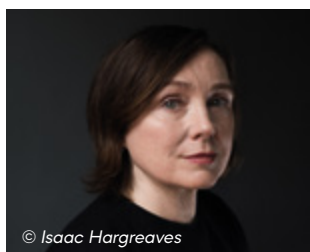
Kathleen Jamie and Lavinia Greenlaw – Cairn and The Vast Extent

Chaired by Claire Malcolm

🕒 2.30pm-3.30pm | 📍 Theatre, Queen's Hall | 💷 £11/£9

Poet and author Kathleen Jamie has increasingly turned her attention to a new form of writing: micro-essays, prose poems, notes and fragments. Placed together, like the stones of a wayside cairn, they mark a changing physical and mental landscape – suffused with wisdom and beauty. Poet, novelist and memoirist, Lavinia Greenlaw's *The Vast Extent* is an erudite cabinet of curiosities; a series of "exploded essays" on topics ranging from seasickness to boredom, caves to mice. Each one examines light and image, seeing and the unseen and asks how we can best describe what we have never encountered before.

Arts Sponsor: *The Biscuit Factory*.



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THE BISCUIT FACTORY



© Colin Crisford

Wendy Moore – Jack and Eve

Chaired by Gerry Foley

🕒 3.30pm-4.30pm | 📍 Library, Queen's Hall
💷 £10.50/£8.50

Vera Holme, known as Jack, left a career as a cross-dressing actress to become chauffeur to Emmeline Pankhurst. Eve Haverfield was the daughter of a Scottish baron. The pair met in 1909, fell in love and became public faces of the suffragettes, enduring prison for the cause. During WW1 they carved radical new paths, driving emergency vehicles, running military hospitals and bearing arms. Throughout, they refused to compromise on their sexuality. Wendy Moore uses Jack and Eve's remarkable story to examine the suffragette movement, the work of women in war and lesbian identity in the twentieth century.



Francis Spufford – Cahokia Jazz

Chaired by Jacqui Hodgson

🕒 4.15pm-5.15pm
📍 Theatre, Queen's Hall
💷 £11/£9

The Costa Prize-winning Spufford's latest work *Cahokia Jazz* is a thrilling tale of murder and mystery in a city where history has run a little differently from elsewhere. It's 1922, and Americans are drinking in speakeasies, dancing to jazz and stepping quickly to the tempo of modern times. Beside the Mississippi, the ancient city of Cahokia lives on its racial divisions held in check. Then a body found on the roof of a skyscraper sparks off a week of bloodshed that will lay bare the city's secrets to a soundtrack of wailing trumpets and rattling machine-gunfire.

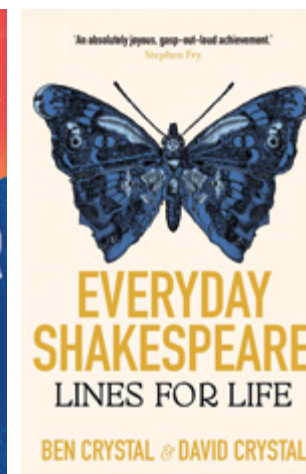


Suzanne Heywood – Wavewalker

Chaired by Simon Pryde

🕒 5pm-6pm
📍 Library, Queen's Hall
💷 £10.50/£8.50

When she was just seven, Suzanne Heywood's parents took her and her brother on what was meant to be a three-year voyage around the world. In the end the family spent a decade at sea living through storms, shipwrecks and isolation. Heywood and her brother had little formal schooling, missed out on friendships and found their safety put at risk. Longing for normality, Heywood fought her parents, earning an interview at Oxford University aged 17 and returning to the UK. Join Heywood as she shares the story of her extraordinary childhood, and how she went on to find success, stability and happiness.



Ben & David Crystal – Everyday Shakespeare

🕒 6pm-7pm
📍 Theatre, Queen's Hall
💷 £11/£9

Join the Bard and two of his biggest advocates to revel in the joy of language and the wondrous complexities of human existence. In their latest book, *Everyday Shakespeare: Lines for Life* son Ben Crystal - actor, author, and producer – and father David - writer, editor, lecturer, and broadcaster on language - gather the finest lines from the lesser-known corners of Shakespeare's plays and poems. While creating an entertaining trove of trivia, miscellaneous facts, historical context and opportunities for reflection, the Crystals highlight the Bard's matchless ability to express our everyday thoughts and emotions.



© Liz Emerson



Angus Hanton –
Vassal State, How
America Runs Britain

Chaired by Gerry Foley

🕒 6.30pm-7.30pm

📍 Library, Queen's Hall

💷 £10.50/£8.50

Britain's leaders have long boasted how they share cultural, diplomatic and political interests with the US, but in *Vassal State* business economist Angus Hanton charges them with total ignorance of the profound economic consequences of the 'special relationship'. He reveals how much of the UK economy is US-owned, laying bare the extent of US corporate control over pay, conditions, what you buy, and how you buy it. *Vassal State* shows how policymakers, from Whitehall mandarins to NHS chiefs, are shaping their choices to fit the needs of the 1,000-plus US multinationals which have the whip hand over the daily lives of the Brits.



Stuart Maconie –
The Full English

Chaired by Harry Pearson

🕒 7.45pm-8.45pm

📍 Theatre, Queen's Hall

💷 £11/£9

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Stuart Maconie is one of the keenest observers of English identity, so who better to take the temperature of the nation at this uncertain waymark on our national journey? His new book, *The Full English*, is a love-letter to England that weaves together history, politics and culture. Following in the footsteps of West Riding polymath JB Priestley, whose classic examination of 1930s England *English Journey* becomes his itinerary, Maconie undertakes his own inventory of the English. How does the country look today, freshly unmoored from its European neighbours and still emerging blinking in the daylight of our post-Covid world?

StoryLand⁹⁹

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Sarah Gristwood – Writing Workshop

Writing a Journal

🕒 10am-12pm | 📍 White Room, Queen's Hall

💷 £25 - limited spaces, please book early to secure a place

In recent years, many of us have come to understand 'journaling' as a useful tool in self-awareness, and even in self-help. But we are far from the first generation to do so. In this workshop, Sarah Gristwood looks back over 400 years of women's diary writing, and asks how diarists before us have used the process, and what lessons we can take away.



© Jonathan Mitchell

Linda McDougall – Marcia Williams

Chaired by Harry Pearson

🕒 11am-12pm | 📍 Library, Queen's Hall

💷 £10.50/£8.50

Over a decade before Margaret Thatcher swept to power, another woman was running Britain from 10 Downing Street: Marcia Williams, the first female political adviser to a Prime Minister. Historians have described the relationship between Williams and Labour leader Harold Wilson as the most mysterious partnership in modern political history. A brilliant tactician, Williams masterminded Wilson's multiple election victories. But misogyny, jealousy, a shocking private life and accusations of bribery all contributed to her reputation as a public nuisance. In this fascinating biography, Linda McDougall seeks to rescue Marcia from previously dismissive verdicts and restore this trailblazing pioneer to her rightful place in British political history.



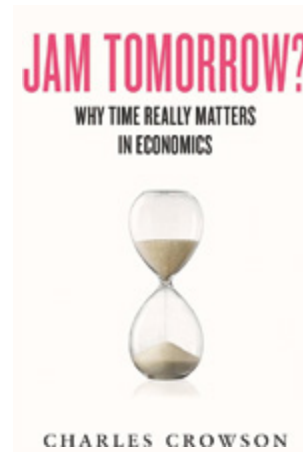
© Emma Goff

Philip Goff – Why? The Purpose of the Universe

Chaired by Gerry Foley

🕒 11am-12pm | 📍 Theatre, Queen's Hall | 💷 £11/£9

Philip Goff is best known for defending panpsychism, the view that consciousness pervades the universe and is a fundamental feature of it. On the 'big questions' of meaning and purpose, Western thought has been dominated by the dichotomy of traditional religion and secularism. Goff believes that it is time to move on from both God and atheism. Through an exploration of contemporary cosmology and cutting-edge philosophical research on consciousness, Goff argues for cosmic purpose: the idea that the universe is directed towards certain goals, laying the foundations for a new paradigm of philosophical enquiry into the middle ground between God and atheism.



Charles Crowson – Jam Tomorrow

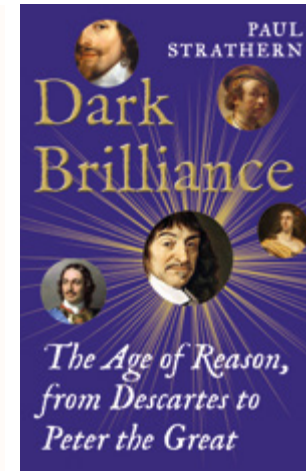
Chaired by Marc Chapman

🕒 12.30pm-1.30pm

📍 Library, Queen's Hall

💷 £10.50/£8.50

Everyone knows time is precious. Despite this, economics generally regards time as a unit of measurement rather than as something inherently valuable. While it is over a hundred years since Einstein's theories of relativity revolutionised our concept of time, economics still labours under the old Newtonian conception of it as a fixed, intergalactic tape measure – until now. In *Jam Tomorrow?* Charles Crowson presents a new theory of value at the heart of which lies our ever-changing perception of time, recasting economics as the choice between our needs for the present and those for the future, between the micro and the macro.



Paul Strathern – Dark Brilliance

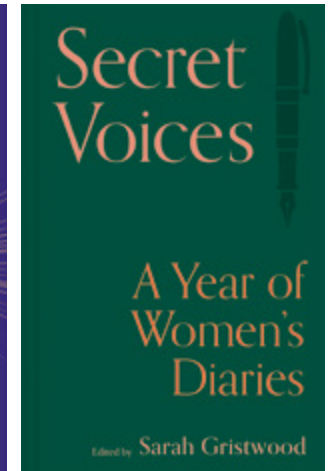
Chaired by Will Mackie

🕒 12.45pm-1.45pm

📍 Theatre, Queen's Hall

💷 £11/£9

Between the end of the Renaissance and the start of the Enlightenment, Europe lived through an era known as the Age of Reason. It was a period which saw advances in art, science, philosophy, political theory and economics. However, all this was achieved against a background of extreme turbulence. Focusing on key characters from the seventeenth to the eighteenth centuries, including Caravaggio, Rembrandt, Newton, Descartes, Spinoza, Louis XIV and Charles I. Paul Strathern offers a fascinating and wide-ranging history that explores the human costs of imposing progress and modernity.



Sarah Gristwood – Secret Voices: A Year of Women's Diaries

Chaired by Claire Malcolm

🕒 2pm-3pm

📍 Library, Queen's Hall

💷 £10.50/£8.50

Sarah Gristwood's latest anthology looks back over four centuries and draws on more than a hundred female diarists – some well-known, many less so. A fascinating, thought-provoking and entertaining compilation of daily entries range from Virginia Woolf relishing her new haircut and Oprah Winfrey meditating on her career to Emilie Davis chronicling the death of Abraham Lincoln and teenage Ma Yan yearning for education in poverty-stricken China. *Secret Voices* contains a rich mix of women from all cultures and backgrounds, and demonstrates how much life has changed for women, as well as how much it hasn't.

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Sunday 28th April (cont.)



© Imogen Whiteley

Helen Rebanks - The Farmer's Wife

Chaired by Gerry Foley

🕒 2.30pm-3.30pm | 📍 Theatre, Queen's Hall | 💷 £11/£9

Helen Rebanks is a farmer, a businesswoman, a teacher, a conservationist and a working mother. From her innovative Cumbrian farm shared with 500 sheep, 50 cattle, 20 chickens, six sheepdogs and two ponies, as well as a husband and four children, Helen brings us a story that's rarely told. It's a tale about the non-stop hard work involved in keeping a farm going and raising a family, about where our food comes from and who puts it on the table. And about what she does at the end of one of those days when she'd much rather punch a cushion than plump it.

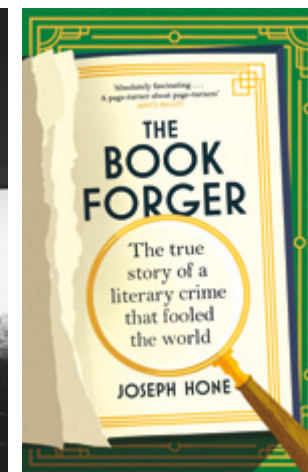
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Local Authors Event – Ben Creed, Joe Hone and Rob Rutherford

Chaired by Harry Pearson

🕒 3.30pm-4.45pm | 📍 Library, Queen's Hall | 💷 £7



Ben Creed is the pseudonym of Chris Rickaby and Barney Thompson. Together, the pair have written three visceral thrillers set in Stalinist Russia in the 1950s, commencing with *City of Ghosts*. Robert Rutherford had a random mix of jobs before taking the dive into crime writing with the novel *What Falls Between The Cracks* - the first in his Porter & Styles series. Joseph Hone is an author of creative non-fiction. His books *Paper Chase* and *The Book Forger* combine historical scholarship and detection.



© Sophie Davidson

Sarah Perry – Enlightenment

In conversation with Sarah Hall

🕒 4.15pm-5.15pm | 📍 Theatre, Queen's Hall | 💷 £11/£9

The author of *The Essex Serpent* is back with a story of love and astronomy, told through the lives of two improbable best friends living in the small Essex town of Aldleigh. Chaired by novelist Sarah Hall, Perry will discuss her latest work in which a couple of kindred spirits, separated in age by three decades, are torn between their commitment to religion and their desire for greater understanding of the world. After a series of ill-starred romantic adventures that briefly destroy their relationship, they come back to each other and find a richer understanding of love, the nature of the universe and of their place in it.

Astronomy Sponsor: Kielder Observatory.



Benji Waterhouse – You Don't Have to be Mad to Work Here

Chaired by Will Mackie

🕒 5.45pm-6.45pm | 📍 Library, Queen's Hall
💷 £10.50/£8.50

Why would anyone in their right mind choose to be a psychiatrist? That's a question NHS psychiatrist Dr Benji Moorhouse addresses in his humane, hilarious and heart-breaking fly-on-the-padded-wall account of life in a psyche ward. For Moorhouse dealing with a schizophrenic lorry driver who thinks he's found the cure for coronavirus and helping a bipolar American, who's flown to England in a wedding dress, convinced she's about to marry Harry Styles are all part of a day's work. But how can he and his colleagues give such vulnerable patients the best treatment when psychiatry lacks staff, beds and actual cures?



© Ander McIntyre

Robin Niblett- The New Cold War

Chaired by Gerry Foley

🕒 6pm-7pm | 📍 Theatre, Queen's Hall | 💷 £11/£9

Robin Niblett, former Director at Chatham House, brings an urgent and essential assessment of the global contest between the US and China to our attention as it encompasses all major instruments of statecraft - economic, political and military. It has its tinder box: Taiwan. Both protagonists are working hard to draw allies to their side from across the world.

How we manage this contest will determine not only whether there is still space for international cooperation to deal with our many global challenges, from the climate emergency to the technological revolution, but also who will lead the twenty-first century and, quite simply, the course of all our futures.

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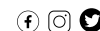
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Audio Book Group

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Supported by Northumberland County Council.





Alistair Moffat – Between Britain – Walking the History of England and Scotland

Illustrated Talk

🕒 6.15pm-7.15pm

📍 Theatre, Queen's Hall

💷 £11/£9

Alistair Moffat takes us on a journey along the border between Scotland and England, travelling westward from Berwick-upon-Tweed to the mouth of the River Sark. Rich in history, the Border has been the site of battles, treaties, castles and crossroads. It is also a place where both countries display their nationalism: Saltires flying in the north, the Cross of St George to the south. It is a lens through which to look at the changing identities of these two countries. At once a personal reminiscence and an examination of national identity, *Between Britain* is also a warm celebration of a place and the people who live there.



Michael Chaplin & Harry Pearson – North East Football Stole our Hearts

🕒 8pm-9pm

📍 Theatre, Queen's Hall

💷 £11/£9

Join Michael Chaplin (*Newcastle United Stole My Heart*) and Harry Pearson (*The Far Corner, The Farther Corner*) for an evening of conversation about our region's football – the highs, the lows and the even lowers. Covering everything from the dribbling skills of Alan Suddick to Chris Waddle's mullet, via Ron Guthrie's Norseman lager win bonus and the open-topped gent's at Dean Street, this event is a must for anyone who can't hear the name "Jinky" Jim Smith without emitting a wry chuckle.



The Big Book Group event

Emily Howes – *The Painter's Daughters*

Chaired by Liv Chapman

🕒 6.15pm-7.15pm | 📍 Theatre, Queen's Hall | 💷 £8

Join us for our popular Big Book Group event or come on your own. (Contact us for specially priced advanced copies for your book group).

An award-winning debut that vividly evokes the world of polite Regency English society, Emily Howes novel tells the story of Peggy and Molly, the daughters of artist Thomas Gainsborough. Peggy has a secret, her sister has a tendency to forget and to fall into mental confusion. It's a fact she's determined nobody else should discover. *The Painter's Daughters* explores family dynamics, mental illness, sisterly love, and asks whether one person can truly change the fate of another.

Arts Sponsor: *The Biscuit Factory*.

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Hachette Proof Party

Chaired by Liv Chapman

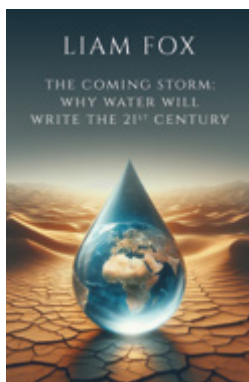
🕒 7.45pm-9.15pm | 📍 Theatre, Queen's Hall | 💷 £17 (includes 3 books)



A unique opportunity to get early copies and meet the writers of three of the most eagerly anticipated UK novels of the summer. *Costanza* by Rachel Blackmore is a historical novel set in 1636 in Rome, based on the life of Costanza Piccolomini who was labeled a muse, a temptress, and a fallen woman - and never permitted to tell her own story - until now. *The Horses* by Janina Matthewson echoes the recent pandemic with a tense, atmospheric story set in an isolated island community in the wake of a global catastrophe. Penelope Slocombe's *Sunbirds* is a novel hunting for the truth. In 1997, Anne's eighteen-year-old son Torran walked out of his hotel in the notorious Himalayan town of Manali - and disappeared. Seven years later a near-stranger offers her a new piece of information.

Attendees will each receive special proof copies of all three novels to take home.

Supported by *Hachette*.



Liam Fox – The Coming Storm. The Impending Crisis on Water

Chaired by Jacqui Hodgson

🕒 6.15pm-7.15pm

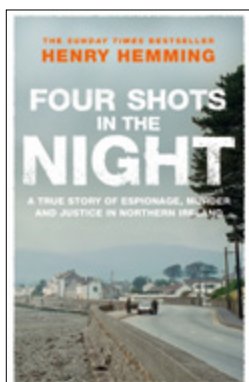
📍 Theatre, Queen's Hall

💷 £11/£9

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Russia's war in Ukraine has seen the world gripped by concerns over energy security. And yet, there is an even greater threat ahead: the battle for water. The combination of an ever-increasing global population, climate change, industrialisation, urbanisation and limited natural resources, mean that in the future our water supplies will be more stretched than ever before. If nations will fight for fossil fuels, it is nothing compared to what they will do for the most vital resource of all. Doctor and politician, Liam Fox tells the story of water and addresses the challenges humanity faces as it runs short.



Henry Hemming – Four Shots in the Night

🕒 8pm-9pm

📍 Theatre, Queen's Hall

💷 £11/£9

Henry Hemming presents his account of the brutal killing of Frank Heggarty, highlighting the bravery of the men crucial in ending the Troubles in Northern Ireland, and the determination of one detective in his dogged search for the truth. Relying on archival research, interviews, and the findings of a new complete police investigation, the questions *Four Shots in the Night* tackles: how did the Troubles really come to an end? Was it a feat of diplomatic negotiation, as we've been told—or did spies play the decisive role? And how far can, or should, a spy go, for the good of his country?

In this unique event the audience will take on the role of the detective. Together with Hemming you will work out who was behind this murder, and why it matters.

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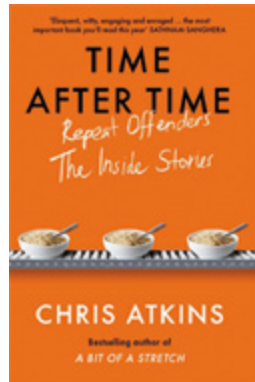
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Chris Atkins – Time After Time. Repeat Offenders the Inside Stories

Chaired by Sheilagh Matheson

🕒 6.15pm-7.15pm

📍 Theatre, Queen's Hall

🎟 £11/£9

British prisoners have to endure the most inhumane and barbaric conditions imaginable, so why do so many of them keep going back for more? Former inmate and documentary maker Chris Atkins has spent the last six years tracking the fortunes of a dozen repeat offenders to understand why the state so often fails to keep them from getting into trouble. Featuring funny, wild and poignant stories, *Time After Time* exploits Atkins' unprecedented access to the criminal underworld to understand why the system actually makes reoffending all but inevitable for most ex-prisoners.



© Hollin Jones



Ian Dunt – How Westminster Works and Why it Doesn't

Chaired by Katy Shaw

🕒 8pm-9pm

📍 Theatre, Queen's Hall

🎟 £11/£9

Politics is so broken that it's absurd. We all know we're being massively played, yet feel unable to articulate how or why. Like being in a toxic relationship, we find ourselves frustrated, disillusioned and lacking in boundaries. We know much of what happens within Westminster walls is seedy and corrupt, but few of us understand how the British political machine operates. This is no accident – our confusion suits our rulers. In this new book, author, podcaster and political pundit Dunt lifts the lid on how government works – and why it so often fails.



David Wibberly – Writing Workshop

Writing from Life - Putting your life experiences on the page

🕒 10.30am-12.30pm

📍 White Room, Queen's Hall

🎟 £25 - limited spaces, please book early to secure a place

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Through a series of tutorial presentations, practical exercises, and group discussions this workshop will show you how to turn your own personal experiences into an endless supply of ideas and get them down on the page.



Raymond Newell – Johnson at 10

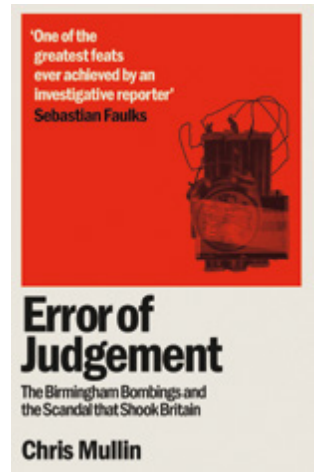
Chaired by Richard Moss

🕒 11am-12pm

📍 Theatre, Queen's Hall

🎟 £11/£9

The premiership of Boris Johnson is one of the most controversial in the 300 years of the office. Visionary or self-server? Remarkable leader or utter incompetent? Courageous, chameleon or charlatan? Based on more than 200 interviews with key aides, allies and insiders, *Johnson at 10: The Inside Story*, co-written with Anthony Seldon, gives the first full account of the BoJo premiership. From the heady, hubris-filled days of July 2019 to the nerve-shredding collapse in confidence just three years later, this is the authoritative account of the most turbulent time in British politics in almost a century.



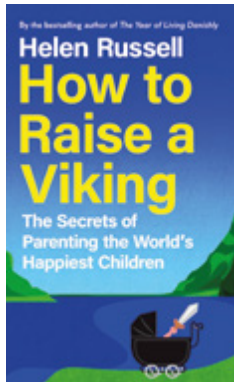
Chris Mullin – Error of Judgement

🕒 12.45pm-1.45pm

📍 Theatre, Queen's Hall

🎟 £11/£9

50 years on from the Birmingham Bombings and with new writing from Mullin, this classic edition of *Error of Judgement* tells the complete story of one of the most significant miscarriages of justice ever. Methodically, with total clarity and a tone that is both gripping and impassioned, then investigative journalist Mullin unpicked every detail of the 1974 IRA pub bombing, which killed 21 and injured at least 170 people, and for which six men were found guilty. He revealed gaping holes in the prosecution case and the horrifying consequences of an establishment determined to close ranks.



**Helen Russell –
How to Raise a Viking**

Chaired by Claire Malcolm

🕒 2pm-3pm

📍 Library, Queen's Hall

💷 £10.50/£8.50

Sponsored by Footprints
on the Moon.



© Simon Meyer

After a decade of living in Denmark and raising a family there, author Helen Russell noticed that Nordic children are different. They eat differently. They learn differently. And then they grow up to be some of the happiest adults on the planet. In *How to Raise a Viking*, Russell takes a searching look into the parenting culture of Denmark and the surprising customs that lead to such well-adjusted humans. This fascinating peek behind the cultural curtain gives readers a glimpse of another world, one where babies sleep outside in their prams when it's -20°C and pre-schoolers wield axes.



**Pen Vogler – Stuffed –
A History of Good Food
and Hard Times in Britain**

Chaired by Alison Freeman

🕒 2.30pm-3.30pm

📍 Theatre, Queen's Hall

💷 £11/£9

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Accounting.



Food writer Pen Vogler tells the story of the food and drink at the heart of social upheaval in Britain and how they have led to today's extremes of plenty and want, of roast beef and food banks, of allotment-fresh vegetables and ultra-processed food. Drawing on cookbooks, literature and social records, Vogler uncovers medieval inns boosted by the plague, the Victorian chemist searching for unadulterated mustard, and post-war supermarkets drawing customers in with strawberries. She tells of the ideas and laws that have fed or starved Britain, of bread and ale, sugary treats, pies and puddings, and why we would give anything for a nice cup of tea.

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**Oliver Lewis –
The Orwell Tour**

Chaired by Sheilagh Matheson

🕒 3.30pm-4.30pm
📍 Library, Queen's Hall
💷 £10.50/£8.50

Following in the footsteps of his literary hero, historian Oliver Lewis set out to visit all the places to have inspired and been lived in by George Orwell. Travelling from Wigan to Catalonia, Paris to Motihari, Marrakesh to Eton, he explored both how Orwell experienced the place, and how the place now remembers him as a literary icon. Beginning in Northern India, where Orwell was born in 1903, and ending in the Oxfordshire village of Sutton Courtenay, where he was laid to rest in 1950, *The Orwell Tour* offers an accessible and informative new biography of Orwell through the lens of place.



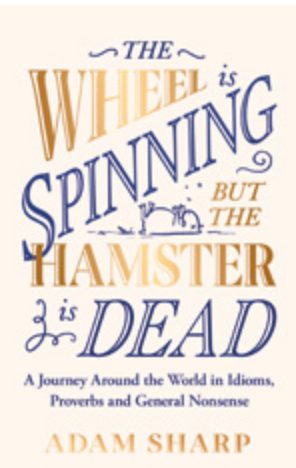
**Chris Lintott – Our
Accidental Universe**

Illustrated Talk

🕒 4.15pm-5.15pm
📍 Theatre, Queen's Hall
💷 £11/£9

The BBC presenter of 'Sky at Night', and Gresham Professor of Astronomy, Chris Lintott, takes us on an astonishing tour of bizarre accidents, big characters, and human error to tell the story of some of the most important astronomical events of the past hundred years – from the first sightings of new galaxies to the possibility of twinkling radio stars. As new telescopes are built around the world, Lintott shows us that keeping an open mind will benefit everyone – whatever might still be lurking out there for us to find.

Astronomy Sponsor:
Kielder Observatory.



**Adam Sharp - The
Wheel is Spinning but
the Hamster is Dead**

🕒 5pm-6pm
📍 Library, Queen's Hall
💷 £10.50/£8.50

In *The Wheel is Spinning but the Hamster is Dead*, wordsmith Adam Sharp journeys around the world in idioms, proverbs and general nonsense. Learn unusual insults from France (You are a potato with the face of a guinea pig), how to hurry someone up in the US (You're going as slow as molasses in January) what they call a shark in Vietnam (fat fish) and what a German means when he "saddles up the chickens" (gets the show on the road). Full of fascinating, ridiculous and hilarious translations from around the world, Sharp has rounded up the very best of what every corner of the globe has to offer.

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Saturday 4th May (cont.)

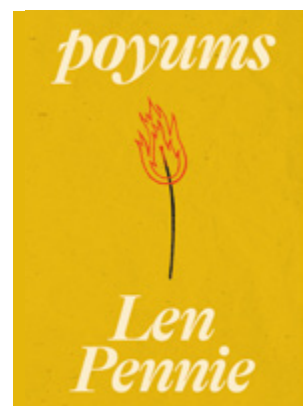


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Subhadra Das – Uncivilised: Ten Lies That Made The West

🕒 6pm-7pm | 📍 Theatre, Queen's Hall | 💷 £11/£9

Subhadra Das specialises in the history and philosophy of science, particularly the history of scientific racism and eugenics, and what those histories mean for our lives today. In *Ten Lies* she looks at Western ideas and how they shape our view of the world and each other in extremely unhelpful ways. Pointing out the racial biases behind concepts like “justice” and “individuality”, Das questions the reality of our democracy, critiques the way capitalism shapes our concepts of everything from time to death, and examines non-Western worldviews and philosophies that she believes do a much better job.



Len Pennie – Poyums

🕒 6.30pm-7.30pm | 📍 Library, Queen's Hall
💷 £10.50/£8.50

Feminist poet Pennie leapt to public prominence during the COVID pandemic when her video performances of poems such as “I’m No Havin’ Children” went viral on social media and drew praise from the likes of Michael Sheen. She brings with her an electric collection of verse and prose about loving, learning, surviving, growing and giving. Whether she’s writing letters to her younger self, advocating for women’s rights or adapting fairy tales to process an abusive relationship, Pennie’s is a bold, frank, sharp and witty voice that moves deftly between English and Scots creating poetry that is approachable, affecting, idiosyncratic and fiercely funny.



Alan Johnson – Death on the Thames

Chaired by Chris Mullin

🕒 7.45pm-8.45pm | 📍 Theatre, Queen's Hall | 💷 £11/£9

Alan Johnson returns to Hexham to talk about his third “Mangan” thriller, *Death on the Thames*.

Johnson’s career in Parliament began after a period as General Secretary of the Communication Workers Union, when he was elected as Labour MP for Hull West and Hessle in 1997. He served as Home Secretary from June 2009 to May 2010. Before that, he filled a wide variety of cabinet positions in both the Blair and Brown governments, including Health Secretary and Education Secretary. Until 20 January 2011 he was Shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Expect a lively discussion and views on the impending General Election.



Tamarin Norwood – Grief Writing Workshop: making a place for grief

🕒 10am-12pm

📍 White Room, Queen's Hall

💷 £25 - limited spaces,
please book early to
secure a place



© Lorentz Gullachsen

This gently-paced and flexible workshop is for anyone who has been bereaved, whether recently or long in the past. Varied, no-pressure writing exercises will teach you techniques for capturing precious memories, acknowledging fleeting thoughts and impressions whether positive or negative, and crafting a place for them in the landscape of your day-to-day life. No special writing skills or experience needed, just pen and paper.

Dr Tamarin Norwood is a writer and academic with a background in fine art. Her academic research explores the beliefs that emerge in response to bereavement, with a focus on reproductive loss. She has led many writing workshops and has worked with national baby loss charities to create and facilitate workshops for bereaved parents, and to develop creative writing resources for baby loss, which are now distributed by the NHS.

50% of proceeds from this event will go to Sands a charity that exists to reduce the number of babies dying and to support anyone affected by the death of a baby, before, during or shortly after birth, whenever this happened and for as long as they need support.



Lucy Scholes – A Different Sound: Stories by Mid Century Women Writers

Chaired by Jacqui Hodgson

🕒 10.45am-11.45pm | 📍 Library, Queen's Hall

💷 £10.50/£8.50

Selected and introduced by writer Lucy Scholes, these remarkable short stories from the 1940s and 50s depict women and men caught between the pull of personal desires and profound social change. From a remote peninsula in Cornwall to the drawing rooms of the British Raj, domestic arrangements are rewritten, social customs are revoked and new freedoms are embraced. A *Different Sound* places works from renowned women writers such as Daphne Du Maurier and Elizabeth Jane Howard alongside recently rediscovered voices. Suffused with tension and longing, they form a window onto a remarkable era of writing.



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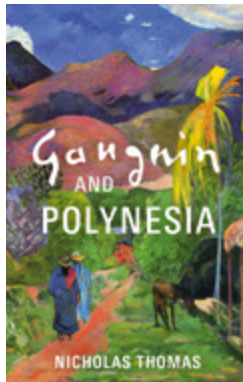
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**Nicholas Thomas –
Gauguin and Polynesia**

Illustrated talk

🕒 11am-12pm

📍 Theatre, Queen's Hall

💷 £11/£9

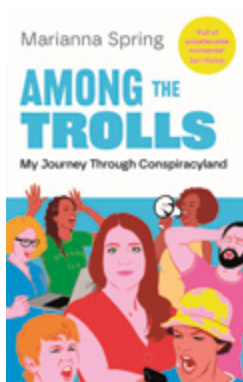
Arts Sponsor: *The Biscuit Factory.*

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In *Gauguin and Polynesia* anthropologist Nicholas Thomas offers a fresh view on the artist, not from the perspective of European art history, but from the contemporary vantage point of the region – Oceania – which he so famously moved to. Here Gauguin invented enigmatic and symbolic images, but he also depicted Polynesia's colonial modernity, acknowledging the life of the time and the dignity and power of some of the Islanders he encountered. *Gauguin and Polynesia* neither celebrates nor condemns an extraordinary painter, who at times denounced and at other times affirmed and exploited the position the French empire offered its white citizens.



© Robert Timothy



**Marianna Spring –
Among the Trolls:
My Journey Through
Conspiracyland**

Chaired by Claire Malcolm

🕒 12.30pm-1.30pm

📍 Library, Queen's Hall

💷 £10.50/£8.50

An urgent and gripping investigation into online trolling, disinformation and conspiracy theories by an award-winning BBC correspondent. Threats and abuse litter Marianna's social media feeds. This seems to be the price of venturing into the world of conspiracy theories, hate and algorithms. And it turns out, she is far from alone.

In 2020, she became the BBC's first disinformation and social media correspondent, and since then has been trying to understand conspiracyland. In *Among the Trolls* Spring tells the first-hand stories of the trolls and the trolled, those behind the information battle that threatens not just the way society works, but also some of the qualities we value most about being human: respect, fairness, tolerance, integrity and kindness.

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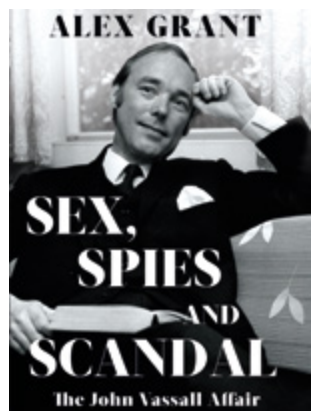


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**Alex Grant –
Sex, Spies and Scandal – The John Vassall Affair**

Chaired by Simon Pryde

🕒 12.45pm-1.45pm | 📍 Theatre, Queen's Hall | 📞 £11/£9

An explosive tale of sexual violence, betrayal, cover-up, homophobia and hypocrisy that blows open some of the British establishment's darkest secrets, *Sex, Spies and Scandal* is the story of John Vassall, the civil servant unmasked as a Soviet spy in 1962. Photographed in compromising positions while working at the British embassy in Moscow, Vassall was blackmailed into handing over secrets from the Admiralty to his Soviet handlers, both in Moscow and in London, for more than seven years. Using newly released MI5 files and interviews with people who knew Vassall from the 1950s until his death in 1996, Alex Grant sheds fresh light on the neglected spy scandal of the early 1960s.



**Tamarin Norwood –
The Song of the Whole Wide World**

Chaired by Jacqui Hodgson

🕒 2pm-3pm | 📍 Library, Queen's Hall | 📞 £10.50/£8.50

A few months into pregnancy, Tamarin Norwood learned that the baby she was carrying would not live. Written partly during pregnancy and partly during the silent maternity leave that followed, *The Song of the Whole Wide World* is an emergency response to grief held somewhere between the womb, the grave and the many stories that bind them. Profoundly moving and intimate, this is a lyrical and fearless meditation on birth, death, and the possibilities of consolation.

50% of proceeds from this event will go to Sands, a charity which supports anyone affected by pregnancy loss or the death of a baby.



John Kampfner – In Search of Berlin

Chaired by Fiona Shaw

🕒 2.30pm-3.30pm | 📍 Theatre, Queen's Hall | 📞 £11/£9

Over a four year period John Kampfner walked the length and breadth of Berlin, delving into the archives, talking to historians and writers, architects and archaeologists, clambering into the fallen statue of Lenin and rummaging through boxes of medieval bones to uncover the story of a remarkable city. Kampfner's *In Search of Berlin* tells the tale of the city's past 800 years, a time in which the German capital has undergone plague, fire and war and has had to start again each time it has been destroyed. Every era of its history has shaped what Berlin is today, a global, multi-cultural city and a destination for refuge and culture.

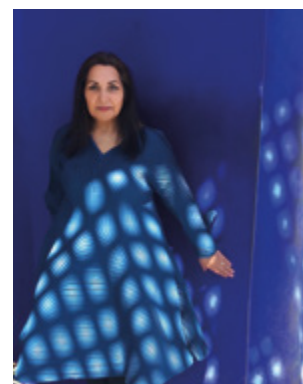


**Rory Cellan-Jones –
Rushkin Park: Sylvia, Me and the BBC**

Chaired by Jacqui Hodgson

🕒 3.45pm-4.45pm | 📍 Library, Queen's Hall
📞 £10.50/£8.50

Can we ever know the truth about our parents and is it worth it, if the damage has already been done? Rory Cellan-Jones' intimate memoir tells the story of a thwarted love affair, his isolated childhood growing up in a one bedroom flat with his mother, and the file he discovered after her death labelled, 'Rory: in the hope that it will help him understand how it really was.' It's a story full of wartime radio broadcasts, glamorous 1950s television studios, and the progressive, centrifugal force at the centre of his family's lives.



**Imtiaz Dharker & Bloodaxe Books –
Shadow Reader/Soul Feast**

🕒 4.15pm-6pm | 📍 Theatre, Queen's Hall | 📞 £11/£9

This two-part event features Imtiaz Dharker reading from her new collection *Shadow Reader* and sharing a presentation of the new Bloodaxe anthology *Soul Feast* with editors Neil Astley and Pamela Robertson-Pearce.

Shadow Reader is a radiant criss-cross of encounters, messages and earthy Punjabi proverbs, shot through with the dark thread of an unwelcome prophecy. The poems bind this looming curse to the colonisation of countries, the earth and its creatures.

Soul Feast is a companion anthology to *Soul Food*, offering up a further feast of thoughtful poems to stir the mind and feed the spirit, bringing hope and light in dark, uncertain times.



Wes Streeting – One Boy, Two Bills & a Fry Up

Chaired by Richard Moss

🕒 6.45pm-7.45pm | 📍 Theatre, Queen's Hall | 📞 £11/£9

Pundits predict that Shadow Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Wes Streeting will go far. And he has already come a great distance. Brought up on a Stepney council estate, he saw his teenage parents struggle to survive. He witnessed the agony they went through deciding whether to feed the meter and heat the flat or put food on the table. With a maternal grandfather Bill, an unsuccessful armed robber, who spent time behind bars, Wes might have ended up in prison, too. But the help and inspiration from the characters that surrounded him, especially his paternal grandfather (also called Bill), set him on the way to Cambridge, then Parliament.



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Programme Listing

Thursday 28th March

8pm
Tyne Valley Film Festival
Forum Cinema

Thursday 11th April

7pm-8pm
Susie White
Library, Queen's Hall

Friday 26th April

6.30pm-7.30pm
Will Hutton
Theatre, Queen's Hall

8.15pm-9.15pm
Jackie Kay
Theatre, Queen's Hall

Saturday 27th April

10.30am-12.30pm
Writing Workshop
White Room, Queen's Hall

11am-12pm
Nigel Fletcher
Theatre, Queen's Hall

12.45pm-1.45pm
Cathy Newman
Theatre, Queen's Hall

2pm-3pm
Paul Anthony Jones
Library, Queen's Hall

2.30pm-3.30pm
Kathleen Jamie and Lavinia
Greenlaw
Theatre, Queen's Hall

3.30pm-4.30pm
Wendy Moore
Library, Queen's Hall

4.15pm-5.15pm
Francis Spufford
Theatre, Queen's Hall

5pm-6pm
Suzanne Heywood
Library, Queen's Hall

6pm-7pm
Ben & David Crystal
Theatre, Queen's Hall

6.30pm-7.30pm
Angus Hanton
Library, Queen's Hall

7.45pm-8.45pm
Stuart Maconie
Theatre, Queen's Hall

Sunday 28th April

10am-12pm
Writing Workshop
White Room, Queen's Hall

11am-12pm
Linda McDougal
Library, Queen's Hall

11am-12pm
Philip Goff
Theatre, Queen's Hall

12.30pm-1.30pm
Charles Crowson
Library, Queen's Hall

12.45pm-1.45pm
Paul Strathern
Theatre, Queen's Hall

2pm-3pm
Sarah Gristwood
Library, Queen's Hall

2.30pm-3.30pm
Helen Rebanks
Theatre, Queen's Hall

3.30pm-4.45pm
Local Authors Event
Library, Queen's Hall

4.15pm-5.15pm
Sarah Perry
Theatre, Queen's Hall

5.45pm-6.45pm
Benji Waterhouse
Library, Queen's Hall

6pm-7pm
Robin Niblett
Theatre, Queen's Hall

Tuesday 30th April

6.15pm-7.15pm
Alistair Moffat
Theatre, Queen's Hall

8pm-9pm
Michael Chaplin
& Harry Pearson
Theatre, Queen's Hall

Wednesday 1st May

6.15pm-7.15pm
Emily Howes
Book Group Event
Theatre, Queen's Hall

7.45pm-9.15pm
Proof Party
Theatre, Queen's Hall

Thursday 2nd May

6.15pm-7.15pm
Liam Fox
Theatre, Queen's Hall

8pm-9pm
Henry Hemming
Theatre, Queen's Hall

Friday 3rd May

6.15pm-7.15pm
Chris Atkins
Theatre, Queen's Hall

8pm-9pm
Ian Dunt
Theatre, Queen's Hall

Saturday 4th May

10.30am-12.30pm
Writing Workshop
White Room, Queen's Hall

11am-12pm
Raymond Newell
Theatre, Queen's Hall

12.45pm-1.45pm
Chris Mullin
Theatre, Queen's Hall

2pm-3pm
Helen Russell
Library, Queen's Hall

2.30pm-3.30pm
Pen Vogler
Theatre, Queen's Hall

3.30pm-4.30pm
Oliver Lewis
Library, Queen's Hall

4.15pm-5.15pm
Chris Lintott
Theatre, Queen's Hall

5pm-6pm
Adam Sharp
Library, Queen's Hall

6pm-7pm
Subhadra Das
Theatre, Queen's Hall

6.30pm-7.30pm
Len Pennie
Library, Queen's Hall

7.45pm-8.45pm
Alan Johnson
Theatre, Queen's Hall

Sunday 5th May

10am-12pm
Writing Workshop
White Room, Queen's Hall

10.45am-11.45am
Lucy Scholes
Library, Queen's Hall

11am-12pm
Nicholas Thomas
Theatre, Queen's Hall

12.30pm-1.30pm
Marianna Spring
Library, Queen's Hall

12.45pm-1.45pm
Alex Grant
Theatre, Queen's Hall

2pm-3pm
Tamarind Norwood
Library, Queen's Hall

2.30pm-3.30pm
John Kampfner
Theatre, Queen's Hall

3.45pm-4.45pm
Rory Cellan-Jones
Library, Queen's Hall

4.15pm-6pm
Imtiaz Dharker
& Bloodaxe Books
Theatre, Queen's Hall

6.45pm-7.45pm
Wes Streeting
Theatre, Queen's Hall

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www.queenshall.co.uk

Everyone Welcome

Queen's Hall welcomes visitors with disabilities and aims to ensure that your visit is safe and enjoyable, providing disabled access to all public areas of the building with ramps, automatic doors, disabled toilet facilities and lifts. Hearing loop facilities are available throughout the auditorium and balcony. Please ask at the Box Office for more details – or call 01434 652477. If you require help, please contact Queen's Hall in advance. Companions of wheelchair users may attend events free of charge. Guide dogs are welcome in all areas of the building.

Volunteer with Us

Join our warm, friendly volunteer team and help ensure the smooth running of the festival!

For more information on what to do next visit:

hexhambookfestival.co.uk/volunteers

"I just wanted to say thank you so much for the opportunity to volunteer at this year's festival; I had an amazing time and gained so much valuable experience. It was great to hear so many amazing speakers and meet all the other volunteers as well."

Contact Us

If you have any questions or would like to make a suggestion about the festival, please send an email to info@hexhambookfestival.co.uk

To subscribe to our e-newsletter for updates from the Hexham Book Festival and information about one-off events, visit www.hexhambookfestival.co.uk

Ticket Information

Tickets for events can be booked online at www.queenshall.co.uk or through the Queen's Hall Box Office on 01434 652477

Buy more tickets and get a discount: When you buy tickets to 4 events you will receive 15% off - excluding workshops.

Box Office Opening Hours:

Monday – Saturday:
10am – 12pm | 1 – 4pm
(plus one hour before performances)

Queen's Hall
Beaumont Street
Hexham
NE46 3LS

Concessions

Our concession tickets are available to Friends of the Festival, those on benefits and students.



THANKS

We are grateful to all our Sponsors and Partners and, of course, to all our fabulous volunteers and audiences who help to make the Festival such a success.

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