

ESSEX BOOK FESTIVAL

1 June – 1 July 2023

essexbookfestival.org.uk

100 Events | 40 Venues | 200 Writers & Artists

Reaching the parts other festivals do not reach



Welcome to the 2023 Essex Book Festival

Introducing the Festival Team

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Zoe Martin

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Dave Monk

Sarah Perry

Brian Southall

Francis Wheen

How To Book Your Ticket

To book tickets please visit essexbookfestival.org.uk or where shown, tickets can be booked via Mercury Theatre Box Office (10am to 8pm Tuesday to Saturday) in person or by telephone 01206 573948. All booking links are shown on the website, this can direct you to the online booking platforms being used to deliver Essex Book Festival 2023.

Bookings will be taken up to 3 hours prior to the event commencing. If there is capacity, tickets will be available on the door.

Covid-19

Please check our website for updates of how we are following the latest Covid-19 regulations for events.

Refunds

The festival cannot refund money or exchange tickets except if an event is cancelled. In the event of a cancellation the Box Office will contact you and issue a refund within 30 days.

Concessions

We offer concessions for Students, Under 27s, and Unwaged.

Accessibility

Information about access at participating venues is posted on the Essex Book Festival website. We also have a Roger Pen hearing system, so please let us know in advance if you would like to book this out by emailing us at: hello@essexbookfestival.org.uk

Essex Book Festival gratefully acknowledges the support of these key partners



Welcome to Essex Book Festival 2023

As the countdown begins for this year's Essex Book Festival, it gives us great pleasure to share some of the fabulous events in the mix this June.

Launching with Polly Toynbee at Anglia Ruskin University, the Festival heads East to Harwich for our Criminally Good Day. With James Naughtie (Radio 4's Book Club) and bestselling novelist Ruth Ware in the line-up, crime-writer aficionados are in for a real treat.

Other highlights include The Pleasure Garden at Hylands House & Gardens in Chelmsford where amongst others Sandra Lawrence will be talking about her fascinating memoir *Miss Wilmott's Ghosts*, based on the life of legendary gardener/maverick Miss Ellen Wilmott, erstwhile owner of Warley Place near Brentwood.

For those itching to hone their writing skills, Essex Writers House will be 'popping up' for its sixth edition in Metal's Chalkwell Hall, Southend-on-Sea. Book one of the free hot-desks overlooking the mouth of the Thames, or sign up for one of our mentoring writing workshops.

Don't forget to mark the diary for our family Midsummer Madness Day at Cressing Temple Barns. Awash with children's author events, theatre, poetry, writing/craft workshops, The Earthlings Tent, plus woodland crafts and story-telling, it's going to be a day to remember. Don't forget to bring your picnic and favourite teddy to our Teddy's Bear Picnic. And that's just the tip of the iceberg...

See you soon,

Ros and Claire

Festival Team

FRI 02 JUN, 7.30PM

LAUNCH EVENT

Polly Toynbee An Uneasy Inheritance: My Family and Other Radicals

We are delighted to be launching this year's Essex Book Festival with *Guardian* columnist and broadcaster Polly Toynbee. One of the most respected, prolific, and razor-sharp voices in social commentary, this is definitely one not to be missed.

Polly will be discussing her latest book, *An Uneasy Inheritance: My Family and Other Radicals*.

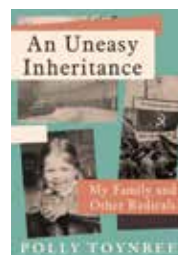
Join Polly for a colourful, entertaining examination of her own family exploring the myth of mobility, the guilt of privilege, and for a truly honest conversation about class in Britain.

Venue: Anglia Ruskin University, Bishop Hall Lane, Chelmsford, CM1 1SQ

Tickets: £10 / £8

Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk

or Mercury Theatre 01206 573948



THU 01 JUNE, 7.00PM IN CONVERSATION

Syd Moore and Seema Anand Sex Matters: Intimacy and Aging

While the menopause is getting the attention it deserves, much has been made of its negative impact. Both Seema Anand (*The Art of Seduction*) and author Syd Moore (Essex Girls Liberation Front) have challenged stereotypes before. In this conversation they explode the myths around sex in middle age, and empowerment through positive sexuality as we get older. Ticket includes a themed cocktail!

Venue: Westcliff Drinks Co, 128 Hamlet Court Road, Westcliff-on-Sea, SS0 7LN

Tickets: £20 includes a themed cocktail

Box Office: Tickets available from Westcliff Drinks Co or online via essexbookfestival.org.uk



© JMoore photos

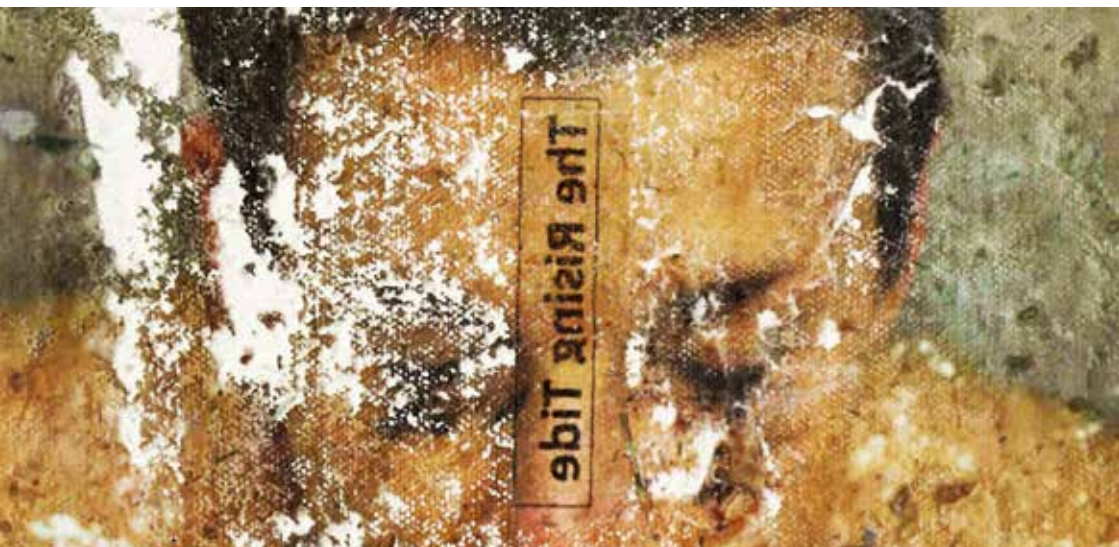


01 – 29 JUNE EXHIBITION

Harlow College The Rising Tide

The photography students at Harlow College are proud to present their work, on the theme of 'The Rising Tide', a response to the 70th Anniversary of The Great Flood of 1953. Though Harlow is landlocked, the students have made their work in response to the challenges that global interconnectivity creates and the impact that climate change will have on all of us.

Venue: Harlow Central Library, Cross Street, Harlow, CM20 1HA



HEAR MY VOICE



As part of our Manifesto for Essex programme of activities for young people, we will be launching our creative writing schools' exhibition HEAR MY VOICE, at Harwich Museum on Saturday 3rd June. The exhibition will then travel to Cressing Temple Barns on 25th June. HEAR MY VOICE has been created to mark the 70th anniversary of The Great Flood of 1953.



SAT 03 AND SUN 04 JUN, 10.00AM – 4.00PM

PODCAST WORKSHOP

FREE

Michelle Durant Eco-Podcasting Workshop

Join Chelmsford Community Radio broadcaster Michelle Durant on board the fascinating LV18 (*The Boat That Rocked*) and help make our Eco-Podcasts. Reflecting on the climate crisis you'll learn how to research and write content, undertake interviews and join them all together to make a big impact. For ages 14-18.

Venue: LV18, The Quay, Harwich, CO12 3HH

Tickets: Free, booking essential

Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk



SAT 03 JUN, 1.30PM

AUTHOR TALK

FREE

Hannah Rudd Britain's Living Seas: Our Coastal Wildlife and How We Can Save It

For generations, we have been slowly suffocating life beneath the waves. However, it's not too late to make a difference and change course. Marine biologist Hannah Rudd presents an alternative and sustainable future for the management of our seas. Discover the incredible diversity of life within our oceans and learn how we can all play a role in protecting and conserving it.

Venue: Harwich Museum, Anglia House, Main Road, Harwich, CO12 3FN

Tickets: Free, booking recommended

Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk



CRIMINALLY GOOD DAY

Saturday 03 June

Electric Palace, King's Quay Street, Harwich, CO12 3ER

Join us for a fabulous day of criminally good author talks and events plus our very first silent film screening at one of Essex's leading cultural venues and one of the oldest of its kind in the UK, Harwich's Electric Palace.

Tickets: £10 / £8 per event

Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk or Mercury Theatre 01206 573948



Make a Day of it!

Criminally Good Day Ticket Deal: Buy a ticket to 3 events, get the 4th event free!

SAT 03 JUN, 11.30AM

FICTION

THRILLER

James Naughtie *The Spy Across the Water*

Renowned journalist and broadcaster James Naughtie will be kicking-off our Criminally Good Day in style. The thrilling third novel from one of our most treasured BBC broadcasters, *The Spy Across The Water*, follows Will Flemyng on a dangerous journey into his clandestine past, from conflict in Ireland to the long shadows of the Cold War.



SAT 03 JUN, 1.30PM

MEMOIR

CRIME

Jackie Malton *The Real Prime Suspect*

The Real Prime Suspect is a jaw-dropping, gritty memoir from Jackie Malton (with Helene Mullholland). Former DCI, Malton, is the inspiration for legendary TV detective Jane Tennison in Lynda La Plante's *Prime Suspect* starring Helen Mirren. Jackie will be taking a frank look at her prolific career and the challenges she faced as a gay woman working within The Metropolitan Police.



SAT 03 JUN, 3.00PM

NON-FICTION

POETRY

Lady Unchained Behind Bars: On Punishment, Prison & Release

Don't miss this unique opportunity to hear poet, broadcaster, storyteller, TEDx speaker and mentor, Lady Unchained (Brenda Birungi) whose mission is to prove that there is life after prison. Through poetry she tells her own personal story and the stories of those with experience of the criminal justice system that are often left untold, because of shame, stigma and negative labels.

'So deeply gripping and inspiring...It will stay with me, always.' – Annie Macmanus



© Tom Pilston Panos Pictures

SAT 03 JUN, 5.00PM

FICTION

CLASSIC CRIME

Ruth Ware Marple: Twelve New Stories

We are delighted to welcome #1 New York Times-bestselling author of *In a Dark, Dark Wood*, *The Woman in Cabin 10*, and *The Lying Game* to our Criminally Good Day. Ruth Ware is one of twelve remarkable and acclaimed authors to create brand-new short stories starring Agatha Christie's iconic sleuth Miss Marple. Ware will be talking about her delightfully thrilling new mystery entitled *Miss Marple's Christmas*.



© Gemma Day

SAT 03 JUN, 7.30PM

FILM

Silent Film Title TBC

Join us for a wonderfully unique opportunity to see a silent film screening at one of the world's oldest and least altered purpose-built cinemas. The stunning Electric Palace Harwich was recently refurbished, and this is sure to be an experience not to be missed. Please note, the silent film is not included in the Criminally Good Day Ticket Deal.

For more information and booking details visit electricpalace.com

Tickets: TBC

Box Office: electricpalace.com



© Electric Palace Trust

SUN 04 JUN, 11.00AM–3.00PM

GUIDED WALK

WRITING WORKSHOP

Adrian May In My Steps: Radical Walks in Essex and Writing Workshop – Boot Sale Harvest

Author, poet and songwriter Adrian May's latest book, *Boot Sale Harvest*, describes a year of going to boot sales with a wide and witty range of musings and purchases. The book takes you on a seasonal journey round the fields of what Grayson Perry recently described as being like 'a very casual museum'.

Join Adrian for a stroll around Colchester Car Boot Sale and buy an unexpected item of your choice. Select carefully as the item will be used as inspiration for your writing at a workshop with Adrian and fellow poet Elelia Ferro which will take place just down the road at Cuckoo Farm Studios.

In partnership with Focal Point Gallery and their Radical Essex programme, re-examining the county in relation to radicalism in thought, lifestyle, politics and architecture.

Venue: Cuckoo Farm Studios, Boxted Road, Mile End, Colchester, CO4 5HH

Tickets: £15 includes guided walk at Car Boot Sale and writing workshop at Cuckoo Farm Studios

Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk



Radical
ESSEX



EXHIBITIONS AT BENHAM GALLERY, CUCKOO FARM STUDIOS



SAT 03 JUN – WED 21 JUN

Salvage: Curated by Iris Gunnarsdottir

A group exhibition focusing on works made from reclaimed and re-cycled materials.

Venue: Benham Gallery, Cuckoo Farm Studios, Boxted Road, Colchester CO4 5HH

Gallery open: Saturdays Sundays: 11am to 4pm; Wednesdays: 4pm to 7pm; Other times by appointment

For details visit: cuckoofarmstudios.org.uk



SAT 24 JUN – WED 12 JUL

Beyond Surface: Terry Flower

Photographs, hand-made books, poetry and text.

WED 07 JUN, 7.00PM **THRILLER****Eleanor Catton** Birnam Wood

The Booker Prize-winning author of *The Luminaries* discusses her new novel, *Birnam Wood*. A gripping psychological thriller, it is Shakespearean in its wit, drama and immersion in character. An unflinching examination of the human impulse to ensure our own survival.

'Birnam Wood is terrific. As a multilayered, character-driven thriller, it's as good as it gets. Ruth Rendell would have loved it. A beautifully textured work – what a treat' – Stephen King



© Murdo MacLeod

Venue: Chelmsford Library, County Hall, Market Road, Chelmsford, CM1 1QH

Tickets: £8 / £7

Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk or Mercury Theatre 01206 573948THU 08 JUNE, 5.00PM & 7.00PM **TOUR** **IN CONVERSATION****Syd Moore and Julie Miller** War, Witches and Other Strange Tales

5.00-6.30pm at The Moot Hall followed by 7.00-8.00pm at Maldon Library

A rare opportunity to tour The Moot Hall, glass in hand, see the witch marks, the site of Maldon's Witch Trials, and meet author Syd Moore and researcher and historian Julie Miller. Then pop over to Maldon Library to hear Syd and Julie discuss War, Witches, Churchill's Secret Army and Other Strange Tales.

Venues: The Moot Hall, High Street, Maldon, CM9 5PF

Maldon Library, Carmelite House, White Horse Lane, Maldon, CM9 5FW

Tickets: £18 for entry and tour of The Moot Hall, includes drink, pamphlet and library talk.

Library talk is free and can be booked separately for those not attending The Moot Hall event via www.libraries.essex.gov.uk/events

Box Office: themoothall.co.uk

© JMoore photos

THU 08 JUN, 7.00PM **HISTORICAL FICTION****Liz Trenow** The Secret Sister

When Liz Trenow, international bestselling author of *Under a Wartime Sky* and *Searching for my Daughter* learned the extraordinary story of her friend's father's wartime experiences she knew at once this should be the subject of her next novel. Liz will be talking about this gripping and heart-breaking story of love, courage and a sister's sacrifice which shines a light on the forgotten heroes of World War II.



Venue: Coggeshall Library, The Friends' Meeting House, 29 Stoneham Street, Coggeshall, CO6 1UH

Tickets: £8 / £7

Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk or Mercury Theatre 01206 573948

THU 08 JUN, 7.00PM

PERFORMANCE

FREE

Stand Up For Diversity

An evening of three-minute mini-talks and soap-box shout-outs to put a spotlight on diversity. For this event Essex Cultural Diversity Project and Essex Book Festival have teamed up with the Harlow Arts Trust in their 70th anniversary year, to bring people together and champion diversity on the theme of *Our Community, Our Environment*.

Venue: Gibberd Gallery, Civic Centre, The Water Gardens, Harlow, CM20 1WG

Tickets: Free, booking recommended

Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk



THU 08 JUN, 7.00PM

HISTORICAL FICTION

Eleanor Shearer River Sing Me Home

A dazzling debut author who draws on her own family history to deliver a powerful, moving and redemptive story of a mother's desperate search to find her stolen children and her freedom. Only once she knows their stories can she rest. Only then can she finally find home. Set in 1834 you'll be transported through the cane fields of Barbados to the forests of British Guiana and on to Trinidad.

Venue: Brentwood Library, New Road, Brentwood, CM14 4BP

Tickets: £8 / £7

Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk or Mercury Theatre 01206 573948



© Lucinda Douglas-Menzies

SAT 10 JUN, 2.00PM

NON-FICTION

Tim Burrows The Invention of Essex: The Making of an English County

In partnership with EA Festival

Essex. A county both famous and infamous: the stuff of tabloid headlines and reality television, consumer culture and right-wing politicians. Join Tim Burrows as he discusses his deeply researched and thoroughly engaging new book, *The Invention of Essex* with Essex Book Festival Director, Ros Green. Together they'll show that there is more to our fabled English county than meets the eye.

Venue: Hedingham Castle, Halstead, CO9 3DJ

Tickets: £12 + £2 service charge

Box Office: eafestival.com



THE HISTORY BOOKS

Sunday 11 June

Layer Marney Tower, Near Colchester, CO5 9US

Fancy indulging in a spot of time-travel this Summer? Then head to Layer Marney Tower, one of Henry VIII's confirmed 'favourites', for a rich assortment of history books, extending from the Tudors to World War II and the royal wardrobe.

Tickets: £14 per event, includes free entry to the Tower and Gardens

Ticket deal: All three events for £36

Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk or Mercury Theatre 01206 573948



12.00 MIDDAY

MILITARY HISTORY

Leo McKinstry Cinderella Boys: The Forgotten RAF Force that Won the Battle of the Atlantic

The remarkable story of the unsung RAF wing who rescued Britain from Hitler's U-boats and made Allied victory possible. Based on a wealth of new sources, including from diaries, log books, archives and interviews, Leo McKinstry shines a new light on the courageous pilots, ingenious scientists and political risktakers who defended the freezing Atlantic from Nazi rule.



2.00PM

**NON-FICTION
HISTORY**

Rosie Harte The Royal Wardrobe

Fashion for the Royal Family has been one of their most powerful weapons and plays a key role in why they still exist today. Their clothes are imbued with meaning, with history, and with majesty but at their core they tell a story. TikTok sensation, Rosie Harte, dives into *The Royal Wardrobe* and tells of a horrible history and colourful past that will surprise and fascinate.

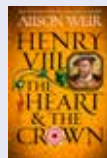


4.00PM

HISTORICAL FICTION

Alison Weir Henry VIII The Heart & The Crown

Alison Weir, No 1 *Sunday Times* bestselling author of the *Six Tudor Queens* series, returns to Layer Marney Tower with the second in a captivating new trio of novels spanning three generations of history's most iconic family, the Tudors. *Henry VIII: The Heart & the Crown* is a riveting tale, and ultimately a poignant one, taking an empathetic view of a man who is all too often portrayed as a caricature of his true self.



TUE 13 JUN, 7.00PM HISTORICAL FICTION

Emilia Hart Weyward

In 2019, Kate flees an abusive relationship. Her destination is Weyward Cottage in a remote Cumbrian village, inherited from her Great Aunt Violet, an eccentric entomologist. As Kate struggles with the trauma of her past, she uncovers a secret about the women in her family. A secret dating back to 1619, when her ancestor Altha Weyward was put on trial for witchcraft.

Interweaving the stories of three women across history, *Weyward* is a bewitching debut novel about gender and control. Join author Emilia Hart for a celebration of nature, female power and breaking free.

Venue: Waltham Abbey Library, 37 Sun Street, Waltham Abbey, EN9 1EL

Tickets: £8 / £7

Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk or Mercury Theatre 01206 573948



WED 14 JUN, 6.30PM CRIME FICTION

Kate Hamer The Lost Girls

Kate Hamer explores her latest book, *The Lost Girls*, the stand-alone sequel to Costa First Novel Award shortlisted *The Girl in the Red Coat*. An enchanting, intense crime novel which sees a girl coming to grips with her past and a mother trying to keep her safe. It is a deeply moving story about healing, connection, and the power of the past.

'Mesmerising, compulsive, deliciously dark.' - Lucy Foley

Venue: Canvey Island Library, High Street, Canvey Island, SS8 7RB

Tickets: £8 / £7

Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk or Mercury Theatre 01206 573948



WED 14 JUN, 7.00PM NON-FICTION TRAVEL WRITING

Madeleine Bunting The Seaside: England's Love Affair

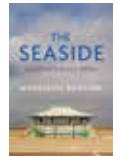
Where better to discuss the enduring appeal of England's coastal resorts than beautiful Frinton-on-Sea.

Journeying clockwise around England from Scarborough to Morecambe, *The Seaside* is Madeleine Bunting's exploration of England's great seaside resorts to understand their origins and their heyday, their ongoing influence, and their current struggle.

Venue: Frinton-on-Sea Library, 59 Old Road, Frinton-on-Sea, CO13 9DA

Tickets: £8 / £7

Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk or Mercury Theatre 01206 573948



©Howard Sooley

THU 15 JUN, 7.00PM

DIGITAL

FREE

An evening in with Benjy Kusi Hope This Helps

The world can often feel like a very scary, complicated and messy place. It's not always clear what is the correct thing to say, the best thing to do or the right way to be. *Hope this Helps* gives guidance on things that can appear incredibly difficult to navigate. Centring tolerance, kindness and empathy, the book takes us back to our roots as a human race of simply wanting to connect, be heard and enjoy life.

More than anything this book reminds you that not everyone can be everything all the time, but the little things each of us can do to make the world slightly better can amount to something incredible. Join TikTok "Voice of Change", Benjy Kusi for this online event and an evening of positivity.

Venue: Online, via Zoom

Tickets: Free or Donation

Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk



© Abena Kusi

THU 15 JUN, 7.30PM

MEMOIR

LITERARY TRAVEL

Robin Ince Bibliomaniac

In Autumn 2021, Robin Ince's stadium tour with Professor Brian Cox was postponed due to the pandemic. Rather than do nothing, he decided he would instead go on a tour of over a hundred bookshops, from Wigtown to Penzance; from Swansea to Margate.

Packed with anecdotes and tall tales, *Bibliomaniac* follows Robin up and down the country in his quest to discover just why he can never have enough books. It is the story of an addiction and a romance, and of an occasional points failure just outside Oxenholme.

Venue: Anglia Ruskin University, Bishop Hall Lane, Chelmsford, CM1 1SQ

Tickets: £10 / £8

Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk or Mercury Theatre 01206 573948



RADICAL PILGRIMAGE: THE SAFFRON TRAIL

Lora Aziz

15 – 21 June

Join artist, writer, wild-crafter Lora Aziz as she sets off on a 7-day 70-mile Radical Pilgrimage along The Saffron Trail as part of our series of IN MY STEPS: Radical Walks in Essex.

Starting at Southend Pier, The Saffron Trail hugs The Thames until it reaches Hadleigh Country Park. It then turns inland towards Hockley Woods, before pivoting north towards Danbury, Chelmsford and Great Dunmow, and finally arriving at Saffron Walden, the one-time UK capital of saffron.

How did saffron, an exotic spice with its origins in the Middle East, famous for its healing, dyeing and flavouring properties, land in Essex? Legend has it that a pilgrim smuggled a saffron corm into England in his hollow staff. The corm swiftly took root in Essex. So much so, that by the 1500s the village of Chepyn Walden had metamorphosed into Saffron Walden. The rest is history.

Lora will be running a series of creative contemplative and ecological workshops along The Saffron Trail as part of the pilgrimage, which culminates in a Moroccan Sufi Gnawa concert at Saffron Hall in Saffron Walden.

If you would like to join in, perhaps for an hour or two, perhaps for a day or two, contact hello@essexbookfestival.org.uk



SAFFRON WALDEN

7

Day 7, 21st June:

Henham to Saffron Walden = 10 miles

21st June:

Mohamed Errebbaa & Gnawa Bristol, Saffron Walden

6

Day 6, 20th June:

Great Dunmow to Henham = 10 miles

20th June:

Saffron Literary Salon, Saffron Walden

5

Day 5, 19th June:

Great Waltham to Great Dunmow = 10 miles

CHELMSFORD

4

Day 4, 18th June:

Chelmsford to Great Waltham = 9 miles

18th June:

Myself, Others and The Land, Chelmsford

Day 2, 16th June:

Belfairs to Battlesbridge = 12 miles

For more information about the Radical Pilgrimage walks, workshops and events visit essexbookfestival.org.uk

den

= 9 miles

iston House, Great Dunmow



5 miles

3

Day 3, 17th June:
Battlesbridge to Chelmsford = 11.5 miles

Day 1, 15th June:
Southend Pier to Belfairs = 8 miles

15th June:
The Departure, Southend

2

1

SOUTHEND ON SEA

SUN 18 JUN, 12.00 MIDDAY **WORKSHOP**

FREE

Hattie Phillips Myself, Others and The Land

Since time began communities have gathered in circles to share stories, learn from each other and make strong bonds that form their communities. Using Nature as a framework, Myself, Others & The Land will explore old and new ways of 'gathering' to create our own spontaneous Rites of Passage. For ages 15-22.

Venue: Marconi Ponds Nature Reserve, Chelmsford CM1 2RL

Tickets: Free, booking essential

Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk



WED 21 JUN, 7.00PM **PERFORMANCE**

Mohamed Errebbaa & Gnawa Bristol

In partnership with Saffron Hall and Essex Cultural Diversity Project

Join us to celebrate the end of our first Radical Pilgrimage: The Saffron Trail with the soaring vocals and bass-heavy grooves of Moroccan Gnawa Master, gimbri (three-string guitar) player, Mohamed Errebbaa & Gnawa Bristol.

Venue: Saffron Hall Foyer, Audley End Road, Saffron Walden CB11 4UH

Tickets: £15. Doors open 7pm for 8pm start

Box Office: saffronhall.com/visit-us/booking-info



Essex Cultural Diversity Project

Saffron Hall

ESSEX WRITERS HOUSE

5 – 30 June 2023

**Metal, Chalkwell Hall, Chalkwell Park,
Southend-on-Sea, SS0 8NB**

This year marks the sixth edition of Essex Writers House, hosted by annual festival partner Metal. Across this month-long programme, there will be workshops, events, sharings and socials, all of which offer supportive time and space to writers from across our county.

Whether you are hoping to share your work for the first time, editing your third novel, or gathering up the notes on your phone, we'd love to support you on your writing journey.

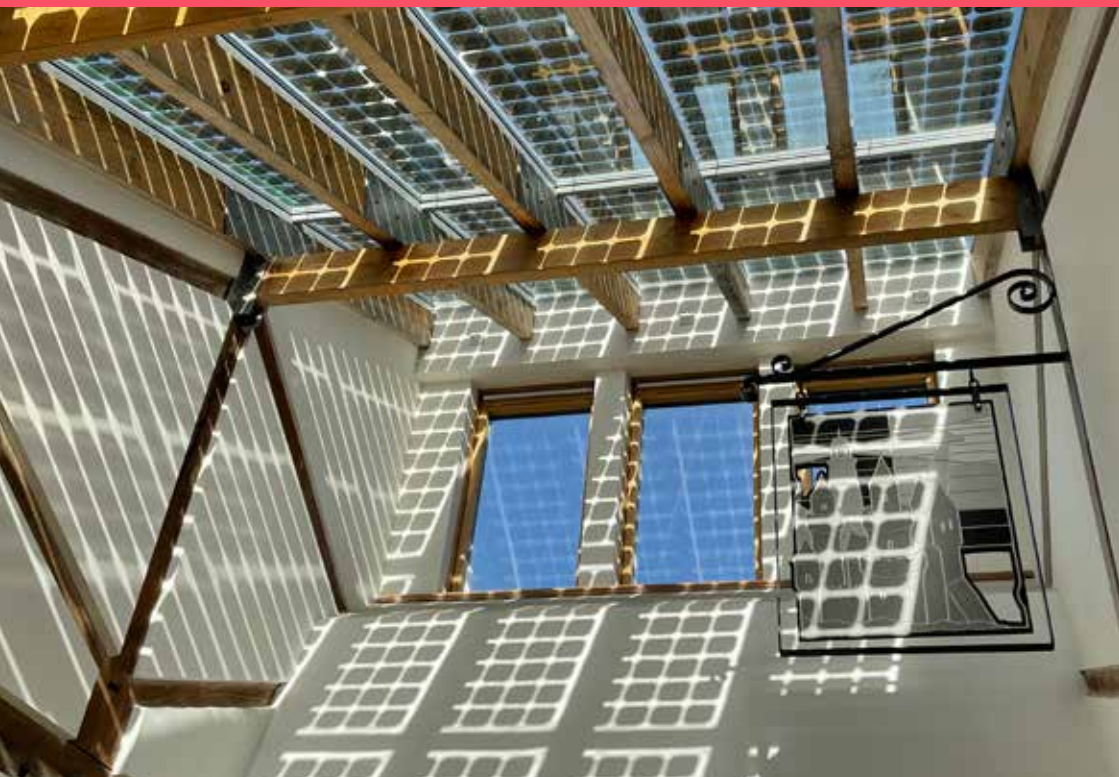
Come along to Chalkwell Hall and make yourself at home. Storytellers, screenwriters and scribblers all welcome!

For booking details and full event listings, visit metalculture.com and head to the What's On page.



Metal





Essex Writers House Programme Highlights Include:

DAILY

Writers Hot Desks

Book a free writing desk in our Attic Studio and take some time to focus on your work. You are guaranteed a changing view across the Estuary and the grounds of Chalkwell Park, along with some space to think.

Accessible via lift or stairs.

THROUGHOUT THE MONTH

Writers in Residence

We'll be hosting local, UK and international writers in residence this June, some of whom you might meet during the wider festival.

We look forward to hosting:

Lora Aziz

British-Egyptian artist, author and wildcrafter

Wioletta Greg

Polish-British writer and poet

Maciej Hen

Polish writer, translator and journalist





SATURDAY 17 JUNE

Words In Chalk

A lively and popular poetry event which brings together an eclectic line-up of writers and performers from Essex and beyond. Come along and see who takes the stage. If you are interested in a slot, please get in touch!



SATURDAY 17 JUNE

Placemaking Poetics

A walking workshop exploring place-based writing through techniques such as concrete poetry, psychogeography and mark-making. Led by London based publishing project Fieldnotes, this session will focus on process and conversations, capturing our settings through a blend of writing and drawing. All levels of experience welcome.



WEDNESDAY 21 JUNE

Lucky Dip

A writers' social with a twist! Guest host to be revealed...

Come along to meet new faces, swap notes and be entertained. There will also be the option of sharing original work, ideal for any first-time performers or emerging writers looking to reach a friendly audience.



THURSDAY 29 JUNE

A launch celebration of How to be a French Girl

The first novel from Essex writer and author Rose Cleary, published by Weatherglass Books. An opportunity to hear from Rose and purchase your own copy on the night. *"A fierce, disturbing and funny debut novel about desire, art and what we'll risk to change ourselves."*

About Metal

Essex Writers House is hosted by festival partner, Metal, who are currently active in Essex, Peterborough and Liverpool. Founded in 2002, they aim to help build stronger, healthier and happier communities, through art, culture and creativity. They believe that everyone deserves a rich and cultural life, and where you live should not be a barrier to this. They hold time and space for artists of all ages and backgrounds to forge new ideas and realise their potential. Their approach celebrates place, builds local connections and nurtures talent, encouraging experimentation, collaboration and co-creation.



Metal

For booking details and full event listings,
visit metalculture.com and head to the What's On page



FRI 16 JUN – SUN 18 JUN FREE

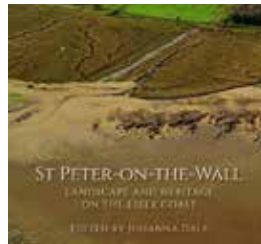
Johanna Dale St Peter-on-the-Wall: Landscape and Heritage on the Essex Coast

Othona Community at Bradwell on Sea

A weekend of events to celebrate the launch of *St Peter-on-the-Wall: Landscape and Heritage on the Essex Coast* edited by Johanna Dale, kindly hosted by the Othona Community at Bradwell on Sea.

The Chapel of St Peter-on-the-Wall is one of the oldest largely intact churches in England and stands in splendid isolation on the shoreline at the mouth of the Blackwater Estuary in Essex. Explore the chapel and its landscape setting through walks, workshops and talks. All ages are welcome and there are free creative activities for children.

Why not bring the whole family and spend the weekend enjoying the atmospheric Dengie Peninsula coast? Accommodation is available at the Othona Community for those wishing to stay overnight. Day visitors are equally welcome.



MANIFESTO
for ESSEX



SAT 17 JUN, 10.00AM – 1.00PM

GUIDED WALK

Johanna Dale and Kevin Bruce In My Steps: Radical Walks in Essex – Bradwell

Distance: 9.5km / 6 miles

Meet: Othona Community

Flat circular walk along the seawalls, footpaths and rural roads of Bradwell on Sea. Learn about the area's history and changing landscape, from Roman occupation, through Saxon missionary activity, agriculture and land reclamation, and military activities, to the construction and operation of Bradwell A.

Tickets: £10 / £8

Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk



All other activities are free, booking not required. These include:

- Guided architectural tours of St Peter-on-the-Wall chapel with independent researcher and consultant David Andrews and architectural historian James Bettley
- Eco-poetry workshop for young people with environmental writer and artist, Wendy Constance. In partnership with Maldon & District CVS
- Celebratory tea and book launch event
- Art workshop with Nastassja Simensky and Angenita Hardy-Teekens, includes *Dorodango-making*
- Lecture on the medieval landscape context of St Peter-on-the-Wall by Prof Stephen Rippon
- Tour of Othona's self-sufficient systems
- Wild swim

**Visit essexbookfestival.org.uk
for full details of all activities**





FREE

FAMILY FUN DAY

Saturday 17 June

**Harlow Central Library, Cross Street,
Harlow, CM20 1HA**

Celebrate the first anniversary of Harlow Library's wonderful refurbishment by joining us for a day of FREE family activities. Drop-in activities include Baby & Toddler Rhymetime, Family Storytime, Arts & Crafts activities and a special performance by Livewire Theatre Group. There will also be free workshops, including with Essex-based teacher and writer Sade Fadipe.

For full details visit essexbookfestival.org.uk

All those aged 12 and under must be accompanied by an adult.

Tickets: Free, booking essential

Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk



George The Bookworm Presents... Telling Tales

A magical and enchanting children's storytelling festival, presented by everyone's favourite book-loving, wise-cracking, bookworm! The festival features a range of highlights for children to enjoy, including fabulous storytellers, exciting children's theatre shows, and creative craft workshops.

George The Bookworm and his friends will be visiting six Essex libraries this summer half-term. These events are all FREE but tickets must be booked in advance. Book your tickets at lemmingstheatre.com/tellingtales

A Lemmings Theatre production.

Essex Children's University – Stamp Your Passports at Festival Learning Destination

Essex Book Festival is once again partnering with our good friends at Essex Children's University to provide 5-14 year olds with exciting learning experiences outside school. Once issued with a Passport to Learning, 'CU Learners' collect stamps and attend a special Graduation Ceremony. Find out how to get your very own Passport to Learning at essexchildrensuniversity.co.uk

All Essex Book Festival YOUNG ESSEX events are CU Learning Destinations – bring your passport, get it stamped, and enjoy your learning journey!





THE PLEASURE GARDEN

Sunday 18 June

Hylands House, London Road, Writtle, Chelmsford, CM2 8WQ

Tickets: £10 / £8 per event

Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk or Mercury Theatre 01206 573948



*Image of Hylands House
Garden © Matt Chung*

11.00AM

NATURE WRITING

James Canton **Grounded**

James Canton joins us to talk about his new book and our connection with the natural world. *Grounded* is a personal journey through our ancient landscapes and shows us how amongst the frenzy of the modern world we can find spaces of quiet reflection and learn to stop and slow down.



1.00PM

MEMOIR

Sandra Lawrence **Miss Willmott's Ghosts**

Sandra Lawrence's fascinating memoir *Miss Willmott's Ghosts* traces the remarkable life of the legendary eccentric trail-blazing, green-fingered heiress Ellen Ann Willmott: the mastermind behind Brentwood's Warley Gardens, who famously booby-trapped her prize plants and sabotaged rivals' gardens.



© Paul Lindus

3.00PM

NON-FICTION

Henry Dibleby **Ravenous**

Henry Dibleby, founder of the Leon restaurant chain, government adviser and author of the radical National Food Strategy, delves behind the scenes to reveal the mechanisms that act together to shape the modern diet and explain not just why the food system is leading us into disaster, but what can be done about it.



TUE 20 JUN THRILLER

William Hussey *Killing Jericho*

William Hussey is the award-winning author of over a dozen novels, including the Crime Fest award-nominated *Hideous Beauty* and *The Outrage*. *Killing Jericho* is the gothic, helter-skelter thriller debut introducing crime fiction's first-ever Traveller detective, Scott Jericho.

Pop along to Waterstones Chelmsford where William will be signing copies of his book from 12 – 12.45pm. He will then visit HM Prison Chelmsford for an author talk. Author events at the prison provide a platform for prisoners to connect with the outside world.

Venues: Waterstones Chelmsford, 76 High Street, Chelmsford, CM1 1EJ
HMP & YOI Chelmsford



© Christopher White

HM Prison &
Probation Service

Essex County Council

WED 21 JUN, 7.30PM FICTION

Mat Osman *The Ghost Theatre*

A dazzling punk re-imagining of Elizabethan London through the eyes of a clairvoyant, bird-worshipping protagonist and an unlikely theatre troupe. Suede bassist, Mat Osman, returns to Essex to unleash his lushly evocative debut novel of hawk-trainers and child actors caught up in the dark glamour and tumult of Elizabethan London. Fantastical and captivating, *The Ghost Theatre* charts the rise and dramatic destruction of a dream born from love and torn apart by betrayal.

Venue: Colchester Library, Trinity Square, Colchester, CO1 1JB

Tickets: £8 / £7

Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk or Mercury Theatre 01206 573948



© Tom Medwell

THU 22 JUN, 7.00PM JOURNAL HUMOUR

Ben Aitken *The Marmalade Diaries*

The Marmalade Diaries is the latest book from the Times bestselling author of *A Chip Shop in Poznan*. Full of warmth, wit and candour, Ben Aitken tells the story of an unlikely friendship during an unlikely time. One of the pair a grieving and inflexible former aristocrat in her mid-eighties. The other a working-class millennial snowflake. What could possibly go wrong? What could possibly go right?

Venue: Harwich Library, Upper Kingsway, Dovercourt, Harwich, CO12 3JT

Tickets: £8 / £7

Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk or Mercury Theatre 01206 573948





SAT 24 JUN, 10.00AM – 4.00PM

FOR WRITERS WORKSHOP

NETWORKING

Essex Writers Day

Pick up writing tips and inspiration from workshops led by experienced authors;

- Essex Libraries Author in Residence and bestselling novelist, Syd Moore.
- Crime and mystery novelist Paul Gitsham: *Crafting a Killer Crime novel: An introduction to writing crime fiction.*
- Author Julia Stone: *The Path to Traditional Publication* – taking your novel from laptop to library.
- Local playwright and author Clare Shaw Burgess: *Creating Characters Through Dialogue.*

Award-winning CEO and founder of Smart Girl Tribe, Scarlett V Clark will be chatting to author Syd Moore about empowerment in literature and signing her book *The Smart Girls Handbook*.

Join in with or listen to our popular Writers Slam and meet other writers.

Venue: Chelmsford Library, County Hall, Market Road, Chelmsford, CM1 1QH

Tickets: Workshops £6 each. Writers' Slam is free, Booking essential

Box office: www.libraries.essex.gov.uk



SAT 24 JUN, 2.00PM

PERFORMANCE

MUSIC POETRY

Andrew Simms, Nicky Saunter and Jules Pretty Hope Tales 3: Water

Join us for an afternoon of collaborative performance, readings, music and poetry to generate hope in times of crisis.

A group of talented and thoughtful people come together to share ideas from their own fields that lead us into possible positive futures inspired by the theme of Water. From these contributions, a 'chapbook' will be published. Following the form of popular 18th and 19th century street literature, these small, easy to digest booklets of information, ideas and entertainment are made for sharing.

This event will also see the live launch of Hope Tales: Chapbook 2 from the previous event in the series, held in Somerset in March.

Venue: Firstsite, Lewis Gardens, High Street, Colchester, CO1 1JH

Tickets: Free + copy of Hope Tales Chapbook for each attendee, booking recommended

Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk



MERCURY

Great Expectations

12 – 27 May

A Mercury Production

Charles Dickens' best-loved novel is brought to life on stage in this thrilling adaptation from Gale Childs Daly, **directed** by the Mercury's Creative Director, Ryan McBryde (*The Comedy of Errors*, *Baskerville*, *Oliver!*).

Featuring some of the most iconic characters in literature, join us on a gripping journey as Pip unravels the truth behind his own great expectations in the gloomy corners of Miss Havisham's Satis Hall. A compelling and dramatic treat for a new generation of theatre lovers.



Dracula

1 – 3 June

Le Navet Bete in association with Exeter Northcott Theatre.

Stop what you're doing and read this very carefully. Your life may depend on it...

This critically acclaimed, multi five star awarded hilarious comedy will be presented by Professor Abraham Van Helsing and his three idiotic actors as they stage a life-changing, theatrical production surrounding the true events of Dracula. Will they pull it off? It's highly unlikely! With four actors playing over forty characters and directed by one of the UK's most exciting comedy directors, John Nicholson, *Dracula: The Bloody Truth* will make you die laughing!

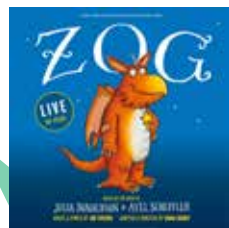


Zog

16 – 18 June

Freckle Productions in association with Rose Theatre presents ZOG. Based on the book by Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler.

The smash-hit stage adaptation from Freckle Productions (the team behind *Zog and the Flying Doctors* and *Stick Man*) is back and promises to be bigger, brighter and more roar-some than ever before! With lively songs from Joe Stilgoe and directed by Emma Kilbey, Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler's much-loved *Zog* is a magical production for all ages.



Mercury Theatre, Balkerne Gate, Colchester CO1 1PT
Find out more and book tickets at mercurytheatre.co.uk

MIDSUMMER MADNESS

Sunday 25 June

Cressing Temple Barns, Witham Road, Braintree, Cressing, CM77 8PD

Pack your picnic and favourite teddy bear and make a beeline for what promises to be a magical day at Cressing Temple Barns. Storytelling, theatre, poetry, eco-crafts, comics, coding, and mud pies galore in our pop-up forest school, what's not to like!



Performances and Poetry in the Majestic Barn...

Ensonglopedia presents: The Puddle at the End of the World

Weird weather! Extraordinary extinctions! Freaky flooding! Water we going to do?! Jamie and her Nanna's home has disappeared under rising sea levels – join them on an exhilarating adventure to rebuild their lives and stop climate change. Ensonglopedia's brand new musical comedy is aimed at ages 6-12, and suitable for all.

Tickets: Free, booking essential



John Agard

Join legendary author and performance poet John Agard who will delight us with a selection of readings including his 2022 children's book *When Creature Met Creature*. Sure to be warm, witty, generous, and flamboyant, it is not to be missed! In association with Renaissance One. Family friendly event, most suitable for children 4 years+.

Tickets: £5 per child, accompanying adult free, under 4's free



Fantastic and FREE...

- Writing for Nature workshops with *Earthlings* author, Ray Star
- Make a Giant Peter Rabbit Sculpture out of rubbish
- Eco-poetry & Eco-crafts
- Re-wilding workshops
- Story Camp with master of folk and fairy tales, fables, myths and legends, storyteller Shane Ibbs

Teddy Bears Picnic ♦ Fairy Door Trail ♦ Library Book Tent ♦ Flower weaving ♦ Kindness Tent ♦ Coding Workshops ♦ and much more...

VISIT ESSEXBOOKFESTIVAL.ORG.UK FOR FULL DETAILS



Wonderful Workshops...

Tickets: £3 per child, accompanying adult free



Comic Art Masterclass with **Kev F Sutherland** who writes and draws for *The Beano*, Doctor Who and Marvel comics, and makes graphic novels adapted from Shakespeare. Learn everything he knows, so you could leave school and steal his job! Take away your own comic + individual caricature. For ages 7+.



Join nature and folk history writer, **Andrew Millham**, to uncover the remarkable relationship between birds and traditional folk music in *Singing Like Larks*. Try your hand at some Forest School skills, connect with nature and go bug-hunting. For families, all ages welcome.



Award-winning author **Catherine Emmett** will use her book, *The Pet*, to explore **How to Write a Super Story in 3 Easy Steps**, from a brilliant beginning, and a magnificent middle to an excellent ending. For ages 7-11.



Sam Scott, author of the spooky *Sophie Spirit* trilogy will be giving **Top Writing Tips** for how to design and develop a believable character, how to build a plot arc and the importance of using varied vocabulary. For ages 7-13.



The Importance of Oceans - Deep down in the ocean blue, there are many surprises waiting for you! Solve some **Riddles from the Sea** with author **Charlotte Sebag Montefiore**. Then join in the fun family quiz! For ages 5-9.



Create your own Climate Show with Ensonglopedia! A creative workshop in telling stories about our planet through theatre, music and puppetry. For ages 7-13.



Eco-Podcasting Workshop - We are in a climate emergency! Focusing on environmental themes, explore how to research and write content, undertake interviews and join them all together to make a big impact, with CCR broadcaster, **Michelle Durant**. For ages 14+.

Tickets: £3

For full details of all Midsummer Madness events and activities visit essexbookfestival.org.uk

All those aged under 12 must be accompanied by an adult.

TUE 27 JUN, 7.00PM CONTEMPORARY FICTION

Kate Worsley Foxash

Kate Worsley talks about her latest book *Foxash*; a visceral, visual novel of rural experiment and dark secrets, set in 1930s England at the height of the Great Depression. With an unsettling sense of place, it is a deeply original story of quiet and powerful menace, of the real hardships of rural life, and the myths and folklore that seep into ordinary lives – with surprising consequences.



© Rick Pushinsky

Venue: Manningtree Library, High Street, Manningtree, CO11 1AD
 Tickets: £8 / £7
 Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk or Mercury Theatre 01206 573948

TUE 27 JUN, 7.30PM HISTORICAL FICTION

Freya Berry The Birdcage Library

An evening with Freya Berry, author of BBC2 Between The Covers pick *The Dictator's Wife*. A gothic-tinged tale of obsession and long buried secrets set in a remote and atmospheric Scottish castle. Discover a mystery within a mystery in *The Birdcage Library*, a novel that will hold you in its spell until the final page.



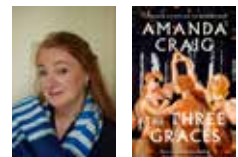
 thurrock.gov.uk

Venue: Grays Library, Thameside Complex, Orsett Road, Grays, RM17 5DX
 Tickets: £8 / £7
 Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk or Mercury Theatre 01206 573948

WED 28 JUN, 7.45PM FICTION

Amanda Craig – DLS Lecture – The Three Graces

Amanda Craig is an award-winning journalist, critic and author. A novelist who often combines literary fiction with crime and suspense, Amanda will not only be talking about her latest enthralling, funny and generous book, *The Three Graces*, she will also discuss her love of Dorothy L Sayers's fiction, "the marriage of true minds", 1930s feminism and the Wimsey-Vane romance.



© Charlie Hopkinson

Venue: Witham Library, 18 Newland Street, Witham, CM8 2AQ
 Tickets: £8 / £7
 Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk or Mercury Theatre 01206 573948



THU 29 JUN, 11.30AM

IN CONVERSATION

IN PERSON

DIGITAL

Abi Daré The Girl With the Louding Voice

In partnership with Appetite Book Club

New York Times bestselling author, Abi Daré, joins us for this very special event in partnership with Appetite Book Club. Daré's exuberant, moving debut revolves around Adunni, a Nigerian girl regarded as property at the age of fourteen, yet determined to find her 'louding voice' and live a life that she controls.

Abi Daré will be in conversation with Onyi Nwabaneli, author of *Someday, Maybe*.

Hybrid event – you can either attend in person, or participate online via Zoom.

Delicious coffee, tea, cake and snacks will be available from the Mercury Café for those attending in person.

Venue: Mercury Theatre, Balkerne Gate, Colchester, CO1 1PT

Tickets: In person: £14.99 includes paperback copy of book; Online: Free

Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk



© AMP

© Precious Mayowa Agbabiaka

THU 29 JUN, 6.00PM

WRITING WORKSHOP

FREE

Samuel Fisher and Justin Hopper Writing Landscapes Workshop

Authors Samuel Fisher (*Wivenhoe*) and Justin Hopper (*The Old Weird Albion*) are hosting a writing workshop at Wivenhoe Library where participants will be invited to think of the places they cherish and find ways to translate those landscapes into words. Supported using public funding by the National Lottery through Arts Council England.

Venue: Wivenhoe Library, 104/6 High Street, Wivenhoe, CO7 9AB

Tickets: Free, booking essential

Box Office: Email wivenhoeplay@gmail.com with 'Writing Landscapes' in the subject heading



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

© Sophie Davidson

© Jason Kofi-Haye

THU 29 JUN, 7.00PM HISTORICAL FICTION

Sarah Hardy The Walled Garden

Sarah Hardy will be discussing her luminous debut novel. It is 1946 and in the village of Oakbourne the men are home from the war. Their bodies are healing but their psychological wounds run deep. Set in the Suffolk countryside as it moves from winter to spring, *The Walled Garden* is a captivating love story and a timeless, moving exploration of trauma and the miracle of human resilience.

Venue: Billericay Library, 143 High Street, Billericay, CM12 9AB
 Tickets: £8 / £7
 Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk or Mercury Theatre 01206 573948



FRI 30 JUN, 7.00PM MEMOIR IN CONVERSATION

Wes Streeting One Boy, Two Bills and a Fry Up

An evening with Labour MP and the Shadow Health Secretary, Wes Streeting. Brought up on a Stepney council estate, the young Streeting saw his teenage parents struggle to provide for him. In *One Boy, Two Bills and a Fry Up* he vividly portrays the power of family and education to help him transform his life. This honest, uplifting, affectionate memoir is a tribute to the love and support which set him on his way out of poverty, and informs everything about Wes Streeting's mission now in politics. He will be in conversation with Professor Pam Cox.

Venue: Lakeside Theatre, University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park, Colchester, CO4 3SQ
 Tickets: £10 / £8
 Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk or Mercury Theatre 01206 573948



SAT 01 JUL, 12.00 – 4.30PM DISCUSSION FREE

The Human Library unJudge Someone

Welcome to The Human Library. Just like in a real library, a visitor to the Human Library can borrow a book from a range of titles. The difference is that books are PEOPLE, and reading is a CONVERSATION. Books in our Human Library come from all walks of life, and each has a different story to tell. Come along, connect with people you wouldn't normally meet, and celebrate positive differences in our community.

In partnership with Essex Cultural Diversity Project and Essex Libraries.

Find out more at www.essexcdp.com

Venue: Chelmsford Library, County Hall, Market Road, Chelmsford, CM1 1QH
 Tickets: Free, no booking required

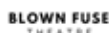


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Key partners



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RADIO DRAMA FESTIVAL

Chelmsford Community Radio are delighted to be hosting the very first Radio Drama Festival for Essex.

The project is supported by the Essex County Council Arts and Cultural Fund and a number of other partners.

Keep an eye on the Essex Book Festival website for more details and to book a place at one of our five Radio Drama Listening Sessions at various local venues

Our Community Showcase event in the City Centre will be an inspirational platform to see work from local writers and performers.

We will also have limited spaces to take part in a Radio Drama Day for budding creatives to devise and record a radio drama from scratch.

Make sure you sign up to follow us on social media too **@chelmsfordcr**

It's going to be a very exciting summer!



Designed by creative.coop

Essex Book Festival gratefully acknowledges the use of photographic resources supplied by authors, publishers and photographers.

The programme is subject to change. Please check www.essexbookfestival.org.uk for updates.

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