



Creative
Folkestone
Book Festival

Folkestone Book Festival

Thu 12 – Sun 22
November
2026



Thanks to our funders and supporters:

Creative Folkestone Book Festival is made possible thanks to the generous support of our funders and partners.

This year's festival is supported by Eurotunnel, Holiday Extras and the Friends of the Folkestone Book Festival.

We welcome the return of our Education Partner, Canterbury Christ Church University.

Creative Folkestone is also supported by Arts Council England, Folkestone and Hythe District Council and Saga.

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Welcome to Folkestone Book Festival 2026

Curiosity is one of the most underrated forces in the world.

It encourages us to ask better questions, challenge our assumptions and venture beyond the limits of our own experience. It helps us connect with people whose lives, beliefs and stories may be very different from our own. At its best, curiosity makes the world feel bigger, more interesting and more full of possibility.

That spirit sits at the heart of Folkestone Book Festival.

Across almost two weeks, we'll welcome some of the most exciting writers, thinkers, artists and storytellers working today. Together, we'll explore politics and power, love and loss, technology and identity, history and hope. There will be conversations that challenge, stories that comfort, ideas that provoke and moments of pure delight.

This is my third year curating the festival and one of the great pleasures of the role is seeing what happens when people come together around books and ideas. A festival programme may begin on a page, but its real life happens afterwards: in lively conversations in The Clearing, in the queue to get your book signed by your new favourite author, over wine and nibbles once you spill out of the Quarterhouse, and in friendships ignited over shared literary loves.

As both an author and curator, I'm drawn to overlooked voices, hidden histories and the stories that connect us. Those interests shaped this year's programme, which embraces difficult conversations alongside joy, wonder, humour and imagination.

And there is nowhere I'd rather have those conversations than Folkestone. This remarkable town is full of readers, makers, artists, campaigners, dreamers and curious minds. Whether you're joining us for a headline author, a family event, a workshop or a drink, I hope you discover something that surprises you.



Most of all, I hope you leave feeling connected: to a story, an idea, another person or perhaps even a new version of yourself. Come and join our conversation!

Sophie Haydock
Curator, Folkestone Book Festival

Tickets and Bookings

Folkestone Book Festival is a celebration of stories, ideas and conversation, for everyone in our community. Every November, writers, thinkers, artists and readers gather by the coast for nearly two weeks of inspiring events, unexpected encounters and lively debate. Curated by author Sophie Haydock (*The Flames*, *Madame Matisse*), this year's programme brings together some of the most exciting voices in contemporary culture, from bestselling novelists and political commentators to historians, prize winners, broadcasters and changemakers.

We believe these conversations are for everyone. Most tickets are £12, with concessions at £10 unless otherwise stated. Our £5 *cost of living ticket* is available to anyone who may otherwise find it difficult to attend, with no questions asked. Whether you're a lifelong festival-goer or joining us for the first time, you'll find a warm welcome, fresh perspectives and plenty to spark your imagination.

Tickets can be booked online at creativefolkestone.org.uk, by phone **01303 760740**, or in person at Quarterhouse Box Office.

The programme may change before the festival begins. For the latest information, visit: creativefolkestone.org.uk

All events take place at Quarterhouse, unless otherwise stated.

All in-person events are followed by a book signing.



[Scan here](https://creativefolkestone.org.uk)

to visit the website
and book tickets

Bookseller

We're delighted that Waterstones Folkestone continues to be our official bookselling partner. Their brilliant local team helps bring the festival to life, connecting readers with authors, championing great books and ensuring you can browse, buy and have your copies signed throughout the festival.



With our partners, we are making the town
a better place to read, write and share stories.

folkestoneisalibrary.com

In partnership with



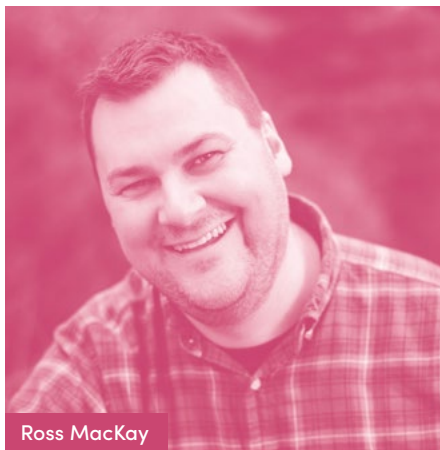
This is a Place Partnership Programme funded by



Founding Funder



Folkestone Book Festival Primary School Series 2026 Inspiring a Love of Books for the Next Generation – for Free



Ross MacKay

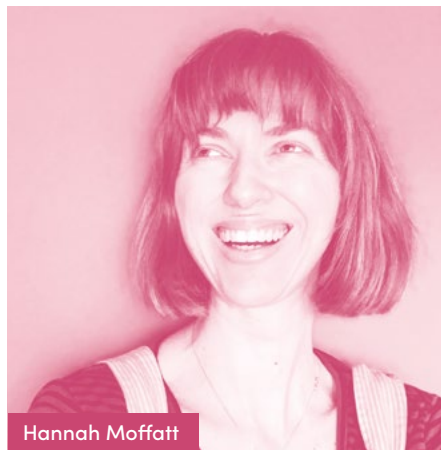
Ross MacKay

Tractors, Trouble
& Intergalactic Adventure

Monday 9 November

11am and 1pm (60 minutes)

What happens when a tractor develops a taste for the stars? Join award-winning Scottish author Ross MacKay to meet Big Red and Toby the Tractor – heroes of his brilliantly bonkers picture book *Tractors in Space*. Packed with storytelling, drawing, laughs and audience participation, this interactive event invites young readers to unleash their imaginations and dream up their own intergalactic adventures.



Hannah Moffatt

Hannah Moffatt

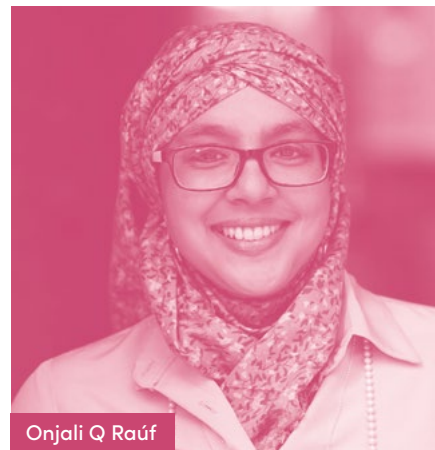
Cosmic Chaos Incoming!

Tuesday 10 November

11am and 1pm (60 minutes)

Alien pirates. A missing grandad. A black hole. What could possibly go wrong? Join children's author Hannah Moffatt for an out-of-this-world event inspired by her hilarious new adventure, *Help! Aliens Stole My Grandad!* A former creative director with a gift for big ideas and bigger laughs, Hannah shares how she creates unforgettable worlds, with plenty of storytelling, imagination and audience participation along the way.

Our Primary Schools Series is a free programme for all local schools and home-schooled pupils, designed to inspire creativity, encourage reading and celebrate storytelling for the next generation, in collaboration with Creative Folkestone's project, Folkestone is a Library. You can support our work with schools and young people by adding a donation when you buy festival tickets.



Onjali Q Raúf

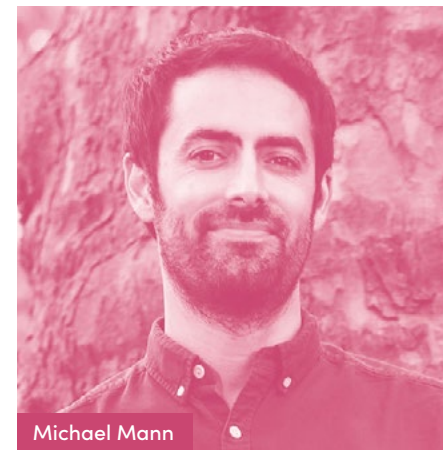
Onjali Q Raúf

Magic, Mischief
& Extraordinary Possibility

Wednesday 11 November

11am and 1pm (60 minutes)

Step into worlds of wonder with bestselling, award-winning author and activist Onjali Q Raúf MBE. In this enchanting event inspired by *Where Magic Grows*, she'll explore magical tales, unforgettable characters and the limitless possibilities of storytelling. A joyful celebration of creativity, empathy and adventure, this event invites young readers to dream bigger and discover where magic begins.



Michael Mann

Michael Mann

Sky-High Adventure
in a Haunted City

Thursday 12 November

11am and 1pm (60 minutes)

Catch the wind and join acclaimed children's author Michael Mann for an adventure inspired by his bestselling fantasy *Ghostcloud*, named a Waterstones Best Children's Book of 2021. In a hauntingly reimagined city, kidnapped children labour beneath the streets while ghostly allies offer hope above the rooftops. Expect adventure, suspense and soaring imagination.

Pre-Festival Events

Gather, explore and celebrate before the festival officially begins. Everyone is welcome at these special community events



Folkestone Through Writers' Eyes: A Literary Walking Tour

Saturday 7 November

12pm – 3pm, Meet at Quarterhouse
Join local writer, historian and guide Tony Quarrington and Folkestone Book Festival curator Sophie Haydock for a literary stroll through the town's streets, seafront and hidden corners. Along the way, discover the writers with links here, from Charles Dickens (above) and HG Wells to Carol Ann Duffy and James Joyce. Blending literature, local history and conversation, this entertaining walk reveals the stories woven through Folkestone's landscape, offering fresh perspectives on familiar places.



Christmas Lights Switch-On

Wednesday 11 November

5pm – 6pm, The Old High Street

Stories, sparkle and festive magic come together as the Christmas lights are switched on in the heart of Folkestone's Creative Quarter. Taking place outside Objectables on The Old High Street – for the first time as part of our Primary School Series – this family-friendly celebration will feature a special appearance from a children's author, who'll have the honour of turning on the lights. Join us as we welcome the festive season with laughter, community spirit and Christmas wonder.

Thursday 12 November



Sir Tony Robinson

Opening Night

7pm – 8pm

Few people have charmed British audiences quite like Sir Tony Robinson. Actor, broadcaster, bestselling author and endlessly entertaining raconteur, he has spent more than fifty years making us laugh, making us think and making us look at the world with fresh curiosity. From the immortal Baldrick in the classic British comedy, *Blackadder*, to *Time Team*, Sir Tony has become one of the nation's most familiar and best-loved voices. We're delighted to open this year's Folkestone Book

Festival in his company. Joining us to discuss his gripping new novel, *The House of Wolf*, Sir Tony reflects on storytelling, history, television and a lifetime of remarkable adventures. Expect medieval intrigue, behind-the-scenes tales, unexpected detours, infectious enthusiasm and, quite possibly, a few stories that have never made it onto our screens. Whether you grew up quoting *Blackadder*, spent Sunday evenings glued to *Time Team* or simply relish a brilliant storyteller at the top of his game, this promises to be a joyful, funny and thoroughly uplifting way to begin the festival.



Sir Tony Robinson

Friday 13 November

Creative Writing Workshop

Jarred McGinnis:

The Art of Writing Together

10am – 1pm | £30 per pair

Kollectiv, CT20 1RN

Limited to 20 places

What stories do we carry about ourselves, and how might someone else remember them? In this bold and original creative writing workshop, acclaimed novelist Jarred McGinnis invites you to bring a writing partner: a friend, sibling, parent, partner or someone you trust with a story. Through dynamic exercises you'll create vivid work from real-life material. Uncover the surprising gaps between how we see ourselves and how others see us.



Jarred McGinnis

Jarred McGinnis & Nell Stevens

Who Do You Think You Are?

3pm – 4pm

Who are we without the stories we tell about ourselves? Two brilliantly original novelists come together for a sharp, psychologically rich conversation about identity, reinvention, self-deception and the gloriously messy business of being human. Jarred McGinnis, named by *The Guardian* as one of the UK's best emerging writers, discusses his highly anticipated new novel *There Is No Meant to Be*, while Nell Stevens, acclaimed author of *Briefly*, *A Delicious Life*, introduces her new novel *The Original*.



Nell Stevens

Jem Calder

*The Debut Everyone
is Talking About*

5pm – 6pm

Few debut authors have generated as much excitement as Jem Calder. Named one of *The Observer's* best debut novelists of 2026 and championed by Sally Rooney, Calder is emerging as one of the most exciting new voices in contemporary fiction. His celebrated debut, *I Want You to Be Happy*, is a brilliantly observed portrait of modern life. Sharp, funny and emotionally astute, Calder discusses love, friendship, ambition and a generation searching for connection in a rapidly changing world.



Jem Calder



Philippa Perry

Philippa Perry

When Psychology Meets Murder

7pm – 8pm

Psychotherapist, broadcaster and bestselling author Philippa Perry has spent decades helping us better understand ourselves and our relationships. Now she turns her attention to murder. In her debut novel, *Shrink Solves Murder*, a psychotherapist becomes an amateur detective after the death of a patient raises troubling questions. Perry discusses crime fiction, deception, human behaviour and the connections between therapy and detective work. Expect warmth, wit, psychological insight and reflections on what pushes people to the edge.

Saturday 14 November

Dominic Gregory

Courage, Crisis & the Kent Coast

10.30am – 11.30am

When the call comes in, would you run towards the storm? Join Dominic Gregory as he discusses his exceptionally powerful new memoir *Lifeboat at the End of the World*, a gripping account of serving as a volunteer RNLI crew member in nearby Dungeness. From violent seas to overcrowded boats carrying desperate passengers, Gregory offers a frontline perspective on courage, teamwork and difficult choices under pressure. A moving conversation about humanity, resilience and the extraordinary people who volunteer to save lives.



Dominic Gregory

Paul Sinton-Hewitt

The parkrun Revolution

12pm – 1pm

What if one Saturday morning could change the world? Join Paul Sinton-Hewitt, founder of the global parkrun movement, for an inspiring conversation about the idea that grew from 13 runners in a London park in 2004 into a worldwide phenomenon involving more than 10 million people. In *One Small Step*, he reflects on the setbacks, breakthroughs and quiet determination behind one of the most successful community movements of modern times, and the extraordinary impact of a simple idea: a weekly timed 5k.



Paul Sinton-Hewitt



Juliet Sargeant

Juliet Sargeant

The Hidden Foundations of Life

2pm – 3pm

Whether you tend an allotment, nurture a window box or simply love the Kent landscape, Juliet Sargeant will change the way you see the ground beneath your feet. The first Black woman to win an RHS Chelsea Flower Show gold medal, she explores the remarkable hidden world of *Soil*, revealing the extraordinary life and quiet magic beneath our gardens. Rich with insight, beauty and practical wisdom, this is a celebration of the living earth and your invitation to grow, nurture and look more closely.



Christine Dawood

Christine Dawood

A Journey to the Titanic

4pm – 5pm

In June 2023, the disappearance of the Titan submersible captivated the world. At the centre of the story was Christine Dawood, whose husband Shahzada and son Suleman were among those lost. In this powerful conversation, she discusses her memoir *Ninety-Six Hours*, an intimate account of the agonising days that followed. Reflecting on love, family, grief and resilience, Christine offers a moving perspective on navigating unimaginable loss and finding the strength to rebuild after tragedy.



Dame Marina Warner

Dame Marina Warner *Shelter in an Unsettled World* 6pm – 7pm

What does it mean to offer refuge – and who gets to belong? In this major cultural conversation, acclaimed writer, mythographer and historian Dame Marina Warner discusses her new book *Sanctuary: Ways of Telling, Ways of Dwelling*, exploring the ancient idea of sanctuary and its urgent relevance in an age of migration, conflict and rising nationalism. Drawing on myth, literature, history and her work with refugee storytelling projects in the UK and Sicily, Warner examines how stories can create connection, dignity and new ways of imagining home.



Ian McEwan

Ian McEwan *What We Can Know* 8pm – 9pm

Few writers have shaped contemporary fiction quite like Ian McEwan. For more than forty years, readers have been captivated by novels including *Atonement*, *Amsterdam*, *On Chesil Beach* and *Lessons*, works that have challenged, unsettled and moved us. In a rare appearance, McEwan joins us to discuss his highly anticipated new novel, *What We Can Know*, and to reflect on a lifetime spent exploring the complexities of love, morality, memory and human behaviour. This promises to be one of the literary highlights of the year.

Sunday 15 November

Members' Morning Coffee and Cake

11am – 12pm

Free to members

Enjoy coffee, cake and behind-the-scenes conversation at this exclusive members' event. Join festival curator Sophie Haydock and the new CEO of Creative Folkestone for a Sunday morning gathering to explore the stories, surprises and bold ideas behind this year's programme. From headline authors and hidden gems to the future of books, culture and creativity in Folkestone, this is a unique opportunity to hear what goes on behind the scenes and what exciting plans lie ahead. Members who attend receive complimentary entry to the following event. Members will be contacted with information on how to reserve their place.

Esther Ghey

Raising Children in the Digital Age

12pm – 1pm

What kind of world are young people growing up in online – and how do we keep them safe within it? Following the murder of her daughter Brianna Ghey in 2023, Esther Ghey became a powerful advocate for compassion, mental health awareness and online safety. In this urgent event, she discusses her new memoir *Under a Pink Sky*, reflecting on grief, transphobia and her journey from private heartbreak to public campaigning. A vital conversation about empathy, resilience and creating safer futures for the next generation.



Esther Ghey

Poorna Bell & Helen Thorn
Reinvention, Rage & Reclamation
2pm – 3pm

What happens when life falls apart – and how do you rebuild something stronger from the wreckage? Join bestselling authors and broadcasters Poorna Bell and Helen Thorn for an energising conversation about reinvention, resilience and reclaiming your life on your own terms. In *She Wanted More* and *How to Face Big Changes and Come Back Stronger*, they explore ambition, identity, transformation and the courage to embrace change. Expect laughter, candour and hard-won wisdom in this uplifting discussion about midlife, freedom and refusing to settle.



Poorna Bell & Helen Thorn

Felicity Cloake & Claire Cohen
Dogs and Dinners
4pm – 5pm

What if the recipe for a better life began with a badly behaved dog? Award-winning *Guardian* food writer Felicity Cloake joins journalist and author Claire Cohen, whose debut *BFF: The Truth About Female Friendship* explores the bonds that shape our lives – for a conversation about friendship, loneliness, reinvention and unexpected joy. Celebrating Cloake's warm, witty and life-affirming debut novel *The Underdog*, this is a feel-good event about second chances, fresh starts and the surprising companions who help us find our way home.



Felicity Cloake & Claire Cohen

Sajid Javid
The Making of Modern Britain
6pm – 7pm

What does it take to defy the limits others place on you? Former Chancellor and Home Secretary Sajid Javid discusses his memoir *The Colour of Home*, a story of family, identity, ambition and belonging. Growing up in 1970s Rochdale as the son of a Pakistani immigrant father, Javid faced poverty, racism and the challenges of navigating two cultures before rising to the highest levels of British politics as Chancellor of the Exchequer. A powerful conversation about resilience, social mobility and finding your place.



Sajid Javid

AL Kennedy
Mercy and Memory
8pm – 9pm

AL Kennedy is one of Britain's most celebrated contemporary writers. Winner of the Costa Book of the Year and author of *Day* and the Booker Prize-shortlisted *Serious Sweet*, she has captivated readers with her sharp, humane explorations of love, loneliness and connection. She will discuss her new novel, *Alive in the Merciful Country* – a story of family, memory, justice and hope. Thoughtful, funny and fiercely original, join us for a memorable conversation with a literary master.



AL Kennedy

Monday 16 November

Creative Writing Workshop

London Writers' Salon:

Find Your Voice, Build Your Practice

10am – 1pm | £20

Kollectiv, CT20 1RN

Limited to 20 places

For the first time, the globally celebrated London Writers' Salon comes to Folkestone. Founders Matt Trinetti and Parul Bavishi have helped thousands of writers build lasting creative practices through workshops, interviews and daily writing sessions. In this inspiring workshop, they'll share practical tools for finding your voice, sustaining momentum and achieving your writing goals. Perfect for anyone seeking inspiration, focus and fresh creative energy for your writing project.



London Writers' Salon

Cory Doctorow

The Internet Is Broken. Now What?

2pm – 3pm

Why does every app, website and platform seem to get worse over time? Writer, activist and technology critic Cory Doctorow discusses *Enshittification*, his sharp and entertaining exploration of the decline of digital life. Coining the now-famous term, Doctorow reveals how online platforms increasingly prioritise advertisers and shareholders over users. Combining incisive analysis, wit and practical solutions, he argues that a better internet is still possible. Essential for anyone frustrated by algorithms, social media or the growing power of Big Tech.



Cory Doctorow

Dr Eleanor Drage

The Fight for a Better AI Future

4pm – 5pm

holiday
extras

Are we asking the wrong questions about artificial intelligence? AI ethicist Dr Eleanor Drage discusses *What If We Got AI Right?* – a provocative exploration of the culture, politics and power shaping our technological future. Rather than focusing on utopian promises or apocalyptic fears, Drage examines who gets to build AI, whose values are embedded within it and who stands to benefit. A leading voice in AI ethics, she offers a hopeful perspective on justice, democracy and what's still at stake.



Dr Eleanor Drage

Iain MacGregor

How War Changed the World

6pm – 7pm

From Marathon to Ukraine, what can the defining battles of history tell us about the world today? Award-winning historian Iain MacGregor discusses *Battle*, his sweeping exploration of the conflicts that transformed warfare and changed the course of nations. Spanning ancient Greece to the age of drones, he examines the leaders, technologies and pivotal moments that shaped history.



Iain MacGregor

Michael Taylor

The Original Conspiracy Theory

8pm – 9pm

Historian Michael Taylor discusses *Illuminati: The History of a Conspiracy Theory*, his gripping account of the eighteenth-century secret society that became the blueprint for modern conspiracy thinking. From the French Revolution and the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* to America's Christian Right and today's online extremism, Taylor traces the spread of ideas about hidden power and secret control.



Michael Taylor

Tuesday 17 November

Creative Writing Workshop

Rebecca Beattie: *Winter, Witchcraft & Creative Renewal*

10am – 1pm | £20

Kollektiv, CT20 1RN

Limited to 20 places

Step into the darker half of the year for a restorative and imaginative workshop with author Rebecca Beattie, inspired by her new book *The Season of Frost and Fire: A Witch's Winter in 13 Rituals*. Through guided prompts, writing exercises and seasonal reflection, Rebecca explores how ritual, folklore and the natural world can unlock fresh creative energy. Perfect for writers, journal-keepers and curious creatives, this participatory workshop invites you to reconnect with intuition, imagination and the stories waiting beneath the surface. Come ready to reflect, write and rekindle your magic.



Viktor Wynd



Rebecca Beattie



Hettie Judah

Hettie Judah

How to Enter the Art World

2pm – 3pm

Can you make it as an artist without going to art school? What does success in the art world really look like? Critic, curator and broadcaster Hettie Judah discusses *How to Enter the Art World*, her candid, practical and inspiring guide to creativity, resilience and building a life in art.

Viktor Wynd

Wicked Enchantments

4pm – 5pm

Join Viktor Wynd, Britain's high priest of the peculiar, for an evening of strange folklore and gothic delights. Inspired by his new book *Dark Fairy Tales*, the founder of the Viktor Wynd Museum of Curiosities conjures witches, ghosts and hidden horrors in an unforgettable event. Not for the faint-hearted.

Emily Howes

& Julie Owen Moylan

Dangerous Desires

6pm – 7pm

What happens to women trapped inside other people's myths? Emily Howes and Julie Owen Moylan explore fame, marriage, longing and the hidden costs of life in the public gaze. In *Mrs Dickens*, Howes reimagines the life of Catherine Dickens, while Moylan's *Elizabeth & Marilyn* explores a real meeting between Queen Elizabeth II and Marilyn Monroe. This fascinating conversation shines a light on women too often overshadowed by the stories told about them.



Emily Howes & Julie Owen Moylan

Victoria Bateman

The Hidden History of Money

8pm – 9pm

In *Economica*, economic historian Victoria Bateman challenges conventional ideas about how wealth is created and prosperity achieved. From the Stone Age to the digital age, she uncovers the overlooked entrepreneurs, innovators and workers who shaped the modern world, while highlighting the vital role of women. One of Britain's most provocative voices on gender and power, Bateman offers a fresh and fiercely argued perspective on money, progress and how the world is built.



Victoria Bateman

Wednesday 18 November

Creative Writing Workshop

Write, Connect, Grow: Building a Digital Creative Community

10am – 1pm | £20

Kollectiv, CT20 1RN

Limited to 20 places

What if you could build a thriving audience without relying on algorithms? Join Substack expert Claire Venus for a practical workshop on growing a loyal community and creating new opportunities through Substack. Whether you're a writer, artist, freelancer or entrepreneur, discover strategies for finding your voice, attracting the right audience and generating sustainable income.



Claire Venus

Matthew Sweet & Tara Parker

Barbara Cartland, My Grandmother

4pm – 5pm

She wrote more than 700 novels, sold hundreds of millions of books and became one of the most recognisable women in Britain. But who was Barbara Cartland beyond the pink gowns and romantic heroines? Drawing on unprecedented access to Cartland's archives, acclaimed historian Matthew Sweet discusses *The Great Dictator*, his revelatory new biography, in conversation with Cartland's granddaughter, Tara Parker.



Natasha Carthew & Hazel Sheffield

Natasha Carthew & Hazel Sheffield

Landscapes of Belonging

2pm – 3pm

Investigative journalist Hazel Sheffield and working-class writer Natasha Carthew come together for a conversation about place, belonging and the ties that bind us to landscape. Through *Frontierlands* and *Rough Edges*, they explore the coastal communities, identities and economic forces shaping Britain today. Both writers reveal how the places we inhabit shape our lives, opportunities and sense of self.

Siri Hustvedt

Life After Paul Auster

6pm – 7pm

Live via video link from the US

Joining us live from New York, internationally acclaimed novelist and essayist Siri Hustvedt discusses *Ghost Stories*, her moving and deeply personal memoir written after the death of her husband in 2024, the celebrated writer Paul Auster. Reflecting on more than four decades of shared life, love and creativity, Hustvedt offers an intimate meditation on memory, grief and the enduring bonds that shape us.



Siri Hustvedt



Matthew Sweet & Tara Parker

Alison Weir

Secrets, Queens and Tudor Power

8pm – 9pm

Few historians have done more to bring Britain's royal past to life than Alison Weir. The bestselling author of more than thirty books, read by millions worldwide, discusses her spellbinding new novel *The Boleyn Secret*, alongside *Queens of the Age of Chivalry* and her extraordinary contribution to bringing medieval and Tudor history vividly to life for generations of readers.



Alison Weir

Thursday 19 November

Creative Writing Workshop

Sudi Pigott: Taste, Describe, Devour
– A Food Writing Workshop

10am – 1pm | £20

Kollektiv, CT20 1RN

Limited to 20 places

Join food writer, broadcaster and critic Sudi Pigott for a sensory workshop inspired by her new book *Consider the Anchovy*. Through guided tastings, close observation and playful writing prompts, participants will explore the connections between taste, memory and storytelling. Perfect for writers, food lovers and curious minds.



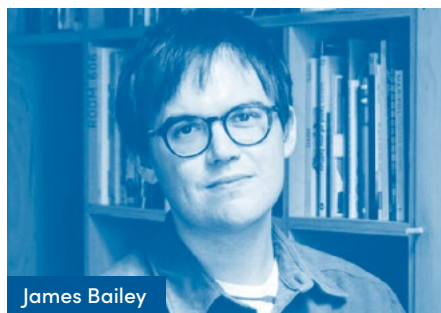
Sudi Pigott

James Bailey

Muriel Spark, Rewritten

2pm – 3pm

In *Like a Cat Loves a Bird: The Nine Lives of Muriel Spark*, biographer James Bailey offers a fresh portrait of one of the twentieth century's most enigmatic writers. Tracing Spark's extraordinary journey from Edinburgh to Tuscany, he reveals a life shaped by reinvention, ambition, faith and artistic brilliance. Rich with surprising discoveries, uncover why Spark's work continues to delight and provoke today.



James Bailey

Folkestone Voices!

4pm – 5pm | £5

What stories are being written in Folkestone now? This showcase celebrates the creativity flourishing across our town. Fifteen writers. Three minutes each. One chance to share an unpublished poem, extract, true story or piece of work in progress. Selected from an open call, participants will take to the stage to read original work.

Enter the
author ballot
on our website
by 1 November



Sarah Perry

Sarah Perry

What Makes a Life Extraordinary?

6pm – 7pm

Sarah Perry, the internationally bestselling author of *The Essex Serpent*, turns her remarkable gifts to memoir in *Death of an Ordinary Man*, a tender, luminous account of the final days of her beloved father-in-law, David, who died just nine days after a cancer diagnosis. With wit, compassion and extraordinary emotional precision, Perry reflects on caregiving, grief and the practical realities of dying. Death comes to every family and Sarah Perry has written one of the most beautiful, clear-eyed accounts of what happens when it does.



Laura Barnett, Yvette Edwards & Jennie Godfrey

Laura Barnett, Yvette

Edwards & Jennie Godfrey

Family Secrets

8pm – 9pm

What happens when family secrets refuse to stay buried, friendships are tested by time, and communities are built on stories that may not be true? Join Laura Barnett, Yvette Edwards and Jennie Godfrey for a warm, funny and moving conversation about the ties that bind us together. Through *Good Good Loving, Births, Deaths and Marriages* and *The Barbecue at No. 9*, they explore family, friendship, loss, belonging and the stories we tell ourselves about the people we love.

Friday 20 November

Creative Writing Workshop

Tessa Hadley: *Turning Ordinary Lives into Fiction*

10am – 1pm | £20 | Kollektiv, CT20 1RN

Limited to 20 places

How do great writers transform ordinary moments into unforgettable fiction? In this workshop, Tessa Hadley explores the craft of creating character, tension, atmosphere and emotional depth. Through practical exercises and close readings from writers she admires, participants will gain fresh insight into the techniques behind great fiction and sharpen their own writing under the guidance of one of Britain's most celebrated novelists.



Amy Abdelnoor & Megha Mohan

Women Rewriting the Map

2pm – 3pm

Novelist Amy Abdelnoor and the BBC's first global gender and identity correspondent Megha Mohan come together for a conversation about identity, power and women's lives across cultures. Inspired by experiences in the Middle East and around the world, *Ever Land* and *Herlands* explore female resilience, community and the possibilities of change.

Tessa Hadley

The Books That Changed My Life

4pm – 5pm

Has a book ever changed your life? One of our most cherished writers, Tessa Hadley joins us to celebrate the books that stay with us forever. In *Alone with a Book*, she reflects on the writers who have shaped her imagination, from Jane Austen and Elizabeth Bowen to Alice Munro and Anne Tyler. A rare opportunity to hear a master storyteller discuss reading, influence and literary passion. Expect insight, inspiration and a joyful reminder of why stories matter and books endure.



Harriet Tyce

Guilty Until Proven Innocent

6pm – 7pm

Following her memorable appearance on *The Traitors*, million-copy bestselling author Harriet Tyce returns with *Witch Trial*, a gripping thriller of suspicion, deception and public judgement, where a sensational murder case spirals into rumour and social media frenzy. Drawing on her experience as a former criminal barrister, Tyce explores the dangerous allure of certainty.



Robert Peston

The Political Thriller of the Future

8pm – 9pm

For more than three decades, Robert Peston, political editor of ITV News, has been one of Britain's most influential journalists. Now he turns his attention to a chilling question: what happens when political power collides with artificial intelligence? In this headline event, Peston discusses his gripping new thriller *The Kill Switch*, a story of governments, tech giants and AI systems locked in a battle for influence and control. Drawing on decades at the heart of Westminster, he explores power, democracy and the technologies reshaping our future.



Saturday 21 November

Lynda La Plante

Prime Suspect

10.30am – 11.30am

Few writers have left a bigger mark on British television than Lynda La Plante. Creator of *Prime Suspect* and the groundbreaking detective Jane Tennison, she transformed the crime genre, created one of TV's most iconic female characters and captivated millions of viewers. A chance to hear from a storytelling pioneer.



Lynda La Plante

Astrid Goldsmith & Wendy Holden

The Holocaust & the Next Generation

12pm – 1pm

Folkestone-based Astrid Goldsmith and bestselling-author Wendy Holden discuss family, memory and inherited legacies through *The Crystal Vase* and *The Teacher of Auschwitz*, exploring survival, resilience and the enduring impact of the Holocaust across generations.



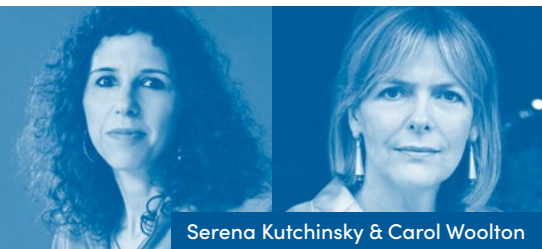
Astrid Goldsmith & Wendy Holden

Serena Kutchinsky & Carol Woolton

The Lost Fabergé Egg

2pm – 3pm

Journalist Serena Kutchinsky joins historian and former *Vogue* jewellery editor Carol Woolton to discuss *Kutchinsky's Egg*, an extraordinary true story of obsession, ambition, family secrets and a missing masterpiece worth millions. Part detective story and part treasure hunt. Rich with glamour, mystery and emotion, it's almost too extraordinary to be true.



Serena Kutchinsky & Carol Woolton

Bill McGuire

The Future of Humanity

4pm – 5pm

In his urgent new book *The Fate of the World*, leading climate scientist and volcanologist Bill McGuire argues that many of the impacts of global heating are arriving sooner, and with greater force, than predicted. Drawing on Earth's 4.6-billion-year history, he reveals what past climate change can tell us about our future.



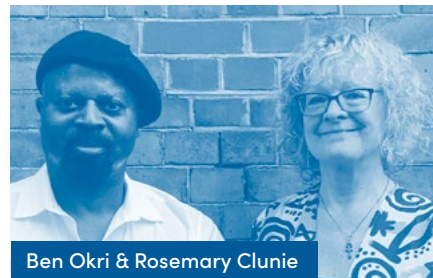
Bill McGuire

Ben Okri & Rosemary Clunie

The True Artist Breaks Out of Jail

6pm – 7pm

What is the role of the artist in a troubled world? Booker Prize-winning novelist Ben Okri joins artist Rosemary Clunie to discuss their remarkable collaboration, *The True Artist Breaks Out of Jail*. Blending words and images, the book explores creativity, freedom, imagination and the challenges of our age. Expect an expansive conversation about art, meaning and the possibilities of the human spirit.



Ben Okri & Rosemary Clunie

Marina Wheeler

Beyond Brexit – What Comes Next

8pm – 9pm

Human rights barrister and mediator Marina Wheeler KC discusses *A More Perfect Union*, her exploration of Britain's relationship with Europe. Having witnessed the Brexit years from uniquely close quarters, Wheeler brings personal insight and formidable legal expertise to questions of security, trade, democracy, migration and the rule of law, in a conversation about where Britain goes next.



Marina Wheeler

Sunday 22 November



Saara El-Arifi & Naomi Ishiguro

Saara El-Arifi & Naomi Ishiguro

The Future of Fantasy

10.30am – 11.30am

Fantasy is one of the most exciting forces in contemporary fiction. Bestselling author Saara El-Arifi (*Earthbound*) and debut fantasy novelist Naomi Ishiguro (*The Rainshadow Orphans*) discuss world-building, myth, magic and speculative storytelling. Together, they explore the power of imagined worlds and why readers continue to be drawn to the unknown and spectacular.

Gus Casely-Hayford & Sonia Solicari

What Will We Leave Behind?

12pm – 1pm

Museum leaders Gus Casely-Hayford (V&A East) and Sonia Solicari (Museum of the Home) explore the objects, collections and spaces that tell the story of our lives. Through *Objects & Us: Why Things Matter* and *Real Rooms*, they examine how artefacts, interiors and everyday possessions shape identity, memory and belonging.



Gus Casely-Hayford & Sonia Solicari

Alasdair Gill

Knives, Spoons and Survival

2pm – 3pm

Chef Alasdair Gill takes readers behind the swinging doors of London's restaurant scene in his memoir, *Knives and Spoons*, in which he explores the legacy of growing up as the son of acclaimed food critic AA Gill. Joining him is legendary restaurateur Jon Spiteri. Together, they discuss kitchens, creativity, self-destruction and second chances.



Alasdair Gill

Sara Wheeler

The Many Lives of Jan Morris

4pm – 5pm

Who was Jan Morris? Celebrated historian, travel writer and journalist – and author of *Conundrum*, her groundbreaking 1974 memoir, in which Jan documented her own gender transition. Acclaimed travel writer and biographer Sara Wheeler explores the life, work and legacy of a remarkable literary figure.



Sara Wheeler

Billy Childish

Festival Finale

8pm – 9pm

Billy Childish is one of Britain's most original creative voices. In this festival finale, the Kent-born cultural icon discusses his latest book, *Only Poets Piss in Sinks*, and explores the ideas that continue to drive him. Dyslexic, expelled from art school and fiercely independent, Childish has built an extraordinary creative life. Unmissable.



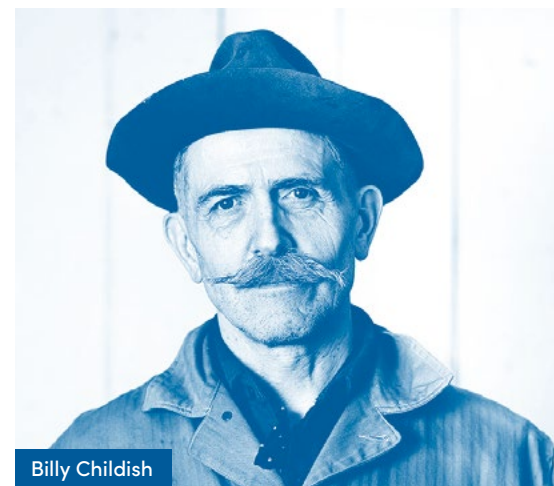
Robin Yassin-Kassab

Robin Yassin-Kassab

Syria After Assad

6pm – 7pm

In December 2024, the Assad regime collapsed after more than five decades in power, bringing an end to one of the Middle East's most brutal dictatorships. In *The Blood Between Us*, writer and commentator Robin Yassin-Kassab returns to Syria to meet the people rebuilding their lives, communities and future.



Billy Childish

Partnership Offers

Folkestone's thriving food and drink scene is one of the things that makes the town such a special place to visit, and we're delighted to be partnering with some of our favourite independent cafés, restaurants and bars during this year's Book Festival.

Throughout the festival, ticket holders can enjoy exclusive discounts and special offers at participating venues across the town.

It's the perfect excuse to explore Folkestone's vibrant culinary scene, whether you're looking for a morning coffee, a leisurely lunch, pre-event drinks or dinner after a stimulating literary conversation. Show your Book Festival tickets before ordering.

Black Market

10% off food

60 Tontine Street, CT20 1JP

Burrito Buoy

10% off full menu

43 Tontine Street, CT20 1JP

Little Rock

10% off your final bill

The Stade, CT20 1QN

El Cortador Tapas Bar

10% off food and drink

41 The Old High Street, CT20 1RL

Rocksalt

10% off food and drink

4-5 Fish Market, CT19 6AA

Steep Street

10% off savoury food

18-24 The Old High Street, CT19 6AA

Pomus

20% off food

53 Tontine Street, CT20 1JR



About

Creative Folkestone Book Festival is one of the UK's longest-running literary festivals. Shaped by the people who live, work and create here, it brings together writers, readers and thinkers to share ideas, spark conversation and celebrate the power of stories.

Each year, the festival welcomes bestselling authors, emerging voices and fresh perspectives from across the world, creating opportunities for discovery, debate and connection. From fiction and poetry to politics, history, science and current affairs, the programme reflects the breadth of contemporary culture while remaining firmly connected to Folkestone's creative spirit.

The festival is curated by author Sophie Haydock and presented by Creative Folkestone, the arts charity dedicated to supporting creativity, culture and community across the town.

Explore the full programme and discover more projects across the town at creativefolkestone.org.uk.

Event information is correct at the time of going to print. For updates, visit creativefolkestone.org.uk/folkestone-book-festival

Access

We're committed to making Quarterhouse welcoming and accessible to everyone.

The main entrance is step-free with automatic doors, and accessible toilets are available on each floor. A lift serves all levels of the building, wheelchair spaces are available in the auditorium, and assistance dogs are welcome.

There is Blue Badge parking in front of Quarterhouse from 4am until 8pm. Additional blue badge parking is available at Tram Road Car Park (CT20 1FL), approximately 350 metres from the venue. Nearby pavements are wide, level and suitable for wheelchairs and mobility aids.

An induction loop system is available for visitors with hearing aids. If you have specific access requirements, please contact us in advance and our team will be happy to help. We're always working to improve accessibility and welcome feedback.

Getting Here

Walking or cycling

Folkestone is a wonderfully walkable town, and we encourage visitors to explore on foot or by bike wherever possible. Quarterhouse sits at the heart of the Creative Quarter and is just a 15 minute walk from Folkestone Central station. Cycle racks are available nearby.

Public transport

Travelling by train is one of the easiest ways to reach the festival. High-speed services run from London St Pancras to Folkestone Central in under an hour, while local bus routes stop in the town centre, just a short walk from our venues.

Driving

If possible, we encourage visitors to travel by public transport, as town centre parking can be limited during busy periods. If you do need to drive, leave the M20 at Junction 13 and follow signs to Folkestone via Cherry Garden Avenue. For sat navs, use CT20 1BN. Payers Park – CT20 1AU, Tram Road Car Park – CT20 1FL

Taxis

Folkestone Taxis (01303 252000)

JJs Taxis (01303 244442)

Premier Taxis (01303 270000)

Channel Cars (01303 252252)

Quarterhouse is in the heart of the Creative Quarter, close to shops, bars and the beach. If you need assistance with planning your visit, contact us on **01303 760 740** or email info@creativefolkestone.org.uk

This programme may change ahead of the festival. For the latest events, updates and announcements, visit:

creativefolkestone.org.uk/folkestone-book-festival

Become a Member Today

Support creativity in Folkestone by becoming a Creative Folkestone Member. Your membership helps fund our Learning and Engagement Programme, bringing arts experiences to over 3,000 children, young people and adults each year.

For just £40 a year, your benefits include:

- Discounts on tickets to Derek Jarman's Prospect Cottage
- Discounts on events at Quarterhouse and Folkestone Book Festival
- 10% off food and drink at The Clearing café and bar
- Invitations to members-only events
- Early access to tickets and news
- No booking fees

Join today and help inspire the next generation of artists, writers and makers.

Visit creativefolkestone.org.uk or speak to our team at the Box Office to sign up.

Design by Robert Bandy



@creativestone
creativefolkestone.org.uk

Thursday 12 November

7pm **Sir Tony Robinson** (Opening Night)

Friday 13 November

10am **Creative Writing Workshop:**
Jarred McGinnis (Life Writing)

3pm **Jarred McGinnis & Nell Stevens**
(Reinvention)

5pm **Jem Calder** (Breakout Debut)

7pm **Philippa Perry** (Psychology)

Saturday 14 November

10.30am **Dominic Gregory** (Dungeness Lifeboat)

12pm **Paul Sinton-Hewitt** (parkrun)

2pm **Juliet Sargeant** (Gardening)

4pm **Christine Dawood** (Titan Disaster)

6pm **Dame Marina Warner** (Sanctuary)

8pm **Ian McEwan** (Literary Fiction)

Sunday 15 November

11am **Members' Coffee and Cake**

12pm **Esther Ghey** (Teenagers Online)

2pm **Poorna Bell & Helen Thorn**
(Starting Over)

4pm **Felicity Cloake & Claire Cohen**
(Dogs & Friendship)

6pm **Sajid Javid** (Political Memoir)

8pm **AL Kennedy** (Contemporary Fiction)

Monday 16 November

10am **Creative Writing Workshop:**
London Writers' Salon
(Find Your Voice)

2pm **Cory Doctorow** (Big Tech)

4pm **Dr Eleanor Drage** (AI)

6pm **Iain MacGregor** (Warfare)

8pm **Michael Taylor** (Illuminati)

Tuesday 17 November

10am **Creative Writing Workshop:**
Rebecca Beattie (Winter Magic)

2pm **Hettie Judah** (Art World)

4pm **Viktor Wynd** (Dark Folklore)

6pm **Emily Howes & Julie Owen Moylan**
(Hidden Women)

8pm **Victoria Bateman** (Economics)

Wednesday 18 November

10am **Creative Writing Workshop:**
Claire Venus (Substack)

2pm **Natasha Carthew & Hazel Sheffield**
(Coastal Communities)

4pm **Matthew Sweet & Tara Parker**
(Barbara Cartland)

6pm **Siri Hustvedt** (Memoir)

8pm **Alison Weir** (Tudors)

Thursday 19 November

10am **Creative Writing Workshop:**
Sudi Pigott (Food Writing)

2pm **James Bailey** (Muriel Spark)

4pm **Folkestone Voices!** (Local Writers)

6pm **Sarah Perry** (Grief and Loss)

8pm **Laura Barnett, Yvette Edwards & Jennie Godfrey** (Family Secrets)

Friday 20 November

10am **Creative Writing Workshop:**
Tessa Hadley (Writing Life)

2pm **Amy Abdelnoor & Megha Mohan**
(Women & Power)

4pm **Tessa Hadley** (Books That Matter)

6pm **Harriet Tyce** (Crime & Traitors)

8pm **Robert Peston** (Politics & AI)

Saturday 21 November

10.30am **Lynda La Plante** (Prime Suspect)

12pm **Astrid Goldsmith & Wendy Holden**
(Holocaust and our Legacies)

2pm **Serena Kutchinsky & Carol Woolton**
(Lost Fabergé)

4pm **Bill McGuire** (Climate)

6pm **Ben Okri & Rosemary Clunie** (Art)

8pm **Marina Wheeler** (Brexit)

Sunday 22 November

10.30am **Saara El-Arifi & Naomi Ishiguro**
(Fantasy)

12pm **Gus Casely-Hayford & Sonia Solicari**
(Museums)

2pm **Alasdair Gill** (Kitchen Secrets)

4pm **Sara Wheeler** (Trans Pioneer Jan Morris)

6pm **Robin Yassin-Kassab** (Syria)

8pm **Billy Childish** (Radical Art)
