

Celebrating 20 Years  
24<sup>th</sup> April – 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2026



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26

FESTIVAL



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DISCOVER MORE

## Welcome to Hexham Book Festival 2026

2026 brings the 20<sup>th</sup> Hexham Book Festival, and with it a cause for huge gratitude.

When the festival was set up it was a wild idea and a dream – and it is now a firm marker in the events calendar for Hexham and Northumberland. We welcome people to Hexham from all over the North East and Cumbria, as well as audiences who travel to the region especially for it. Over the years we've hosted hundreds of novelists, politicians, children's writers, poets, journalists and historians – and every year, our audiences surprise us with how enthusiastic, generous and welcoming they are.

This year's festival plays host to many authors including Alexander McCall Smith, Val

McDermid, Lee Child, Andrey Kurkov and Sarah Hall. We welcome historians Tracy Borman and Antonia Senior; US Poet Jane Hirshfield; and politicians Nicola Sturgeon, Penny Mordaunt and Chris Mullin. We have plenty of new and exciting travel and history books to tempt you; fascinating science and tech thinkers; and workshops for the aspiring scribes among you.

Booking opens to Friends on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> February and to the public on Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> March.

We can't wait to see you.

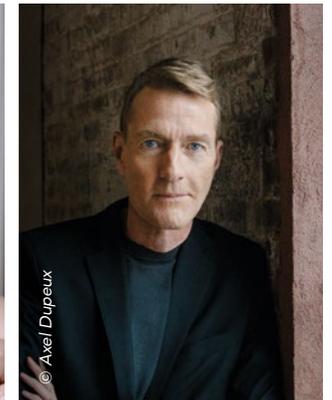
*The Hexham Book Festival team*



Andrey Kurkov



Nicola Sturgeon



Lee Child



Hexham Book Festival is a Community Interest Company working in partnership with Queen's Hall Arts.

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**Tyne Valley Film Festival – The Stranger: Preview**

Read the book, see the film.

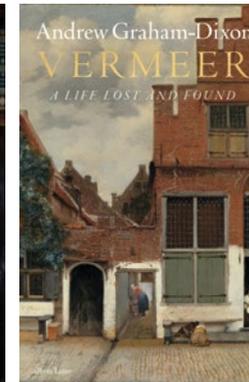
🕒 8pm

📍 Forum Cinema

🎟 £10 – full, £7 concession, £3 aged 25 and under

Hexham Book Festival is collaborating with Tyne Valley Film Festival again this year with a sublime adaptation of Albert Camus' landmark novella, *The Stranger*, from multi-award winning writer and director François Ozon. Set in 1930s Algeria, *The Stranger* is a classic, adored in its original French as well as in translation for its historical setting and social commentary.

To book: [forumhexham.com](http://forumhexham.com) or 01434 601144



**Andrew Graham-Dixon – Vermeer**

Illustrated talk

🕒 8pm–9pm

📍 Theatre, Queen's Hall

🎟 £12.50/£10.50

Sponsored by Matfen Hall



The paintings of Johannes Vermeer of Delft are some of the most beautiful, even sublime, in the history of art. Yet, like the life of Vermeer himself, they are mysterious and have for centuries defied explanation. Following new leads, and drawing on a mass of historical evidence, some of it freshly uncovered in the archives of Delft and Rotterdam, Andrew Graham-Dixon paints a dramatically new picture of Vermeer, revealing many of the painter's hitherto unknown friendships as well as his previously undetected allegiance to a radical movement driven underground by persecution.

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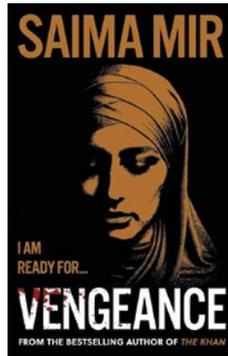
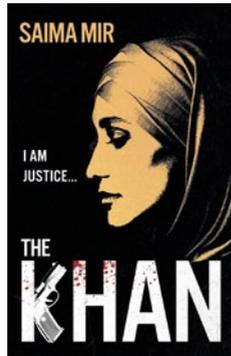
01434 602555    [www.cogitobooks.com](http://www.cogitobooks.com)    5 St Mary's Chare, Hexham, NE46 1NQ

Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> April

Workshop: Crime Writing with Saima Mir

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

💷 £25 – limited spaces so please book early to secure a place



Join journalist and writer Saima Mir for this two-hour workshop on how to write crime fiction, one of the most popular genres for new writers to attempt. No previous writing experience necessary.

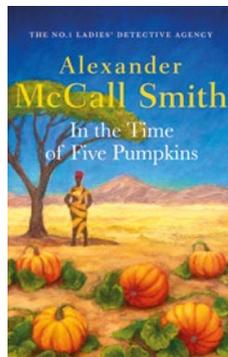
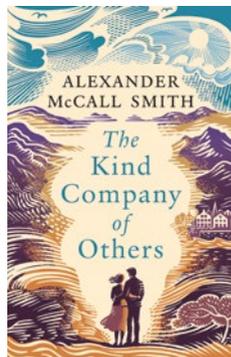
Saima Mir is an award-winning journalist and bestselling author. She is the author of the *Times* bestseller *The Khan* and its sequel *Vengeance*. She started her career at the *Telegraph & Argus* and went on to work for the BBC.

Alexander McCall Smith –

*The Subtle Pleasures of Indiscretion* and *The Kind Company of Others*

Chaired by Claire Malcolm

🕒 11am–12pm | 📍 Theatre, Queen's Hall | 💷 £12.50/£10.50



A Hexham Book Festival favourite returns! Alexander McCall Smith is a prolific writer, and master storyteller, and we're delighted he'll be joining us to talk about his new novels – including books in the Scotland Street and No1 Ladies' Detective Agency series - as well as sharing some of his poetry.

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## Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> April (cont.)



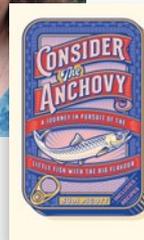
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### Sudi Pigott – Consider the Anchovy

Chaired by Caroline Beck

🕒 12.45pm–1.45pm | 📍 Theatre, Queen's Hall

🎫 £12.50/£10.50



*Consider the Anchovy* is a love letter to the humble fish, exploring the history and culture behind its bold flavour. Each chapter ends with delicious recipes, while vivid research and colourful, maverick characters bring the story to life. Entertaining and passionately argued, this odyssey celebrates anchovies with their pungent, complex, umami allure as leading, albeit sometimes unpredictable, movers in world culinary history.

Sponsored by Matfen Hall



### For Crime and Country – David Mark and Saima Mir

Chaired by Harry Man, RLF

🕒 2pm–3pm | 📍 Library, Queen's Hall | 🎫 £11/£9



A special discussion based on the podcast series *Collected from the Royal Literary Fund*, and dipping into the RLF archive. What is it that attracts crime writers to conjure up a specific place in their writing? From the shadows of the iconic Wool Exchange in Saima Mir's Bradford to the once-bustling pubs in Hull's old town frequented by David Mark's DI McAvoy, how can contemporary crime fiction both shine a light on the struggles facing England's Northern towns and celebrate the undercelebrated?

Supported by the Royal Literary Fund

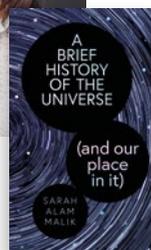


### Sarah Alam Malik – A Brief History of the Universe (and our place in it)

Chaired by Martin Farr

🕒 2.30pm–3.30pm | 📍 Theatre, Queen's Hall

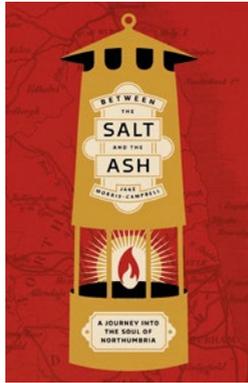
🎫 £12.50/£10.50



Particle physicist and internationally renowned expert on dark matter Dr Sarah Alam Malik takes us on a journey through the discoveries that have propelled and continually overturned our perception of the cosmos. Whilst delving into ancient theories as well as modern science, Sarah will feed our innately human desire to understand what is out there, and where we fit in among it all.

Sponsored by Northumberland National Park

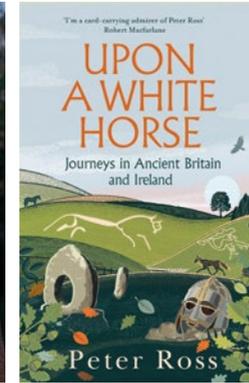




**Jake Morris-Campbell –  
Between the Salt and  
the Ash**

Chaired by Will Mackie  
 ⌚ 3.45pm–4.45pm  
 📍 Library, Queen’s Hall  
 💷 £11/£9

Jake Morris-Campbell travels across England’s North East to explore its deep past and uncertain future. After inheriting his great-grandfather’s Davy lamp, he sets out on a pilgrimage from Lindisfarne to Durham Cathedral, moving through a region shaped by Christianity, industry, and class. Along the way, he reflects on thirteen centuries of social change, identity, and Englishness. The journey tests his role as a writer, rejects easy narratives of decline, uncovers neglected histories, and celebrates the place he calls home.



**Peter Ross – Upon  
A White Horse –  
Journeys in Ancient  
Britain and Ireland**

Chaired by Matthew Kelly  
 ⌚ 5.15pm–6.15pm  
 📍 Library, Queen’s Hall  
 💷 £11/£9

Sponsored by Matfen Hall

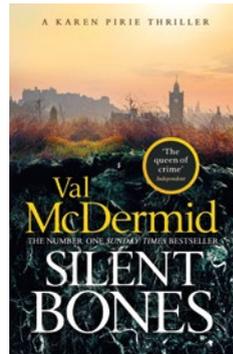


The prehistoric sites of Britain and Ireland are places of wonder and wondering. On a journey from midwinter at Stonehenge to midsummer at Sycamore Gap, Peter asks what it is like to live within the great stone circle at Avebury, what rituals occurred in an Anglesey tomb and what draws volunteers to care for the Uffington White Horse – and reflects on why these structures remain important to this day.

**Val McDermid – Silent Bones and Winter**

Chaired by Alison Freeman

⌚ 4.15pm–5.15pm | 📍 Theatre, Queen’s Hall | 💷 £12.50/£10.50



One of the UK’s most accomplished and respected novelists, Val McDermid has sold over 19 million books to date across the globe, and her work has been translated into more than 40 languages. She joins us in Hexham to talk about her two new books for 2026: *Silent Bones*, a new thriller featuring Karen Pirie – now a hit ITV series – and *Winter*, a standalone memoir where she journeys from Edinburgh streets to Scottish coasts, celebrating festivals, childhood memories and the season as one of rest, retreat and creativity.

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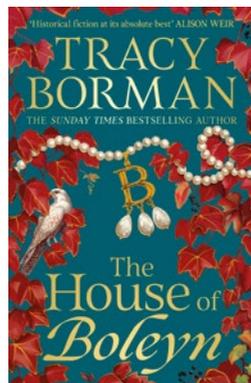
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## Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> April (cont.)



### Tracy Borman – The House of Boleyn

Illustrated Talk

🕒 6pm–7pm

📍 Theatre, Queen's Hall

💷 £12.50/£10.50

Sponsored by Matfen Hall



Uncover the secrets of the Boleyn family with Tracy Borman, Chief Historian at the Historic Royal Palaces. In her new novel *The House of Boleyn*, best-selling author, historian and broadcaster Tracy Borman immerses us in the world of the Boleyn's beautiful Kent home, Hever Castle. It was here that they plotted and schemed, grieved and rejoiced – and where Henry VIII relentlessly pursued Anne Boleyn.



### The Working-Class Library: Val McDermid

Live Podcast recording

🕒 7.30pm–8.30pm

📍 Library, Queen's Hall

💷 £5

NEW WRITING  
NORTH

Join writer Richard Benson (*The Farm, The Valley*) and Claire Malcolm (New Writing North) from the Working-Class Library podcast as they seek to explore and reclaim working-class people's contribution to English literature. For this live edition of the podcast they will be joined by special guest Val McDermid, talking about William McIlvanney's *Laidlaw* – a foundational Scottish crime novel that is often cited as being the book that kicked off the Tartan Noir phenomenon.

The podcast is a venture of *The Bee*, the magazine of writing by working-class writers.

## Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> April



### Illustration Workshop: Tales from the Gaol

With Jonny Hannah

🕒 10am–12pm –  
and Sunday 3 May,  
10am–12pm.

📍 Hexham Old Gaol

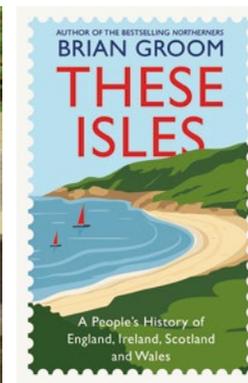
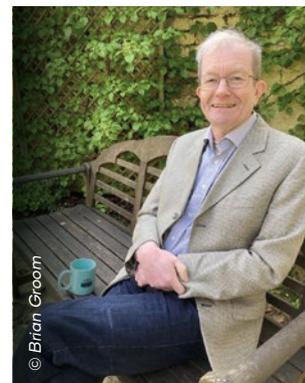
🎟️ FREE but booking  
required

Join award-winning illustrator and writer Jonny Hannah to design and create a dustjacket cover for a new publication marking the transformation of Hexham Old Gaol (reopening Spring 2027). Use any illustration tools—hand-drawn, screenprint, pochoir, collage, or mix—and leave with a free publication, unique wrap-around cover, and new, reusable skills gained.

Entry also includes free entry to rest of the museum.

Age 12+ (under 16s must be accompanied by an adult)

To book: [talesfromthegaol@gmail.com](mailto:talesfromthegaol@gmail.com)



### Brian Groom – These Isles: A History of England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland

Chaired by Harry Pearson

🕒 11am–12pm

📍 Library, Queen's Hall

🎟️ £11/£9

From the highlands to the Channel Islands, via the towns and cities of the nations in between, this is the definitive story of our shared history, told through the groups who lived here. *These Isles* sketches the evolution of the regions, our relationships with each other, and the legacy of those who have shaped it – from the Celts and Romans, Anglo-Saxons and Vikings, Tudors and Stuarts, musicians and playwrights, politicians and nobles, and modern icons.

## Audio Book Group

This group is for anyone who has difficulty with reading caused by a visual impairment or other challenges. A friendly group which welcomes new members, we meet on the last Thursday of each month at 2pm – apart from August – in Hexham Library. Members receive free copies of an audio book and meet to discuss it over a cup of tea. To join, please email [info@hexhambookfestival.co.uk](mailto:info@hexhambookfestival.co.uk)



## Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> April (cont.)

### Marian Boswall – *The Kindest Garden*

Chaired by Roisin Beck-Taylor

🕒 11.30am–12.30pm | 📍 Theatre, Queen's Hall

🎫 £12.50/£10.50



Drawing on lessons from forward-thinking farmers, foresters, re-wilders and nature itself, *The Kindest Garden* shows you how to create a garden that is both a beautiful sanctuary for yourself and also a place where nature can thrive. A step-up from sustainable gardening, which focuses on minimising our impact on the earth, regenerative gardening is about making an active contribution to the health of the planet: improving and replenishing biodiversity through our gardens. Whether you have a shady patio, a large plot of land or a windowsill – you can make an impact.

Climate Talks Sponsor: Vattenfall



### Vernon Bogdanor – *Making the Weather*

Chaired by Richard Moss

🕒 12.45pm–1.45pm | 📍 Library, Queen's Hall | 🎫 £11/£9



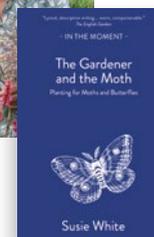
Six post-war politicians, all of whom exerted an outsized influence on the political life of the UK but never led the country - despite shaping the national politics more than most Prime Ministers. Aneurin 'Nye' Bevan, Roy Jenkins, Tony Benn, Enoch Powell, Keith Joseph and Nigel Farage. Each man achieved such prominence and influence despite not being the leader (yet) - how? And what next, for the one person who might yet still become UK Prime Minister?

### Susie White – *The Gardener and the Moth*

Chaired by Roisin Beck-Taylor

🕒 1.15pm–2.15pm | 📍 Theatre, Queen's Hall

🎫 £12.50/£10.50



Susie White has spent more than a decade constructing an abundant wildlife haven at her Northumberland home, often describing it in her Country Diary for the Guardian. A keen advocate of planting for wildlife, and pollinators in particular, her garden is a sanctuary for all creatures and promotes life and growth. She will share how to create a garden that attracts and sustains moths and butterflies as well as discussing her newest book *Nature's Almanac: A Gift for Every Day of the Year*.

Sponsored by Northumberland National Park

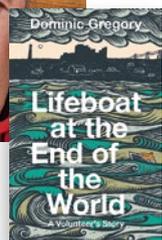
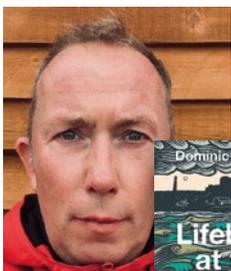


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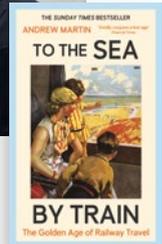
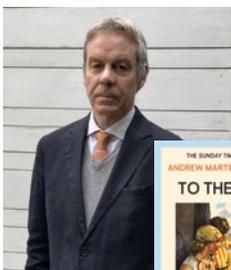


**Dominic Gregory – Lifeboat at the End of the World**

Chaired by Jacqui Hodgson

🕒 2.30pm–3.30pm | 📍 Library, Queen’s Hall | 📄 £11/£9

An extraordinary memoir from a RNLI volunteer, based at Dungeness on the English Channel, giving us an insight into one of the most specialised and unknown roles in the UK. You’ll meet the lifeboat crew, many of them from families who have crewed the lifeboat for generations, who all give up their time, livelihoods and safety to brave wind, tide and storms, and you’ll hear about their rescues, their dilemmas, and the life-and-death decisions they have to make in a split second, with no warning, often whilst battling the elements.



**Andrew Martin – To the Sea by Train**

Chaired by Harry Pearson

🕒 3pm–4pm | 📍 Theatre, Queen’s Hall

📄 £12.50/£10.50

Who went on holiday to the British coast as a child? Throughout the twentieth century, the seaside service posters of Britain’s railways promised fresh air and frivolity to millions of urban dwellers with the phrase: ‘To the sea by train’. With his signature wit and anecdotal style, Andrew Martin captures an era defined by its railways: from the development of Brighton and Scarborough into pleasure resorts, and the introduction of bank holidays and two-day weekends, to the advent of cheap flights and the British coast’s subsequent decline – and, latterly, resurgence and renovation.



**Eleanor Bruce & Lucilla Gray – Things We Found in the Ground**

Chaired by Vic Watson

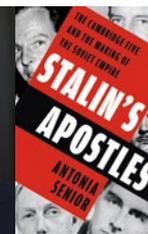
🕒 4.15pm–5.15pm | 📍 Library, Queen’s Hall | 📄 £11/£9

Cousins from opposites sides of the world, Ellie and Lucie grew up unaware of each other’s interest in history and the search for lost objects. But after being brought together during lockdown at their grandfather’s home in Lincolnshire, they picked up a metal detector for the first time and quickly discovered a shared passion which set them off on a life-changing journey, reconnecting with each other and the buried history that we walk over every day. You’ll be amazed at what they found.

**Antonia Senior & Piers Blofeld – Stalin’s Apostles & Master of Lies**

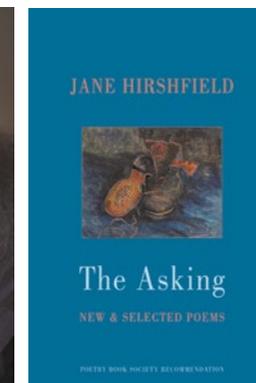
Chaired by Jacqui Hodgson

🕒 4.45pm–5.45pm | 📍 Theatre, Queen’s Hall | 📄 £12.50/£10.50



Five men, radicalised to communist ideology whilst at Cambridge in the 1930s: Anthony Blunt, Guy Burgess, John Cairncross, Donald Maclean and Kim Philby supplied the Soviets with UK and US intelligence for years until they were uncovered in 1951. Using recently declassified documents, historian and journalist Antonia Senior shines a light on their deception – and the reasons why they did it – whilst Piers Blofeld argues that Anthony Blunt specifically is one of the greatest spy-masters of all time, penetrating the very top of British society whilst flying under the radar.

*Sponsored by Matfen Hall*



**Bloodaxe Books presents: Jane Hirshfield**

🕒 6.30pm–7.30pm

📍 Library, Queen’s Hall

📄 £11/£9

*Supported by Poetry Ireland and Bloodaxe Books*

**BLOODAXE BOOKS**



A very special evening with a visionary American writer whose poems have become a balm and a refuge during times of upheaval. Many of Jane’s poems went viral during the pandemic and led to her work being found by an entirely new audience. One of only three events taking place during her visit to Britain, the evening will see Jane joined by her UK editor, Bloodaxe’s Neil Astley, in conversation about her work and the wide range of subjects she explores — from nature and relationships to the Buddhist practice of mindfulness, and more. Jane will also read from *The Asking: New & Selected Poems*.



**Workshop: How to Get Published from Manuscript to Market - with Harry Man**

🕒 6.30pm–8pm  
 📍 Library, Queen’s Hall  
 🎟 £10

Learn how to prepare work for submission, whether you need a literary agent, and what an editor at a publishing house does.

Join award winning poet, translator, author and former literary agent and publisher Harry Man in this lively and informative workshop, where he’ll share insights from both sides of the coin as an author and publisher, alongside practical tips on developing your career and working with agents and editors. Whether you’re new to writing, or feel the time is right to send your work out into the world, or simply curious to know more about the publishing process, this workshop is for you.

**Become a Friend of Hexham Book Festival**

Membership runs until 31st January 2027 and benefits include £2 off most ticket prices throughout the Festival.

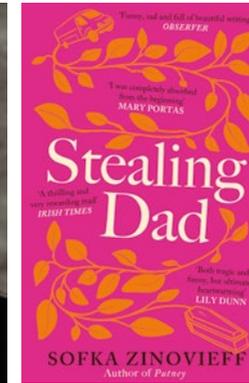
Apply online at: [www.hexhambookfestival.co.uk/become-a-friend](http://www.hexhambookfestival.co.uk/become-a-friend) and for only £23 single and £34 double membership (two people at one address), you’ll be helping to support the Festival going forward.



**Young Writers**

We run a Young Writers group in partnership with the Queen’s Hall for aspiring authors aged 11-16yrs. 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](http://www.hexhambookfestival.co.uk)



**The Big Book Group Event: Stealing Dad by Sofka Zinovieff**

Chaired by Liv Chapman  
 🕒 6.15pm–7.15pm  
 📍 Theatre, Queen’s Hall  
 🎟 £8

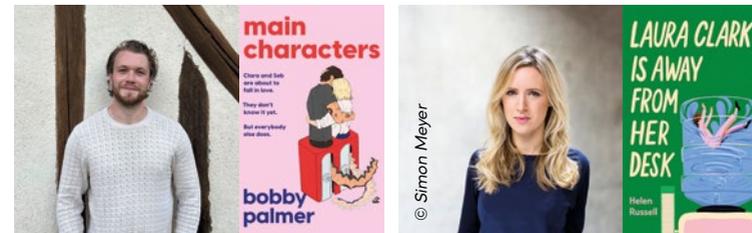
Join Hexham Book Festival for our popular Big Book Group Event, perfect for avid readers. All attendees can order specially priced hardbacks to read ahead of the event, email us to order: [info@hexhambookfestival.co.uk](mailto:info@hexhambookfestival.co.uk)

*What do you do when you’re not allowed to attend your father’s funeral?*

This is the question facing Alekos’s far-flung children from many marriages when the successful, if controversial, Greek sculptor dies in London. His last wife and now widow is determined that they stay away, but for the first time, all the sisters and brothers meet up and plan to take matters into their own hands, with surprising and hilarious consequences.

**Headline Proof Party: Bobby Palmer and Helen Russell**

Chaired by Liv Chapman  
 🕒 7.45pm–8.45pm | 📍 Theatre, Queen’s Hall | 🎟 £14 (includes 2 books)



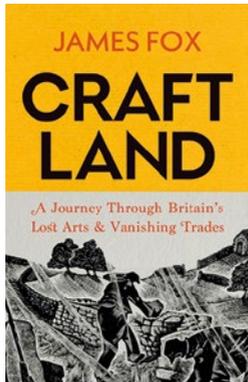
A special opportunity to get your hands on early copies of some of the most exciting new novels of 2026: *Main Characters* by Bobby Palmer & *Laura Clark is Away from her Desk* by Helen Russell.

In *Main Characters*, two people are falling in love – and it’s blindingly obvious to everyone but them. A modern love story, told entirely from the perspective of those around the couple involved. *Laura Clark is Away from her Desk* is the perfect novel for our times: a stressed mother, with ageing parents, and a workload she cannot keep up with, who one day decides to quit: her job, her home, her responsibilities. What is she when she’s untethered?

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

*Presented in partnership with Headline Publishers*

## Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> April



### James Fox – Craftland

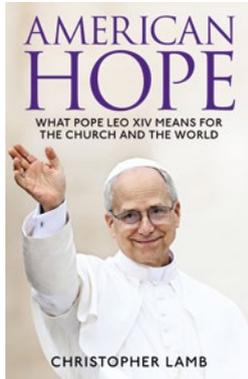
Illustrated Talk

🕒 6.15pm–7.15pm

📍 Theatre, Queen's Hall

🎫 £12.50/£10.50

For generations, what we made with our hands defined our identities, built our communities and shaped our regions. With a special event sharing what he found when travelling the length of Britain, from the Scilly Isles to the Scottish Highlands, James Fox reveals the country's last remaining master craftspeople and documents these vanishing skills and trades. Stepping inside the workshops of blacksmiths and wheelwrights, cutlers and coopers, bell-founders and watchmakers, *Craftland* is not only a glimpse into our past but another way of life — one that is not yet lost and whose wisdom could shape our future.



### Christopher Lamb – American Hope

Chaired by Jacqui Hodgson

🕒 8pm–9pm

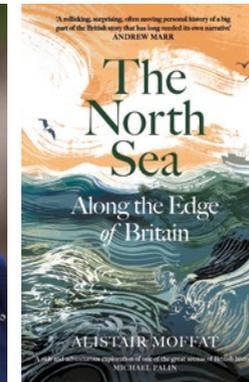
📍 Theatre, Queen's Hall

🎫 £12.50/£10.50

In the time it took to utter his name, Robert Prevost went from being a relatively unknown cardinal to one of the most famous people in the world. But who is this soft-spoken American who assumes the role of pope at a time of extraordinary global turbulence?

A revelatory portrait of Pope Leo XIV, which brings to life the first American pope and explores the consequences of his election for the Catholic Church and the world.

## Friday 1<sup>st</sup> May



### Alistair Moffat – The North Sea

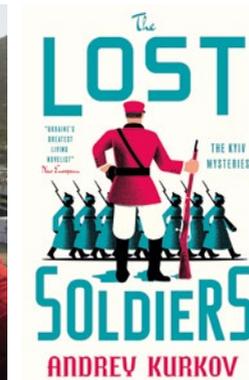
🕒 6.15pm–7.15pm

📍 Theatre, Queen's Hall

🎫 £12.50/£10.50

A fascinating exploration of our nearest coastline. Alistair Moffat spent a year travelling the North Sea shores to better understand our relationship to this life-giving and destructive sea. Running from Kent and the Rhine estuary to the Norwegian coast and the tip of the Shetland islands, it has been home to warring tribes, foreign invaders, lost civilisations and holidaymakers. Along the way he discovered stories as old as time, meeting technological advances in wind farming, as well as a body of water so powerful and destructive it is claiming more and more shoreline every year.

Introduced by Liv Chapman.



### Andrey Kurkov – The Lost Soldiers

Chaired by Jacqui Hodgson

🕒 8pm–9pm

📍 Theatre, Queen's Hall

🎫 £12.50/£10.50

We are delighted to be hosting Andrey Kurkov, Ukraine's greatest living novelist and a commentator and journalist on Ukraine for the international media. His novel *Death and the Penguin* is an international bestseller, and he joins us to talk about his Kyiv Mysteries series, the third of which is published this Spring. In this third volume, Kurkov vividly depicts a city filled with political turbulence and eccentric characters - and draws playful parallels with the present day.



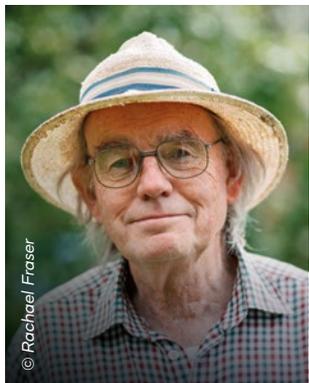
**Workshop: Brave Beginnings: Writing for the Genuinely Nervous with Dave Wibberley**

🕒 10.30am–12.30pm | 📍 White Room, Queen’s Hall  
 📄 £25 - limited spaces, please book early to secure a place

A welcoming, low-pressure workshop designed for those who feel intimidated by the blank page but long to write.

This session is for anyone who’s ever said “I’m not a writer,” but secretly wants to be. Using playful prompts, tactile aids, and gentle encouragement, we’ll explore how writing can be a companion rather than a challenge. The focus is on emotional safety, creative permission, and finding joy in small beginnings.

Perfect for absolute beginners or those returning to writing after a long pause.

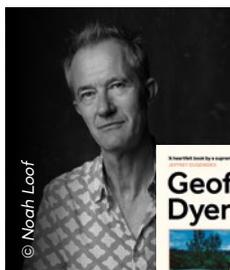


**Chris Mullin: The Starmer Government - An Interim Report**

🕒 11am–12pm | 📍 Theatre, Queen’s Hall  
 📄 £12.50/£10.50

British politics has never been more volatile. Governments are faced with a series of incompatible demands. An electorate which demands less tax and more public spending. A migration crisis to which there are no easy solutions. Struggling public services and spiralling public debt. And every day the flames are fanned by an unscrupulous tabloid media and a new breed of populist politicians who have no answers.

Is there a way out? Former Labour minister and celebrated diarist Chris Mullin gives his take on the crisis engulfing British politics and looks at the way forward.

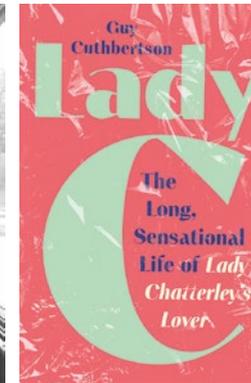
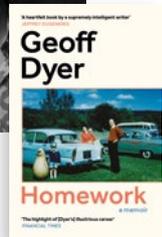


**Geoff Dyer – Homework**

Chaired by Claire Malcolm  
 🕒 12.45pm–1.45pm | 📍 Theatre, Queen’s Hall  
 📄 £12.50/£10.50

Born in 1958, the only child of a dinner lady and a sheet-metal worker, Geoff Dyer grew up in a world shaped by memories of shortages and the Second World War. It was a time of Airfix models, wargames, conkers and frugality: Geoff’s father splurges on a mono record player – before imposing a blockade on buying records.

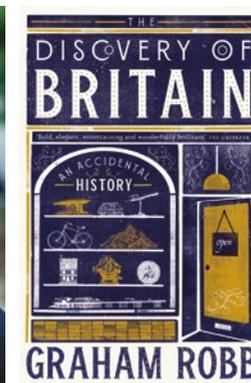
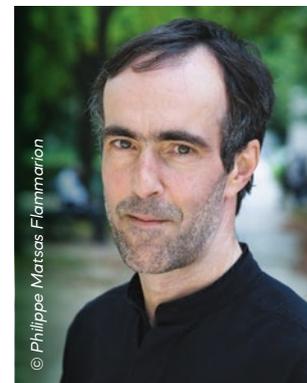
Aware of the monumental social change he lived through, Geoff Dyer now has a life his parents would barely recognise, and which seemed inconceivable: grammar-school education led to books, prog rock, girls, beer and, eventually, a place at Oxford.



**Guy Cuthbertson – Lady C: The Long, Sensational Life of Lady Chatterley’s Lover**

Chaired by Caroline Beck  
 🕒 2pm–3pm  
 📍 Library, Queen’s Hall  
 📄 £11/£9

D. H. Lawrence’s *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* is one of the best-known and most resonant works of the twentieth century. Originally considered obscene and unpublishable in numerous countries, its scandalous story of class divide and the English countryside is infamous. But, since the 1920s, we have repeatedly re-created Lady Chatterley, from film and TV to music and tourism. Guy Cuthbertson tells the colourful story of the novel’s journey through the last hundred years – from derision to global success and longevity.

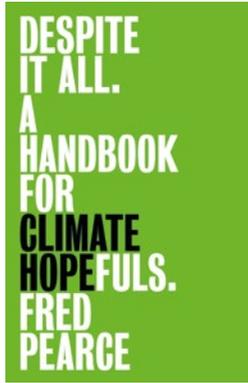


**Graham Robb – The Discovery of Britain**

Chaired by Martin Farr  
 🕒 2.30pm–3.30pm  
 📍 Theatre, Queen’s Hall  
 📄 £12.50/£10.50  
 Sponsored by Matfen Hall



From Graham Robb’s unique two-wheel, pedal-powered perspective, *The Discovery of Britain* takes the reader on a deeply researched, highly witty and surprising journey around Britain from 500 million BC to the next election. Weaving the personal with the historic, the social with the political, Graham Robb’s new book will delight, dazzle and move you just as his ground-breaking *The Discovery of France* did in 2007.



**Fred Pearce – Despite it All**

Chaired by Harry Pearson

🕒 3.45pm–4.45pm

📍 Library, Queen's Hall

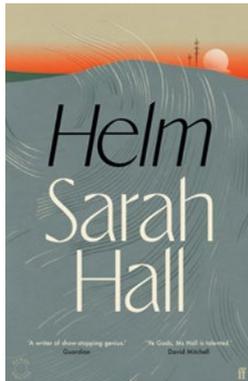
🎫 £11/£9

Climate Talks Sponsor: Vattenfall

VATTENFALL

There is a climate crisis, extinctions are accelerating, forests are disappearing, water cycles are collapsing and pollution is choking our skies and seas: it is easy to be defeatist about the fate of our planet.

And yet, despite it all, it's not too late: things can change for the better. Fred Pearce has been reporting from the frontline of climate change and environmental recovery for over four decades and what he has seen has given him reason - in fact, seven reasons - for (cautious) hope. Nature is finding ways to thrive in unexpected places; the population bomb has been defused; our consumerist societies are finally approaching 'peak stuff'; and a combination of ancient wisdom and modern technology can help us correct our course.



**Sarah Hall – Helm**

Chaired by Claire Malcolm

🕒 5.30pm–6.30pm

📍 Library, Queen's Hall

🎫 £11/£9

Climate Talks Sponsor: Vattenfall

VATTENFALL

The latest novel from award-winning Cumbrian author Sarah Hall follows Helm - a ferocious, mischievous wind. *Helm* is the subject of folklore and awe, who has blasted the sublime landscape of the Eden Valley since the very dawn of time. But now Dr Selima Sutar, surrounded by infinite clouds and measuring instruments in her observation hut, fears human pollution is killing Helm.

Rich, wild and vital, *Helm*, is the story of a unique life force, and of a relationship: between nature and people, neither of whom can weather life without the other.



**Nicola Sturgeon – Frankly**

Chaired by Richard Moss

🕒 6pm–7pm

📍 Theatre, Queen's Hall

🎫 £12.50/£10.50

In this captivating memoir, Nicola Sturgeon takes readers from her working-class roots in Ayrshire to the forefront of Scottish politics as the country's first female and longest-serving first minister. Sturgeon offers an insider's view of key political moments, including the establishment of the Scottish Parliament, the SNP's rise to power, the Scottish Independence Referendum, the complexities of Brexit and the unforeseen challenges of the Covid pandemic – as well as the unique challenges of being one of very few women in a high-pressure, high-visibility position of power.



**Penny Mordaunt – Pomp and Circumstance**

Chaired by Jonathan Morrell

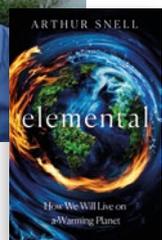
🕒 7.45pm–8.45pm

📍 Theatre, Queen's Hall

🎫 £12.50/£10.50

Penny Mordaunt, who in her ceremonial role as Lord President of the Privy Council famously carried the Sword of State and presented the Sword of Offering to King Charles III at his coronation, examines areas of traditional British culture – including the monarchy, Parliament, the law, sport and local traditions, as well as values including sacrifice, courage and remembrance. She shows how a country often thought of as old-fashioned actually uses its unique historical conventions to navigate the future.

Far from being a brake on progress, British traditions – from the magnificent to the silly - offer a predictable rhythm to life, promote values, encourage reflection and create a sense of continuity while allowing room for innovation and growth.



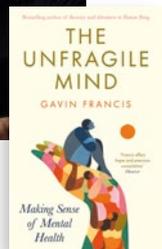
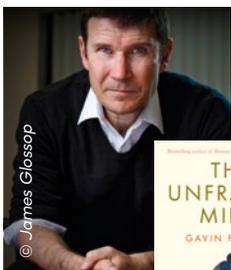
**Arthur Snell – Elemental**

Chaired by Fred Pearce

🕒 11am–12pm | 📍 Library, Queen’s Hall | 💷 £11/£9

For the very first time, historian and former British diplomat Arthur Snell delivers a comprehensive account of the geopolitics of climate change. With over 30 years’ experience in conflict zones and fragile states, Arthur Snell travels from the heat of the Sahel to the Arctic Circle to show how climate change is coinciding with a breakdown in geopolitical order, increasing conflict and economic crises.

*Climate Talks Sponsor: Vattenfall*



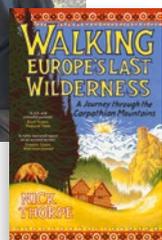
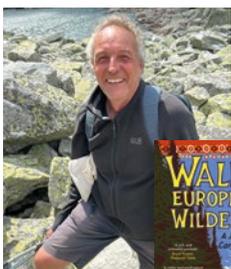
**Gavin Francis – The Unfragile Mind: Making Sense of Mental Health**

Chaired by Claire Malcolm

🕒 11.30am–12.30pm | 📍 Theatre, Queen’s Hall

💷 £12.50/£10.50

Around a quarter of young people in the UK are now diagnosed with mental illness; one in four adults are prescribed psychiatric medication. These numbers represent a huge and recent expansion in mental health labelling, but reveal nothing of the experience of those seeking help. A GP with over 30 years’ experience, Gavin Francis draws on conversations with patients and colleagues to explore the history of psychiatry, the nature of mental health and ill-health, and the problems - including mood disorders, trauma, anxiety and addiction - that he addresses daily. The mind, he argues, is dynamic and adaptive - better addressed not with rigid labels and protocols, but with curiosity, kindness, humility and hope.

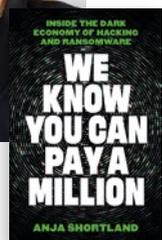


**Nick Thorpe – Walking Europe’s Last Wilderness**

Chaired by Caroline Beck

🕒 12.45pm–1.45pm | 📍 Library, Queen’s Hall | 💷 £11/£9

The Carpathian Mountains of Poland, Slovakia, Romania, and Ukraine are Europe’s last true wilderness. A landscape of great spruce and beech forests, grass meadows, and ancient villages, its people contend daily with the elements—as well as Europe’s last large carnivores. But this fragile ecosystem is now under threat, from climate change and illegal logging. Journeying from the banks of the Danube to Transylvania, Nick Thorpe guides us through the history and ecology of the watershed of Europe, between the Black Sea and the Baltic.



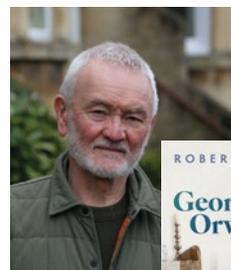
**Anja Shortland – We Know You Can Pay A Million**

Chaired by Gerry Foley

🕒 1.15pm–2.15pm | 📍 Theatre, Queen’s Hall

💷 £12.50/£10.50

Cybercrime is everywhere. A multibillion-pound industry run by wily hackers and fraudsters. Bankrupting business, stalling governments, stealing sensitive data. Your turn could come any day now. Are you ready? From a leading expert in illicit trading, *We Know You Can Pay a Million* spotlights the criminal underworld where organised groups trade stolen information and cryptocurrencies, revealing the fascinating hidden histories of the superhackers whose activities have potentially catastrophic consequences for us all.

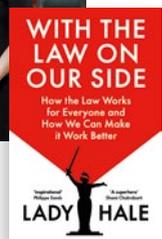


**Robert Colls – George Orwell**

Chaired by Caroline Beck

🕒 2.30pm–3.30pm | 📍 Library, Queen’s Hall | 💷 £11/£9

George Orwell has never been more quoted and misquoted. Can he be rescued from the soundbites? Born in 1903, Orwell’s life played out against a background of two world wars, two great revolutions, one long global depression, the rise and rise of Communism, and the war-time pre-eminence of the United States until his death in 1950. Yet no matter how alert he was to all these great struggles, and no matter how guarded he was in his personal life, Orwell never turned away from the question of who he was, and the contradictions that entailed.



**Lady Hale – With The Law On Our Side**

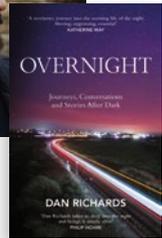
Chaired by Jacqui Hodgson

🕒 3pm–4pm | 📍 Theatre, Queen’s Hall | 💷 £12.50/£10.50

A citizen’s guidebook to the law in our land with a supremely expert guide: former President of the Supreme Court, Baroness Brenda Hale.

To most of us, our laws are a web of intimidating institutions and practices. Taking us into the complexities of real courts and real decisions, we see that we all have rights: schoolchildren, disabled people, workers, minorities and patients. In captivating stories, it tells us what the law is about, how it works and, most importantly, why we should all care about it.

# Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> May (cont.)

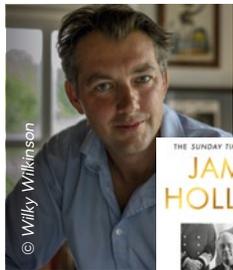


## Dan Richards – Overnight

Chaired by Jonathan Morrell

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

There is something special about the night. For many, just the idea of it conjures thoughts of starlit skies, romance, refuge, of being tucked up in bed. For some, the night means fear, vulnerability, danger, and sleeplessness. At night things go bump, monsters hide under beds, owls take wing and foxes' prowl. For others still, nightfall signals the start of work. *Overnight* is a celebration of all things nocturnal, of those who labour while the rest of us sleep: the bakers, health workers, sailors, couriers, broadcasters, drivers, fishers, the emergency services and more. And it is also a hymn to nighttime wildlife, dreams and art.



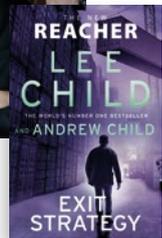
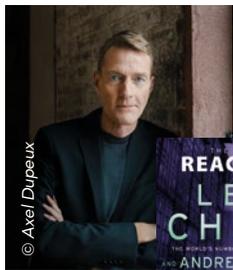
## James Holland – The Visionaries

Chaired by Gerry Foley

🕒 4.45pm–5.45pm | 📍 Theatre, Queen's Hall

💷 £12.50/£10.50

A unique look at the people in power who make history, from one of the most authoritative voices on 20th-century history. From the world on the eve of war in 1914 through to the Versailles Treaty and the global financial catastrophe of the late 1920s and early thirties, and the political earthquakes that followed, *The Visionaries* takes a broad sweep of history with important lessons for today. It's a reminder that while history does not repeat itself, patterns of human behaviour certainly do.



## Lee Child – Reacher: Exit Strategy

Chaired by Claire Malcolm

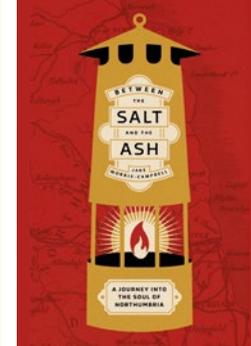
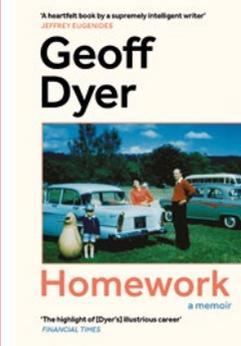
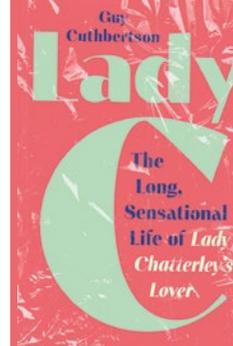
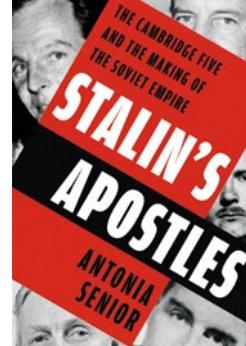
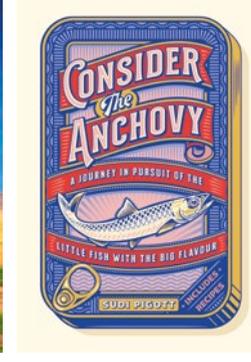
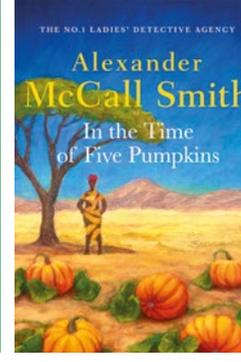
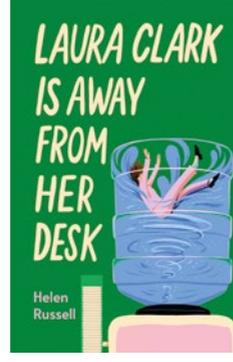
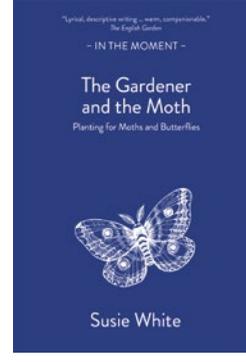
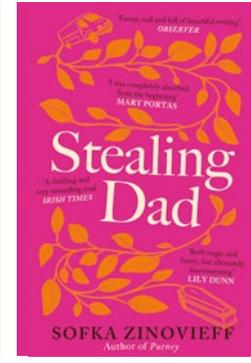
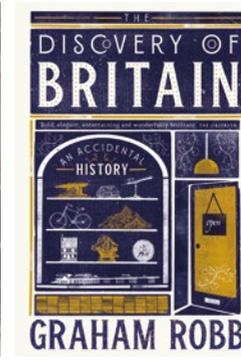
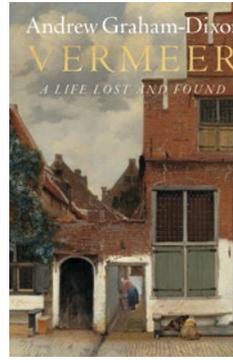
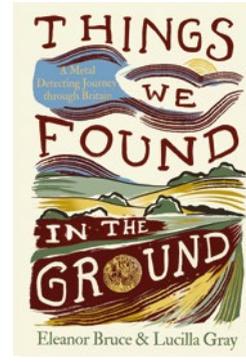
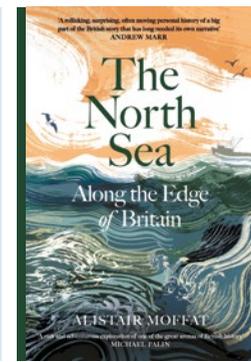
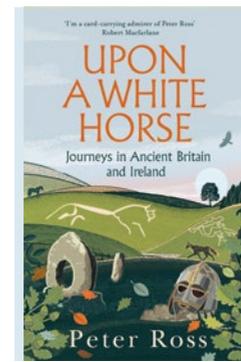
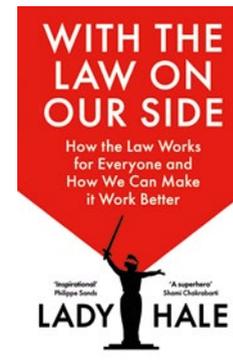
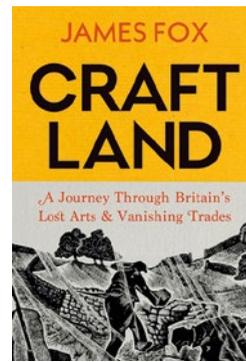
🕒 6.30pm–7.30pm | 📍 Theatre, Queen's Hall

💷 £12.50/£10.50

Lee Child joins us to close Hexham Book Festival 2026, with his 30th Jack Reacher thriller, and the sixth in the universally acclaimed collaboration between Lee and his brother Andrew. Jack Reacher is one of the most-loved characters in modern fiction: it is said a Jack Reacher novel is sold somewhere in the world every nine seconds. His books consistently achieve the number one slot on bestseller lists around the world and have sold over one hundred million copies.

Lee is the recipient of many awards including Author of the Year at the 2019 British Book Awards. He was appointed CBE in the 2019 Queen's Birthday Honours.

Sponsored by Matfen Hall



# 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.



Luke Wright presents  
**LATER LIFE LETTER**

**Friday 22 May, 7.30pm**

From **£9.50**

The story of Luke Wright's adoption – the life he leads, and the one he might have done. Expect raucous laughter, tear-stained cheeks, and a little smattering of drum n bass.

*"His poems shoot arrows through the heart."* ★★★★★ List

**Age guidance:** 14+



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**Saturday 23rd May 2026**  
Bywell, Stocksfield - NE43 7AB  
[www.northcountyshow.co.uk](http://www.northcountyshow.co.uk)

**Tickets on sale now!**



## Programme Listing

### Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> March

8pm

Film: The Stranger  
Forum Cinema

### Friday 24<sup>th</sup> April

8pm–9pm

Andrew Graham-Dixon  
Theatre, Queen's Hall

### Sat 25<sup>th</sup> April

10.30am–12.30pm

Workshop: Crime Writing  
with *Saima Mir*  
White Room, Queen's Hall

11am–12pm

Alexander McCall Smith  
Theatre, Queen's Hall

12.45pm–1.45pm

Sudi Pigott  
Theatre, Queen's Hall

2pm–3pm

For Crime and Country: David  
Mark & Saima Mir – RLF event  
Library, Queen's Hall

2.30pm–3.30pm

Sarah Alam Malik  
Theatre, Queen's Hall

3.45pm–4.45pm

Jake Morris-Campbell  
Library, Queen's Hall

4.15pm–5.15pm

Val McDermid  
Theatre, Queen's Hall

5.15pm–6.15pm

Peter Ross  
Library, Queen's Hall

6pm–7pm

Tracy Borman  
Theatre, Queen's Hall

7.30pm–8.30pm

The Working-Class  
Library: Podcast  
Library, Queen's Hall

### Sun 26<sup>th</sup> April

10am–12pm

Illustration Workshop:  
Tales from the Gaol  
with *Jonny Hannah*  
Hexham Old Gaol

11am–12pm

Brian Groom  
Library, Queen's Hall

11.30am–12.30pm

Marian Boswall  
Theatre, Queen's Hall

12.45pm–1.45pm

Vernon Bogdanor  
Library, Queen's Hall

1.15pm–2.15pm

Susie White  
Theatre, Queen's Hall

2.30pm–3.30pm

Dominic Gregory  
Library, Queen's Hall

3pm–4pm

Andrew Martin  
Theatre, Queen's Hall

4.15pm–5.15pm

Eleanor Bruce & Lucilla Gray  
Library, Queen's Hall

4.45pm–5.45pm

Antonia Senior & Piers Blofeld  
Theatre, Queen's Hall

6.30pm–7.30pm

Bloodaxe Books Presents:  
Jane Hirshfield  
Library, Queen's Hall

### Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> April

6.30pm–8pm

Workshop: Routes into  
Publishing with Harry Man  
Library, Queen's Hall

### Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> April

6.15pm–7.15pm

The Big Book Group  
Event: Sofka Zinovieff  
Theatre, Queen's Hall

7.45pm–8.45pm

Headline Proof Party: Bobby  
Palmer and Helen Russell  
Theatre, Queen's Hall

### Thurs 30<sup>th</sup> April

6.15pm–7.15pm

James Fox  
Theatre, Queen's Hall

8pm–9pm

Christopher Lamb  
Theatre, Queen's Hall

### Friday 1<sup>st</sup> May

6.15pm–7.15pm

Alistair Moffat  
Theatre, Queen's Hall

8pm–9pm

Andrey Kurkov  
Theatre, Queen's Hall

### Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> May

10.30am–12.30pm

Workshop: Brave  
Beginnings – Writing for  
the Genuinely Nervous  
with Dave Wibberley  
White Room, Queen's Hall

11am–12pm

Chris Mullin  
Theatre, Queen's Hall

12.45pm–1.45pm

Geoff Dyer  
Theatre, Queen's Hall

2pm–3pm

Guy Cuthbertson  
Library, Queen's Hall

2.30pm–3.30pm

Graham Robb  
Theatre, Queen's Hall

3.45pm–4.45pm

Fred Pearce  
Library, Queen's Hall

5.30pm–6.30pm

Sarah Hall  
Library, Queen's Hall

6pm–7pm

Nicola Sturgeon  
Theatre, Queen's Hall

7.45pm–8.45pm

Penny Mordaunt  
Theatre, Queen's Hall

### Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> May

10am–12pm

Illustration Workshop:  
Tales from the Gaol  
with *Jonny Hannah*  
Hexham Old Gaol

11am–12pm

Arthur Snell  
Library, Queen's Hall

11.30am–12.30pm

Gavin Francis  
Theatre, Queen's Hall

12.45pm–1.45pm

Nick Thorpe  
Library, Queen's Hall

1.15pm–2.15pm

Anja Shortland  
Theatre, Queen's Hall

2.30pm–3.30pm

Robert Colls  
Library, Queen's Hall

3pm–4pm

Lady Hale  
Theatre, Queen's Hall

4.15pm–5.15pm

Dan Richards  
Library, Queen's Hall

4.45pm–5.45pm

James Holland  
Theatre, Queen's Hall

6.30pm–7.30pm

Lee Child  
Theatre, Queen's Hall

## Venues

### Queen's Hall Arts

Beaumont Street, Hexham NE46 3LS  
Theatre, Library and White Room  
[www.queenshall.co.uk](http://www.queenshall.co.uk)

### Forum Cinema

8-9 Market Pl,  
Hexham NE46 1XF  
[www.forumhexham.com](http://www.forumhexham.com)

## 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 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](http://hexhambookfestival.co.uk/volunteers)

## 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](mailto: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](http://www.hexhambookfestival.co.uk)

## Ticket Information

Tickets for events can be booked online at [www.queenshall.co.uk](http://www.queenshall.co.uk) or through the Queen's Hall Box Office on **01434 652477**

All bookings are subject to a booking fee of £1.50 per transaction.

### 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.



# Vattenfall powering ahead in Northumberland

Operating since 2017, Ray Wind Farm is an onshore project located near Otterburn and in an average year can provide about 10% of Northumberland's energy needs.

## Biodiversity

**28 merlin chicks** have hatched and successfully ringed on site since the site became operational

**Peatland restoration**  
130 hectares of habitat

Save **487,000** tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>\*

\* based on projected capacity since site became operational reference UK wind energy database (UKWED) | RenewableUK



## Community benefits

Kirkharle Courtyard parkrun:  
**£4,300 grant**

Broadband 4 the Rural North (B4RN):  
**£350,000 towards two project builds to date**

The Ray Wind Fund has distributed over £2.25m in 480 grants to local communities.

Vattenfall Wind Power Ltd  
St Andrew's House, Haugh Lane,  
Hexham, NE46 3QQ

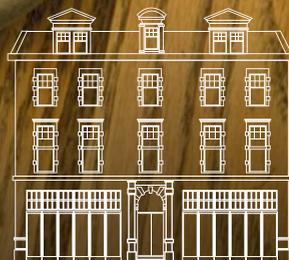
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