

Berwick Literary Festival

5–11 Oct
2026



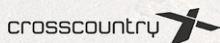
Celebrating Words
Written | Spoken | Performed

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Love literature? Become a patron!

Play a vital role in helping the Festival thrive and support the planning, preparation and people behind the scenes who bring the Festival to life each year. Patron contributions help us keep the Festival ambitious, inclusive and rooted in the Town. To find out more about becoming a Patron, and learn more about the scheme, please visit berwickliteraryfestival.com/patrons

Welcome to the 2026 Berwick Literary Festival programme

In 2026, Berwick Literary Festival gathers around the theme
How We Find Our Way.

For two hundred years, the lighthouse at the mouth of the Tweed has offered steady guidance through changing tides. As it reaches this milestone, we take inspiration from its purpose rather than its symbolism, and turn our attention to the ways stories help us orient ourselves in the world.

How We Find Our Way is a theme about navigation rather than answers. It asks how people make sense of experience, move through uncertainty, and understand where they stand. Across fiction and non-fiction, poetry and song, history, science, art, drama and performance, this year's programme brings together writers and artists whose work sheds light on how meaning is formed, challenged and shared.

Here in Berwick-upon-Tweed, a town shaped by borders, movement and exchange, questions of direction and perspective feel deeply familiar. This Festival invites voices from many disciplines and traditions to explore how insight is gained, how understanding grows, and how stories help us see more clearly, both as individuals and as communities.

As ever, this Festival is made possible by people. Our volunteers, patrons, partners, funders and local businesses give their time, expertise and belief to bring the programme to life. And you, our audience, whether you travel ten minutes or ten hours, bring curiosity and care to every conversation.

We hope the sessions you attend offer illumination, and that the stories you encounter help you find your own bearings long after the Festival comes to a close.

We are very much looking forward to welcoming you.

Joan Montgomery Festival Director
Stephen Platten Chair of Trustees



5 Oct	2pm	The Straw Yard	Elaine Thomson	p6
5 Oct	4pm	Salvation Army Hall	Clive Jones	p6
5 Oct	6pm	Salvation Army Hall	Hannah Kaner and Laura Steven	p6
5 Oct	7.30pm	Salvation Army Hall	Helen Goh	p6
6 Oct	10am	The Straw Yard	Gaynor Macfarlane	p7
6 Oct	12 noon	Salvation Army Hall	Christina Jansen	p7
6 Oct	2pm	Salvation Army Hall	Linda Bankier	p8
6 Oct	3pm	Ad Gefrin	Afternoon tea and Titanic Talk	p8
6 Oct	4pm	Salvation Army Hall	George Szirtes	p8
6 Oct	5pm	Ad Gefrin	Christopher Ward	p9
6 Oct	6pm	Salvation Army Hall	Ben Barry	p9
6 Oct	7pm	Wooler Library	Border Readers	p9
6 Oct	7.30pm	The Straw Yard	Seán Hewitt	p10
7 Oct	11 am	The Straw Yard	Amanda Roberts	p10
7 Oct	1pm	Holy Trinity Church	Peter Aitchison	p10
7 Oct	3pm	Salvation Army Hall	Dominic Gregory	p11
7 Oct	4pm	The Straw Yard	Anthony Delaney	p11
7 Oct	7.30pm	Holy Trinity Church	John Lloyd	p12
8 Oct	9am	Martins the Printers	Martins Book Printers	p12
8 Oct	10am	The Straw Yard	Louise Tucker	p12
8 Oct	10.30am	Martins the Printers	Martins Book Printers	p12
8 Oct	11 am	Salvation Army Hall	Mark Batey	p13
8 Oct	1pm	Salvation Army Hall	Martyn Howe	p13
8 Oct	3pm	Holy Trinity Church	Matthew Parris	p13
8 Oct	5pm	Salvation Army Hall	John Osborne	p14
8 Oct	7pm	The Straw Yard	Cabaret of Words	p14
8 Oct	7.30pm	Holy Trinity Church	Vince Cable	p14

9 Oct	9am	Martins the Printers	Martins Book Printers	p15
9 Oct	10am	Salvation Army Hall	Paul Stevenson	p15
9 Oct	10.30am	Martins the Printers	Martins Book Printers	p15
9 Oct	12 noon	Salvation Army Hall	Marion Todd	p16
9 Oct	2pm	Berwick Parish Centre	Diarmaid MacCulloch	p16
9 Oct	2pm	Salvation Army Hall	Bella Bathurst	p16
9 Oct	4pm	Holy Trinity Church	Joanne Harris	p17
9 Oct	6pm	The Straw Yard	Patrons' Drinks & Canapés	p17
9 Oct	7.30pm	Holy Trinity Church	Alistair Moffat	p17
10 Oct	10am	Berwick Parish Centre	Stephen Alford	p18
10 Oct	10am	Salvation Army Hall	Masud Husain	p18
10 Oct	10.30am	Berwick Library	Adventure Babies 1	p19
10 Oct	11.30am	The Guildhall	Christian Foley	p19
10 Oct	12 noon	Berwick Library	Adventure Babies 2	p19
10 Oct	12 noon	Salvation Army Hall	Clare Coghill	p19
10 Oct	12 noon	Berwick Parish Centre	Iain MacGregor	p20
10 Oct	1.30pm	Berwick Library	Carolina Ewing	p20
10 Oct	2pm	Salvation Army Hall	David Breeze	p20
10 Oct	2pm	Berwick Parish Centre	Bloodaxe Poetry	p21
10 Oct	4pm	Salvation Army Hall	Jake Morris-Campbell	p21
10 Oct	4pm	The Straw Yard	David Hepworth	p21
10 Oct	6pm	Salvation Army Hall	James Bailey & Kathryn Mannix	p22
10 Oct	7.30pm	Holy Trinity Church	Simon McDonald	p22
11 Oct	10am	The Straw Yard	Alison Smith	p22
11 Oct	10am	Maltings Cinema at Barracks	Alexander Ballinger	p23
11 Oct	12 noon	The Guildhall	Wendy Holden	p23
11 Oct	12 noon	Maltings Cinema at Barracks	Claire Gilbert	p23
11 Oct	2pm	Maltings Cinema at Barracks	Paul de Zulueta	p24
11 Oct	2pm	Berwick Parish Centre	Stephen Alford	p24
11 Oct	4pm	Holy Trinity Church	Louis de Bernières	p24



Saltwater: A Midsummer Ghost Story

Elaine Thomson

Monday 5 October, 2pm–3pm

The Straw Yard • £10

The second in a quartet of exquisitely haunting ghost stories, *Saltwater* is set on the Isle of Stroma in 1896. Sent to oversee the completion of a new lighthouse, Tom, a man of sense and science, is unprepared for the conditions on the island and soon learns there are some problems that science cannot answer, and some threats so ancient and strange, that nothing can keep them at bay. Elaine Thomson is a Scottish author who has written several historical novels under the name E. S. Thomson.



**David Smiley
in Yemen, 1963.**

The 'Real' Smiley • Clive Jones

Monday 5 October, 4pm–5pm

Salvation Army Hall • £10

In the public imagination he remains an elderly, slightly stooped figure, who rooted out traitors in the British secret service. George Smiley was of course the creation of the spy novelist, John Le Carré. But now a new book, *The Clandestine Lives of Colonel David Smiley: Code Name 'Grin'* by Durham University academic, Clive Jones, reveals the remarkable career of a real 'Smiley,' whose exploits on behalf of British intelligence were in marked contrast to the more sedate actions of his fictional namesake.



Northumberland's Answer to Game of Thrones

Hannah Kaner and Laura Steven

Monday 5 October, 6pm–7pm

Salvation Army Hall • £10

Bestselling authors Laura Steven (#1 New York Times Bestselling author of *Our Infinite Fates* Sunday Times Bestseller of *Silvercloak*) and Hannah Kaner (#1 Sunday Times Bestselling author of *Godkiller*, *Sunbringer* and *Faithbreaker*) discuss their experiences as Northumbrian fantasy writers, the inspiration the north has given them and how it feels to come home to the borderlands.

Author Laura Steven was born and bred in Berwick-upon-Tweed and has published several books for young adults. Hannah Kaner is an English Fantasy novelist who lives in Edinburgh.

Baking and the Meaning of Life • Helen Goh**Monday 5 October, 7:30pm–8:30pm****Salvation Army Hall • £10**

When we bake, it's never just about the richness of the butterscotch or the crisp flakiness of the pastry. Whether you're a beginner or a veteran, you do it for reasons far beyond the mere production of a piece of food. Few know this better than Helen Goh, who – along with being a recipe developer with Ottolenghi for more than a decade – is, uniquely, a practising psychologist. In this, her first solo cookbook, Helen draws on her own life to bring together 100 favourite recipes that show how baking is the ultimate vehicle to convey joy, connection and personal growth.



“Helen in her absolute element. It really doesn't get any better.”

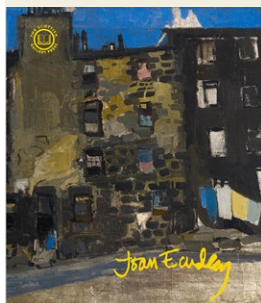
YOTAM OTTOLENGHI

The Art of Adaptation: Transforming Books into Audio Drama • Gaynor Macfarlane**Tuesday 6 October, 10am–11am****The Straw Yard • £10**

Reading novels is an act of individual imagination, so how does radio adaptation paint pictures in the minds of listeners while keeping true to the original book? Award-winning BBC radio producer Gaynor Macfarlane (recent adaptations include *Northanger Abbey* and *Kramer versus Kramer* alongside books by Alexander McCall Smith, Muriel Spark and F Scott Fitzgerald) reveals the secrets of creating audio drama and how she decides what to keep and what to lose when transforming much-loved novels for a national and global audience.

**Joan Eardley and The Scottish Gallery: An Intimate Perspective • Christina Jansen****Tuesday 6 October, 12 noon–1pm****Salvation Army Hall • £10**

Drawing on The Scottish Gallery's long association with Joan Eardley, Christina Jansen offers an insider's view of the artist's work in Townhead and Catterline. Through the paintings and drawings Eardley exhibited at the Gallery, archive material and the public and private collections that acquired her work, the talk will explore what happened during her lifetime and how audiences responded to her work. It will also reveal some of the stories behind the exhibitions, sales and relationships that helped establish Eardley's reputation, offering a more personal perspective on one of Scotland's most important twentieth-century artists.



The Scottish Gallery Press is releasing a new book on Joan Eardley in Spring 2027



Voices From The Archives • Linda Bankier

Tuesday 6 October, 2pm–3pm

Salvation Army Hall • £10

Berwick Archives is a wonderful resource full of primary source material about people and the area. Through both the written and spoken word, information has been passed down to us about life in the past. Join Berwick Archivist Linda Bankier to find out about some of the stories passed down to us about Berwick from the 16th to 20th centuries through original records and oral testimony. Linda recently received the Mayor's Own Award in recognition of her exceptional contribution to Berwick's heritage and community life.



Afternoon tea followed by Christopher Ward Talk

Afternoon tea and *Titanic* Talk

Tuesday 6 October, 3pm–4:30pm

Ad Gefrin • £25

Enjoy a Classic Afternoon Tea in the beautiful setting of multi-award-winning museum and whisky distillery, Ad Gefrin, prior to Christopher Ward's event, *My Life in the Shadow Of Titanic*.

The Festival is able to offer combined tea and talk tickets at a discounted price thanks to a grant from EDF Renewables Barmoor Windfarm Community Benefit Fund at Community Foundation North East. That will make your Afternoon Tea even tastier.

Details of Christopher's talk, which begins at 5pm, are on page 9. Tickets can also be purchased without Afternoon Tea.



Crossing Borders: Poetry, The Translation of Poetry and the Poetry of Translation

George Szirtes

Tuesday 6 October, 4pm–5pm

Salvation Army Hall • £10

George Szirtes FRSL, winner of T S Eliot Prize for poetry, and translator of Nobel Prize winning novelist, László Krasznahorkai, reads from his recent and new poems about refugees and migration, and from his translations of the poetry of Hungarian poet Krisztina Tóth, while offering a glimpse of Krasznahorkai too. What is it to translate? What does fidelity mean in translation? Why are poetry and translation important? How far is writing in itself an act of translation?

My Life in the shadow of Titanic: A story of love, loss and lies • Christopher Ward

Tuesday 6 October, 5pm–6pm

Ad Gefrin • £10

Christopher Ward grew up in the shadow of *Titanic*, his mother the illegitimate daughter of one of the heroic bandmen. After her death, Christopher wrote a best-seller about his young grandfather. Five years later, in a chance encounter in Jamaica, he discovered that his mother lived and died unaware that she had a half-brother 5,000 miles away. And then...the further revelation that Christopher himself has cousins back in Britain. They meet and find love, friendship and forgiveness.

This event is kindly sponsored by EDF Renewables Barmoor Windfarm Community Benefit Fund at Community Foundation North East.

The Rise and Fall of the British Army 1975-2025

Ben Barry

Tuesday 6 October, 6pm–7pm

Salvation Army Hall • £10

Ben Barry served in the Army from 1975 to 2010, often in key staff appointments, and has worked closely with the Army in the following decade. This new study draws not only on his personal experience, but also on a very wide range of written sources complemented by interviews to provide a new interpretation of this period that challenges the existing narratives.

“An impressively detailed chronicle by an analyst well up to the task. Read it and weep.” ALAN MALLINSON, THE SPECTATOR

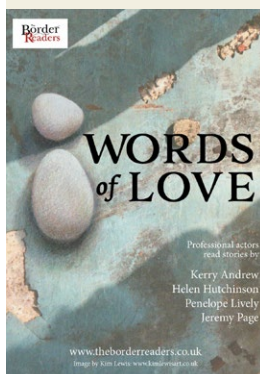
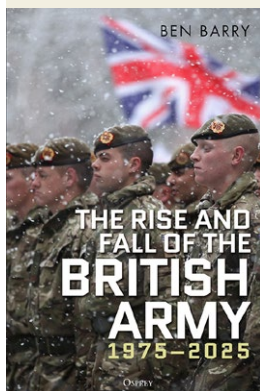
Words of Love • Border Readers

Tuesday 6 October, 7pm–9pm

Wooler Library • £8

The Border Readers return to Berwick Literary Festival in Wooler Library to give us words of love. This live audio event is suitable for anyone aged 11 to 100, and includes contemporary short stories about people in and out of love read by professional actors. Stories include *The Row* by Penelope Lively: A brilliant piece of comic writing on the ups and downs of married life from the much loved Booker prize-winning author; and *To Belong To* by Kerry Andrew: A heart-warming tale of loss, redemption and healing through the power of nature and community on a remote Scottish island.

Tickets: Wooler.library@northumberland.gov.uk or call 01668 282123





“A beautiful novel about how a first love can shape a whole life”

HELEN MACDONALD,
AUTHOR OF H IS FOR HAWK

Open, Heaven • Seán Hewitt

Tuesday 6 October, 7:30pm–8:30pm

The Straw Yard • £10

On the cusp of adulthood, James dreams of another life far away from his small village. As he contends with the expectations of his family, his burgeoning desire – an ache for autonomy, tenderness and sex – threatens to unravel his shy exterior. Then he meets Luke: unkempt and handsome, charismatic and impulsive. With the passing seasons, the two teenagers grow closer and the bond that emerges between them transforms their lives.

Seán Hewitt was born in 1990. He is the author of two poetry collections, *Tongues of Fire* and *Rapture’s Road*, and a memoir, *All Down Darkness Wide*.

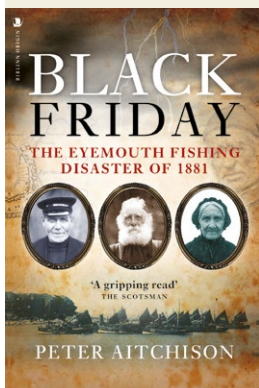


Discovering Isabella’s Berwick: A “thievish and ill-behaved” place • Amanda Roberts

Wednesday 7 October, 11 am–12 noon

The Straw Yard • £10

Lady of the Quay, the first in a new series of historical mysteries featuring Isabella Gillhespy, takes the reader back to Berwick-upon-Tweed in Tudor times. In early 1560, Elizabeth I had been Queen for just over one year. It was a time of great change; of political, religious and social upheaval, as well as exploration. Amanda will discuss why Berwick was at the centre of political intrigue and how the town is integral to the setting of the novel, framing the challenges that Isabella has to navigate to prove her innocence.



Black Friday: The Eyemouth Fishing Disaster of 1881 • Peter Aitchison

Wednesday 7 October, 1pm–2pm

Holy Trinity Church • £10

In this compelling narrative history of the devastating storm that killed 189 men, Peter Aitchison draws upon first-hand accounts, archival research and on his own family testimony to unpack a remarkable tale of tragedy, smuggling and survival. In the context of the 200th anniversary of Berwick’s own lighthouse, this discussion will explore the precarious nature of maritime life and the resilience of coastal communities in the face of fundamental change.

Lifeboat At The End of the World**Dominic Gregory****Wednesday 7 October, 3pm–4pm****Salvation Army Hall • £10**

For two hundred years, the Dungeness lifeboat has launched in storms and heavy seas to frigates and barques, trawlers and dinghies. Like all lifeboat stations in the British Isles, it is led by a coxswain and staffed entirely by volunteers. Dominic Gregory volunteers as part of her crew and this is their story – remarkable yet ordinary men and women who, in their different ways, give up their time, livelihoods and safety to brave wind, tide and storms, not to mention the peril of navigating between the vast floating skyscrapers that make up so much of modern shipping.

“Dominic Gregory hasn’t just delivered a survey of courage and determination – *Lifeboat at the End of the World* is a hymn to human decency, and that makes it a very timely book indeed”

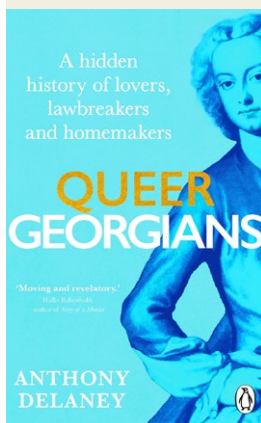
TIM WINTON

Queer Georgians • Anthony Delaney**Wednesday 7 October, 4pm–5pm****The Straw Yard • £10**

Based on original archival research by *History Hit* podcast presenter Anthony Delaney, *Queer Georgians* reveals the real people that inspired Gentleman Jack and the gay romances in *Bridgerton*, long written out of the nation’s story and now lovingly restored. Delaney has traced the stories of people daring to challenge society’s expectations, unearthing archives and court records to reveal the tragedies and the joys of queer life three centuries ago. This is an invitation to view our shared history in a whole new light.

“Delaney writes with great precision... It’s impossible not to feel invested in the drama and well-being of his most cherished characters... Here is a page turner one could as easily read on a beach as in a library. *Queer Georgians* is utterly riveting.”

THE IRISH INDEPENDENT



BOOK YOUR TICKETS NOW: berwickliteraryfestival.com



Funny Old Life • John Lloyd

Wednesday 7 October, 7:30pm–8:30pm

Holy Trinity Church • £15

Veteran producer John Lloyd's extraordinary career in comedy ranges from Radio 4's *Quote Unquote*, *The News Quiz* and *The Museum of Curiosity* to many of television's biggest hits: *Not the Nine O'Clock News*, *Blackadder*, *Spitting Image* and the panel show *QI*. He's a writer too, with over 30 books to his credit.

In conversation, he'll reflect on his unique creative record and his life-long determination to find humour in the deepest truths of the world around us. An hour with the UK's peerless Professor of Ignorance (Southampton Solent University) can only leave you somewhat the wiser...



Martins Book Printers Tour (1) and (2)

Thursday 8 October, 9am–10am and 10:30am–11:30am

Martins the Printers • £10

Martins the Printers, Sea View Works, Main Street, Spittal TD15 1RS
The perennially popular tours of Martins the Printers are part of our programme again this year and if you haven't taken part in a tour, we strongly recommend you do. An independent family owned book printers has operated from Berwick-upon-Tweed since 1892.

Today, Martins is one of the few remaining book printers and binders left in the UK, and is an integral part of the community of Berwick and the surrounding communities. The event includes a tour round the working factory. *These events are kindly sponsored by Martins the Printers.*



Find Your Way to Writing • Louise Tucker

Thursday 8 October, 10am–12 noon

Saturday 10 October, 10am–12 noon

The Straw Yard • £25

Always wanted to write but don't know where to start? Join Louise Tucker on this two-hour beginners' workshop which will help you discover what sort of writer you are, inspire you to find and use your voice and encourage you to build a creative practice. We'll talk about influences and experience, time and discipline, and try exercises and prompts to get your ideas flowing. Louise Tucker is a writer, editor and tutor. She was awarded the 21-22 Annabel Abbs Scholarship from UEA for her MA in Prose Fiction.

Grace and Josephine to the Rescue

Mark Batey

Thursday 8 October, 11am–12 noon

Salvation Army Hall • £10

Newcastle-born author Mark Batey gives a two-part talk linked to his recent books *Grace and Josephine Butler's Great Crusade*.

Grace Darling and Josephine Butler were two extraordinary 19th century women, born within 20 miles of Berwick, whose legacies endure today. Mark will look at how that happened. He will also talk about his writing process and how these life stories moved from blank page to published books.

The Coast Is Our Compass • Martyn Howe

Thursday 8 October, 1pm–2pm

Salvation Army Hall • £10

Why do we walk? Why do we like to be beside the sea? And what happens when you infuse these questions into a journey around the coast of England – a pilgrimage in search of art, culture, community and glorious natural wealth along the world's longest managed coastal path? Extending well beyond the confines of a walking memoir, *The Coast is our Compass* addresses all this and more. From the 1970s, Martyn Howe's sense of curiosity, adventure and learning has led him along all the National Trails.

If At First You Don't Succeed... Matthew Parris

Thursday 8 October, 3pm–4pm

Holy Trinity Church • £15

Matthew Parris worked for the Foreign Office and the Conservative Research Department before serving as MP for West Derbyshire. He joined *The Times* as parliamentary sketchwriter in 1988, a post he held for 13 years. He broadcasts for radio and television, and presents the biographical programme *Great Lives* on BBC Radio 4.

Matthew won the Orwell Prize for his acclaimed autobiography, *Chance Witness*, published in 2002. His latest book *Fracture* is a fascinating exploration of his theory that genius is often sparked by childhood trauma. *This event is kindly supported by an anonymous sponsor.*





Sandy Arse • John Osborne

Thursday 8 October, 5pm–6pm

Salvation Army Hall • £10

To celebrate the publication of his new seaside anthology *Sandy Arse*, John Osborne is travelling the country spreading the joy of the seaside. Join him in a world of seaside postcards, beach cricket and cliffside walks as he looks at all that is good, and bad, with life at the seaside.

“John’s story left me and my children spellbound and in tears”

STEWART LEE ABOUT JOHN’S STORY ‘DON’T NEED THE SUNSHINE’ ON BBC RADIO 4.



Cabaret of Words

Thursday 8 October, 7pm–9:30pm

The Straw Yard • FREE

Step into the Festival’s warm-hearted open-mic night, where poets, flash-fictioneers, script-writers and storytellers bring original work to life. Ten-minute pre-booked slots are followed by two five-minute wild-card spots for those struck by last-minute inspiration (or courage). Relax with a drink, cheer on local talent or take to the stage yourself. You may also nominate someone to read your work for you. Free, but seats and performance places must be booked.

Booking: thestrawayard.co.uk

Queries: hello@berwickwritersforum.com



Eclipsing the West • Vince Cable

Thursday 8 October, 7:30pm–8:30pm

Holy Trinity Church • £15

The Western-dominated world we have known for the past three hundred years is coming to an end. China and India account for more than a third of the world’s population and have the potential to wield enormous economic and political power. How will these countries navigate their growing roles on the world stage?

Vince Cable has followed China and India for decades.

In *Eclipsing the West* he offers a compelling account of what the rise of the Asian superstates means for the future.

Martins Book Printers Tour (3) and (4)

Friday 9 October, 9am–10am and 10:30am–11:30am

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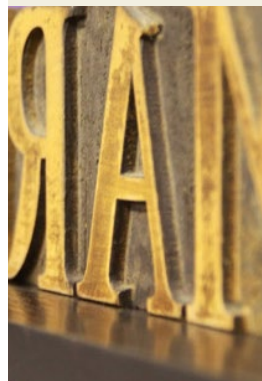
My Tics and Me, Changing the Story of

Tourette Syndrome • Paul Stevenson

Friday 9 October, 10am–11am

Salvation Army Hall • £10

Paul Stevenson is a lived experience advocate, speaker, author of the children's book *My Tics and Me*, and played a role in the award-winning film *I Swear*. Diagnosed later in life with Tourette Syndrome, ADHD, and OCD, Paul now uses storytelling to challenge stigma and improve understanding. In this session, he will discuss the inspiration behind the book, the importance of early education, and how awareness can grow into understanding, acceptance, and inclusion for children and families.



As part of this year's Schools and Young People's Programme, Paul Stevenson

will also be visiting the high schools we work with to talk about his experiences, writing and how we can all find our way to better awareness, understanding and well-being.

Advice and further information about Tourette Syndrome (TS) can be found at Tourettes Action (www.tourettes-action.org.uk) and Tourette Scotland (www.tourettescotland.org). These organisations support people of all ages living with TS, a complex and hereditary neurological condition, affecting 1 in 100 people, and characterized by involuntary movements and vocalisations called tics. Many people with TS find the condition embarrassing, exhausting, painful and isolating.

**Killing People For a Living • Marion Todd**

Friday 9 October, 12 noon–1pm

Salvation Army Hall • £10

Marion Todd is the author of the popular DI Clare Mackay crime series set in St Andrews. Her debut novel, *See Them Run*, was shortlisted for the Scottish Crime Debut of the Year in 2020, and she has gone on to sell more than 600,000 books. Now a full-time author, she has also worked as a college lecturer, candlemaker and hotel lounge pianist. In conversation, Marion will be discussing her most recent novel, *Watch Them Fall*.

**Finding Our Bearings: Christianity's Long Journey • Diarmaid MacCulloch**

Friday 9 October, 2pm–3pm

Berwick Parish Centre • £10

Diarmaid MacCulloch is Emeritus Professor of the History of the Church, Oxford University, and Fellow of St Cross College and of Campion Hall. In conversation he focuses on how Christian belief and practice has evolved and helped or hindered individuals and societies orient themselves through times of change – especially over the last two centuries. This reflection is in the light of his major survey of all Christian history.

**The Lighthouse Stevensons • Bella Bathurst**

Friday 9 October, 2pm–3pm

Salvation Army Hall • £10

Edinburgh's Stevenson family left two astounding legacies. First were the 97 major lighthouses they constructed around the Scottish coastline between 1790 and 1940, and second was the works of Robert's grandson, Robert Louis Stevenson, who used his three-year apprenticeship as an engineer as the base material for many of his greatest tales, including *Kidnapped* and *Jekyll & Hyde*. Bella Bathurst tells the story of the family who stuck to lighthouses for so long that lighthouses stuck to them.

Sleepers in the Snow • Joanne Harris

Friday 9 October, 4pm–5pm

Holy Trinity Church • £15

Out on the moor, in the snow, a house stands beneath a pylon. It is a house full of memories, and full of old things. The house, Kirkhill, has a new occupant - just moved in, fresh from a bitter divorce and looking for a fresh start. The moor is the perfect place for it: isolated and peaceful. Only as the nights start to draw in, and the weather takes a turn, so does the house. The cosy isolation becomes menacing, and the diaries of the previous owners begin to reveal a terrible tragedy which befell Kirkhill. *Sleepers in the Snow* is an astonishing, original and powerful novel of love, loss, mystery and dementia, from bestselling author Joanne Harris.

Patrons' Drinks and Canapés

Friday 9 October, 6pm–7:30pm

The Straw Yard • FREE to Patrons, booking required.

Patrons of Berwick Literary Festival are invited to a free drinks event. We will be serving canapés along with a cocktail and non-alcoholic option. The event is nestled between events with authors Joanne Harris and Alistair Moffat, and will give patrons an opportunity to enjoy refreshments before the evening talk.

To find out more about becoming a Patron, visit berwickliteraryfestival.com/patrons

The North Sea • Alistair Moffat

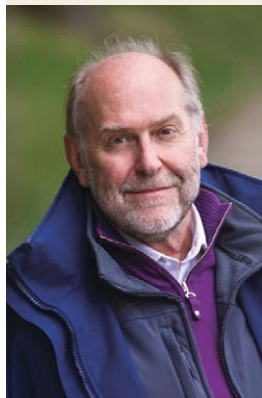
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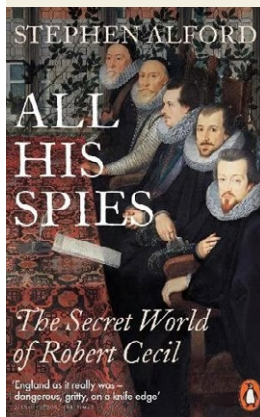
Holy Trinity Church • £15

Running from Kent and the Rhine estuary to the Norwegian coast and the tip of the Shetland islands, The North Sea has been home to warring tribes, foreign invaders, lost civilisations and holidaymakers. With a history that spans millennia, these waters contain a multitude of stories. Alistair Moffat spent a year travelling its shores to better understand our relationship to this life-giving and destructive sea and examines how it has shaped who we are today.

“My favourite kind of travel writing: lyrical prose but also endlessly fascinating stories that reminds us of the rich and deep history of our east coast and waters beyond.”

JAMES HOLLAND





All His Spies, The Secret World of Robert Cecil **Stephen Alford**

Saturday 10 October, 10am–11am

Sunday 11 October, 2pm–3pm

Berwick Parish Centre • £10

Robert Cecil, statesman and spymaster, lived through an astonishingly threatening period in English history. Queen Elizabeth had no clear successor, and enemies both external and internal threatened to destroy England as a Protestant state, most spectacularly with the Spanish Armada and the Gunpowder Plot.

All His Spies shows how easily these dramas could have turned out very differently. Cecil's sureness of purpose, his espionage network and good luck all conspired to keep England uninvaded and to create a new 'British' monarchy which has endured to the present day.



Our Brains, Ourselves • Masud Husain

Saturday 10 October, 10am–11am

Salvation Army Hall • £10

Through the stories of seven of his patients, acclaimed Oxford University neurologist Masud Husain shows us how our brains create our identity, how that identity can be changed, and sometimes even be restored. Among the people we encounter is a man who used to be the life and soul of the party but has now become profoundly apathetic, another who ran out of words, and a woman who believed she was having an affair with the man who was really her husband.

“Husain's empathetic and engaging portraits tell a wider story about identity and belonging and the fundamental question of what makes each of us who we are”

THE TIMES BEST BOOKS OF 2025

BOOK YOUR TICKETS NOW: berwickliteraryfestival.com

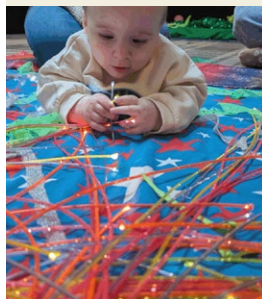
Sensory Storytelling with Adventure Babies

Saturday 10 October, 10:30am–11:30am & 12 noon–1pm

Berwick Library • FREE, but booking required

We are delighted that Ashleigh from Adventure Babies is back with us again to tell stories in Berwick Library on Festival Saturday. Join us to take your little ones on a storytelling adventure.

Featuring interactive puppets, props, music, sensory play, lights and bespoke parachutes to bring a brilliant book to life, the session is suitable for accompanied children from birth to three years old.



Babblin' Animal Raps • Christian Foley

Saturday 10 October, 11.30am–12.30pm

The Guildhall • FREE, but booking required

What to expect in this (very) interactive rap show? Picking from a selection of 101 poems... Expect Golfn' Dolphins, Lionel-El Messi Vs Christiano Prawnaldo, basketballing kangaroos, spider strikers, raving ravens, donut baking dodos and Krill Bill (who's really chill).

Expect tongue twisting tantalising tales with tap dancing tarantulas and so much more. Expect a frenzy of freestyle songs, purrfect poems and absolute animal anthems to make the crowd go wild.

“Rhythm, rhyme and rap, what more could you want from the lyrical acrobat, Christian Foley... a banger of a book that has me and my whole crew completely hooked!”



Cafe Cùil Cookbook: Recipes from the Isle of Skye

Clare Coghill

Saturday 10 October, 12 noon–1pm

Salvation Army Hall • £10

Cafe Cùil faces the sea just outside stunning Carbost in the Isle of Skye. In this idyllic setting, award-winning chef Clare Coghill celebrates Highland produce, reimagines traditional Scottish dishes and puts a Hebridean twist on some global ones.

This isn't a book that demands fancy techniques; instead it shows how easy it can be to cook delicious dishes without taking things too seriously, using many of the ingredients we have on our doorstep, whether you're in Skye or Spittal. *This event is kindly sponsored by Berwick Slow Food.*



“Island life on a plate. Clare serves up the true spirit of Skye, with a modern, delicious flair.”

COINNEACH MACLEOD,
THE HEBRIDEAN BAKER



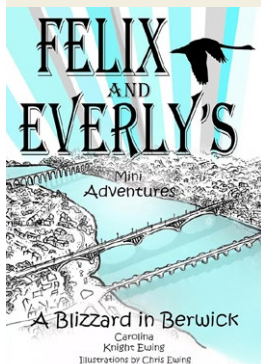
Battle: The Moments that Transformed Warfare from Ancient Greece to Ukraine • Iain MacGregor

Saturday 10 October, 12 noon–1pm

Berwick Parish Centre • £10

Across three millennia, wars have been won not simply by numbers or weapons, but by morale, leadership, innovation and timing. In this talk, author and historian Iain MacGregor takes audiences on a gripping journey from Marathon and Alesia to Gettysburg and Stalingrad, exploring the decisive moments when history turned on a single battle. Drawing on eyewitness testimony, battlefield research and fresh analysis, Iain reveals why certain clashes mattered – and why their lessons continue to shape modern conflict.

This is a compelling exploration of how human decision-making under extreme pressure has forged nations, empires and the world we inhabit today. *This event is kindly sponsored by SSAFA.*



A Blizzard in Berwick • Carolina Ewing

Saturday 10 October, 1:30pm–2:30pm

Berwick Library • FREE, but booking required

Carolina Knight Ewing, the author of *Felix and Everly's Mini Adventures*, will be running a session in Berwick Library for early readers (suitable for 5-10 years old with accompanying parent).

The books are set in the region, including one based in Berwick, and the interactive session will include chapter readings, and will focus on the wildlife and animals that feature in the stories. There will also be a Q&A and an activity sheet to take home.



A Chainsaw Massacre: recovering from the felling of a tree • David Breeze

Saturday 10 October, 2pm–3pm

Salvation Army Hall • £10

The felling of the tree in Sycamore Gap in 2024 led to a world-wide outpouring of grief. Eighty archaeologists came together to offer comfort in the form of a book in which each described their favourite place on Hadrian's Wall. A second book, also edited by David Breeze, about trees along Hadrian's Wall and their history, followed.

David Breeze is a British archaeologist, teacher and scholar of Hadrian's Wall, the Antonine Wall and the Roman Army. *This event is kindly sponsored by the Border Archaeological Society.*

Bloodaxe Poets • James Berry Poetry Prizewinners**Saturday 10 October, 2pm–3:15pm****Berwick Parish Centre • £10**

Clementine Ewokolo Burnley, Nadine El-Enany and Roshni Gallagher were the three equal 2024 winners of Bloodaxe's James Berry Poetry Prize, Britain's only poetry prize offering both expert mentoring and book publication for young or emerging poets of colour.

In her debut collection, *Belling the Leopard*, Clementine Ewokolo Burnley asks what remains after once-familiar places and people have gone. Her poems criss-cross the Atlantic beginning in the 1850s.

The poems of Nadine El-Enany's debut collection *Pelican Daughter* are imbued with tenderness and fuelled by a hunger for justice, connection and a more empathic world. She lectures in law and lives in London.

Roshni Gallagher is a poet from Leeds of mixed Indo-Guyanese and Irish heritage who now lives in Edinburgh. In her debut collection, *Even the Trees*, Roshni explores the porous boundary between the past and the present, and how ecological landscapes and landscapes of the mind and body are permanently altered by migration and memory.

**Between the Salt and the Ash • Jake Morris-Campbell****Saturday 10 October, 4pm–5pm****Salvation Army Hall • £10**

After inheriting the miner's safety lamp that belonged to his great-grandfather, Jake Morris-Campbell set out on a pilgrimage across his homeland. Travelling from the Holy Island of Lindisfarne to Durham Cathedral, he asks what new ways might be made through the old north. Jake's journey along the 'Camino of the North' sees him explore the shifting individual and regional identity across 1300 years of social change, rejecting the damaging trope of 'left behind' communities.

**Hope I Get Old Before I Die • David Hepworth****Saturday 10 October, 4pm–5pm****The Straw Yard • £10**

David Hepworth has spent far too much of his life thinking about pop records and rock stars. Thanks to TV programmes like *Whistle Test* and magazines like *Smash Hits* and *Q*, he has managed to turn this into gainful employment. Among his best-selling books are *Never A Dull Moment: 1971 The Year That Rock Exploded*, *Uncommon People* and *Abbey Road*. His latest, *Hope I Get Old Before I Die*, is about our rock heroes in their Third Age.



**The Meaning of Life • James Bailey & Kathryn Mannix****Saturday 10 October, 6pm–7pm****Salvation Army Hall • £10**

What gives life meaning? And how does our awareness of mortality shape the way we live? James Bailey asked one hundred remarkable people: what is the meaning of life? He will be sharing his findings, alongside one of the book's contributors, acclaimed palliative care doctor and writer Kathryn Mannix. Drawing on reflections from figures including Dame Jane Goodall, Yusuf / Cat Stevens and Dame Hilary Mantel, this thoughtful and uplifting conversation explores purpose, love, loss, happiness and what truly matters in our brief time on earth.

**Lessons From a Life in Diplomacy****Simon McDonald****Saturday 10 October, 7:30pm–8:30pm****Holy Trinity Church • £15**

Simon McDonald joined the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) in 1982 and, early in his career, served in Jeddah, Riyadh, Bonn and Washington, D.C. He was British Ambassador to Israel (2003-2006) and to Germany (2010-15).

In September 2015 Simon became Permanent Under-Secretary at the FCO and Head of the Diplomatic Service. After leaving the FCO in Autumn 2020, he was appointed a life peer, taking his seat in the House of Lords as a crossbencher in February 2021.

In conversation, Simon will talk about his life in diplomacy and his writing.

**Emergence: Writing Truth • Alison Smith****Sunday 11 October, 10am–12 noon****The Straw Yard • £25**

Truth emerges when the voice is free.

Join poet, author teacher and coach, Alison Smith for a two hour workshop where you will hear, read, write and share poetry – powerful words in powerful combinations.

Alison will explore what a poem is, and will share her own poems as well as her favourites by other poets. There will then be a creative exercise designed to free the poet within. We will end by a sharing and celebration of the poems written. This workshop is for both new and experienced poets.

Berwick Literary Festival and Maltings present

Phyllis Dalton A Career in Costume: Lawrence of Arabia to The Princess Bride • Alexander Ballinger

Sunday 11 October, 10am–11am

Maltings Cinema at Berwick Barracks • £10

Illustrated with a generous selection of images from Phyllis Dalton's extraordinary archive, Alexander Ballinger tells the story of Phyllis Dalton, one of the most celebrated film costume designers of the 20th Century. Alexander spent almost a decade in exclusive interviews with Phyllis (1925-2025) and the result is an entertaining and revelatory book about her work on films such as *Lawrence of Arabia*, *Doctor Zhivago*, Kenneth Branagh's *Henry V* and cult classics *The Princess Bride* and Disney spectacular *The Spaceman and King Arthur* (1979), which was filmed almost entirely at Alnwick Castle.

An Intimate Portrait of Audrey Hepburn

Wendy Holden

Sunday 11 October, 12 noon–1pm

The Guildhall • £10

Bestselling author and former war correspondent Wendy Holden reveals why she was chosen to co-author the first authorised biography of Audrey Hepburn. A deeply personal insight into the life of the Hollywood star, *Intimate Audrey* is full of untold stories by the person who knew her best – her son, Sean. Forged by war, Audrey never forgot being under Nazi occupation and drew on it to become a fierce advocate for children in war. "She was a lioness with the gentlest of hearts."

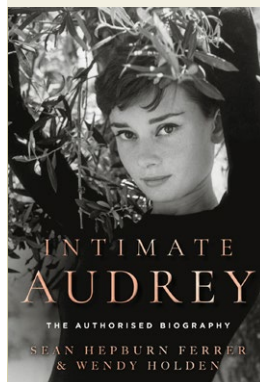
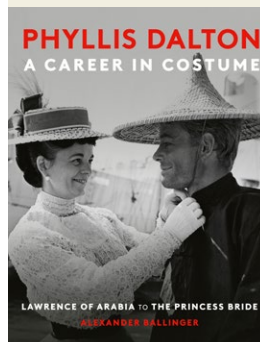
Berwick Literary Festival and Maltings present

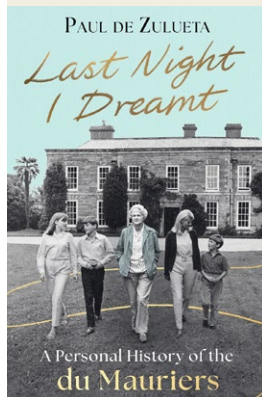
Finding my way to write I, Julian • Claire Gilbert

Sunday 11 October, 12 noon–1pm

Maltings Cinema at Berwick Barracks • £10

Claire Gilbert will speak of the way Julian of Norwich guided her through two and a half years of gruelling treatment for cancer, including how to find a new and much deeper writing voice in *Miles to Go Before I Sleep*. *I, Julian* was written at the end of the treatment as an act of homage. Claire will talk about how using her creative imagination to write a fictional autobiography brought her closer to the truth of Julian than a factual biography.





Berwick Literary Festival and Maltings present

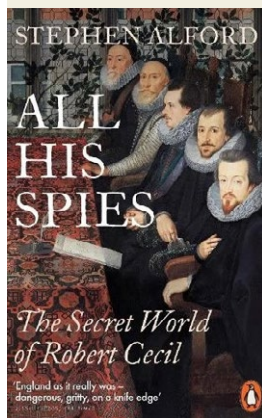
Last Night I Dreamt: A Personal History

of the du Mauriers • Paul de Zulueta

Sunday 11 October, 2pm–3pm

Maltings Cinema at Berwick Barracks • £10

Paul de Zulueta is the eldest grandson of Daphne du Maurier, and in his intimate, revelatory family biography, has drawn on private family archives, new interviews and his own memories of his grandmother, a woman who was central to his early life. In doing so, he gives us an extraordinary look into the world of Daphne du Maurier with rare closeness and emotional candour, and a moving portrait of one of the great British artistic families of the 19th and 20th centuries.



All His Spies, The Secret World of Robert Cecil

Stephen Alford

Sunday 11 October, 2pm–3pm

Berwick Parish Centre • £10

By popular demand we are delighted that Stephen is back for a second session. Robert Cecil, statesman and spymaster, lived through an astonishingly threatening period in English history. Queen Elizabeth had no clear successor, and enemies both external and internal threatened to destroy England as a Protestant state, most spectacularly with the Spanish Armada and the Gunpowder Plot.

All His Spies shows how easily these dramas could have turned out very differently. Cecil's sureness of purpose, his espionage network and good luck all conspired to keep England uninvaded and to create a new 'British' monarchy which has endured to the present day.



Celebrating words: Written, Spoken

and Performed • Louis de Bernières

Sunday 11 October, 4pm–5pm

Holy Trinity Church • £15

To end our 13th Festival in style, Louis de Bernières will be talking about the writer's life, and reading from his poetry, his last novel, *Light Over Liskeard*, and his new memoir *Smelling of Rooks*. Louis is an English author, well known for his novels including *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*, *Birds Without Wings* and *So Much Life Left Over*. He is also a music lover, and plays several instruments. Louis believes that everything he knows about poetry can and should be made use of in his songwriting, and not surprisingly many of his songs are stories.

Berwick Writers' Forum

Berwick Writers' Forum connects writers across Berwick and the surrounding area. Through events, conversations and shared projects, we're building a welcoming community for writers at every stage, from first-time scribblers to published authors. Join us for *Cabaret of Words*, our bi-monthly open mic night, and *Between the Lines*, our live author conversation series. We're also developing new opportunities for writers to meet, collaborate and share their work.

If writing is part of your life, we'd love you to be part of ours.

Join the Community

Scan to learn more and join the Forum.



The Cabaret of Words

Thursday 20 August 2026

Thursday 8 October 2026

Our popular bi-monthly open mic night for writers, performers and lovers of the spoken word. A warm, welcoming evening of original writing, live performance and community.

Whether you're reading work aloud or simply listening from the audience, everyone is welcome.



Between the Lines

The Straw Yard

A bi-monthly live conversation series exploring how writing really happens.

Recorded as a podcast at The Straw Yard, each event invites an author into an honest discussion about process, doubt, discipline, publishing and creative life.

Audience questions are an integral part of the evening!

Forthcoming dates at The Straw Yard for your diary:

- Thursday 10 September 2026
- Thursday 12 November 2026
- Thursday 14 January 2027



Stories from England's Northern Edge

A new digital anthology showcasing writing connected to Berwick and the surrounding area. From poetry and memoir to fiction and creative non-fiction, the anthology celebrates place, identity and the many ways writers find their way through the world.

Submissions are currently open for the 2026 anthology until September and details can be found on our website.

With thanks to Create Berwick, Northumberland County Council and the North East Combined Authority, for supporting these projects.



Writing Crime on Northern Ground

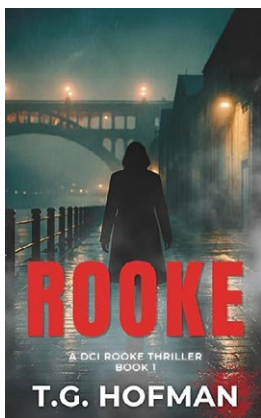
**Friday 21 August, 7pm– 8pm. Bar opens at 6.30pm
Duns Volunteer Hall • £10**

Join acclaimed crime authors Clare Grant and T.G. Hofman as they discuss their research, plotlines and star detectives with Berwick Writers' Forum's Clare English.

Clare Grant is the author of *Winter of Shadows*, the first in an acclaimed historical thriller series set in 1860s York. A former journalist, she blends meticulous research with page-turning suspense.

T.G. Hofman is a writer, theatre director and cultural producer, who is also a Presiding Justice in the criminal courts of England and Wales. *Rooke* is the first novel in a gripping British Crime Thriller set in the North East.

“In *DCI Rooke*, Hoffman has created a detective worthy of comparison to the best in the genre, clever, flawed but brilliantly believable.” JONATHAN DARBY



*This event is kindly supported by
The Blackhill Windfarm Community Fund.*



Scan to book

Open Studios

Berwick Open Studios offers an exciting opportunity for visitors to the town, as well as residents, to visit artists' studios and not only experience their creative processes, but also buy wonderful pieces direct from the makers themselves. Find out more at www.createberwick.co.uk/berwickopenstudios.



BERWICK
STYLE & CULTURE
MAGAZINE

Art : Music : Makers : People
www.berwickstyle.com

Style and Culture

Whether you're planning a visit, looking for something to do, or wanting to discover more about the place you call home, you'll find comprehensive What's On listings, local guides and more at www.berwickstyle.com.

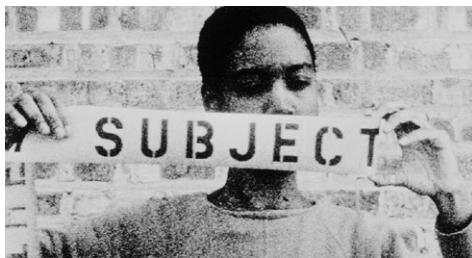
CineNova at The Burr Film Library

Saturdays, 12 noon – 4pm
The Burr Film Library • FREE

Pop in for a browse and a cuppa!

The Berwick Film & Media Arts Festival hosts a year-round film library, a programme of film events, workshops and conversations.

From 1 Aug - 31 Oct, browse Cinenova's feminist short-films made between the 1910s to the early 2000s. These films explore relations and alliances between different struggles.



Tideline Runners • RJ Flynn

Monday 5 October, 7pm–8pm

YHA Meeting rooms • £5 donation to YHA charity

Tickets are available from YHA reception, payable on the door. Limited numbers.

We recommend an age rating of 14+ due to mature themes and occasional strong language (stated on the poster).

Berwick-based playwright RJ Flynn and Tideline Runners present a chance to see performances of early drafts from upcoming productions. (Performed 'script-in-hand')

Minotaur: A queer take on 'Theseus in the Underworld', existing between traditional Greek theatre, Ibsen-style chamber theatre and opera.

Rattlesnakes: The effects of justice system's effects on victims, perpetrators and their families from working class backgrounds.

Lifting From The Floor: A short two-hand work about the restorative power of solitude versus the eroding entropy of loneliness presented in its entirety.



Schools & Young People's Programme

The SYP has been a fundamental part of the BLF since its inception 12 years ago. We offer events in the library, local schools and The Guildhall to young people across the age span from toddlers to 6th Formers. All our events are completely free of charge.

This year, our exciting programme includes author Simon James Green; poet John Osborne; poet, performer and rap artist Christian Foley; motivational speaker and football referee Janie Frampton; Tourette's ambassador and author Paul Stevenson, and storyteller Kristina Stevenson.

Last year around 900 children in this area enjoyed our free events. Thanks are due to the six hard working members of the Young People's committee who plan and bring together these ambitious programmes.

Judy Crow

Convenor SYP Berwick Literary Festival

Rotary Competition Awards

The short story writing competition organised by Berwick Rotary for local schools, has been integral to the Festival since 2014, when Christopher Smith and a small team got the ball(point pen) rolling. Shortlisted students are invited to an award ceremony in the Guildhall, where excerpts are read and prizewinners announced. This event is highly popular with students and carers, and regrettably it is not possible to accommodate members of the public.

Janie Frampton – EOTAS and High Schools

Janie Frampton cemented her place in history as the second woman referee to operate in the men's professional game of football in England. She says her journey in football taught her that resilience matters, but so does being kind to yourself. Everyone has difficult days, and that's okay; what matters is finding the confidence to keep going, believe in your dreams and never let others decide what you can achieve. Using the experience Janie learned from the pitch, she hopes to inspire young people to be ambitious, courageous, resilient and proud of who they are becoming.

Janie will be visiting high schools and is also working with EOTAS and SEN students, which is kindly sponsored by the North Northumberland branch of the National Autism Society.

"I know what it takes to lead under pressure, challenge norms, and succeed in spaces where you're not expected to."

Janie Frampton OBE





The Literary Conversation Grows

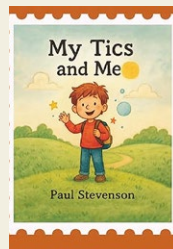
The popular 'A Literary Conversation' project will run for the 3rd year and involve high schools including Berwick Academy. Students create postcard-sized recommendations of books to share with other schools. Schools involved will display the cards, as will Berwick Library. This year we'd also like to invite all participating adults to make a book recommendation for 13-14 year olds. There will be an event at Berwick Library when the books will be displayed and the students can exchange their recommendations.

Sir Charlie Stinky Socks, Primary and Special Schools

Sir Charlie Stinky Socks is bold, brave and awfully clever. He likes adventures with wily witches, terrible beasts and fire breathing dragons. Oh, and he has a cat called Envelope. Children from years 2 & 3 of our primary schools will be finding out in this fun-filled interactive event as they help Kristina Stephenson bring Sir Charlie's story alive with music, puppets, costumes, magical props and more laughs than you can waft away with a stinky sock.

Paul Stevenson – High Schools

Paul Stevenson is a lived experience advocate, speaker, author of the children's book *My Tics and Me*, and played a role in the award-winning film *I Swear*.



Diagnosed later in life with Tourette Syndrome, ADHD, and OCD, Paul now uses storytelling to challenge stigma and improve understanding. With humour and humility, he will talk to high school students about how awareness can grow into understanding, acceptance, and inclusion for children and families.

John Osborne, Primary and High Schools

In a workshop celebrating the poetic power of the seaside, poet John Osborne will be running sessions to help students create their own seaside poem. Surrounded by a variety of seaside objects to write about and inspire, this will be a new way to enjoy the seaside.

John is an experienced teacher, having taught creative writing in primary schools, universities and festivals across the country.



See pages 19 and 20 for FREE SYP events open to the public over the Festival weekend.

During your visit, we invite you to explore and support all the local enterprises that help to make Berwick such a vibrant and welcoming place.

Rest & Refresh

The Corner House Café Church Street, TD15 1EE

Enjoy the cosy surroundings and warm atmosphere at The Corner House Café, where you can taste locally roasted coffee and delicious food while perhaps comparing notes with fellow festival goers or meeting a speaker.

Opening times

Monday to Saturday 10am–4pm

Sunday 11 October 11am–3pm

The Straw Yard • Parade, TD15 1DF

Will be open daily especially for Festival week, offering a friendly place to chat and grab a drink.

Opening times

Monday 5 to Sunday 11 October 10am–4pm
and around our speaker events.

Books

Books featured during the Festival will be available to buy and have signed by the author at most events. They can also be bought from The Book Loft on Marygate, TD15 1AX www.thebookloft.co.uk

The Book Loft is a bright, welcoming, independent bookshop in the heart of Berwick-upon-Tweed, a place where stories, community and coastal life come together. Thoughtfully curated and full of discovery, the bookshop opened in October 2025 and offers a wide range of books for all ages and various interests, alongside beautiful stationery and carefully chosen bookish gifts.

Our venues

- 1 **Berwick Library**
Walkergate, TD15 1DB
- 2 **Berwick Parish Centre**
Parade, TD15 1DF
- 3 **Holy Trinity Church**
Parade, TD15 1DF
- 4 **Maltings Cinema at Berwick Barracks** TD15 1DQ
- 5 **Martins the Printers**
Seaview Works, Main St,
Spittal, TD15 1RS
- 6 **Salvation Army Hall**
Church Street, TD15 1EE
- 7 **St Aidan's Hall**
Church Street, TD15 1DX
- 8 **The Guildhall**
Marygate, TD15 1BN
- 9 **The Straw Yard**
Parade, TD15 1DF
- 10 **The Book Loft**
Marygate, TD15 1AX

Beyond the Town

Ad Gefrin South Road, Wooler, NE71 6NJ

Duns Volunteer Hall Duns, TD11 3AF

Wooler Library

Cheviot Centre, Wooler, NE71 6BL



Berwick map



All our venues are wheelchair accessible; for the Guildhall, arrangements must be made in advance with the custodian: 01289 330900.

For more information about our town, where to park, where to eat and stay and other local attractions and events, see visitberwick.com

How to book

Online

Directly using the links in this brochure or on the Maltings' website.

maltingsberwick.co.uk

To book **multiple events** in one online transaction, after booking your first event click **What's on** at the top of the page and add the next event within 10 minutes. After that your basket will be cleared so tickets can be made available to others.

By Phone

01289 330999 when the cinema is open for film screenings. The schedule can be seen on the Maltings' website maltingsberwick.co.uk. At other times a message can be left and you will receive a call-back when the box office is manned.

In Person at

Maltings Cinema at Berwick Barracks when open for film screenings, now accessible via the Ravensdowne gate. The schedule can be seen on the Maltings' website maltingsberwick.co.uk

In addition Maltings' Cinema box office will be open:

Fri 9 October, 10am – 1pm

Sat 10 October, 10am – 1pm

Sun 11 October, 9:30am – 1pm

At the door if the event is not at capacity (by card or cash).

Contact us

Berwick Literary Festival

Berwick Community Trust,
56-58 Castlegate,
Berwick-upon-Tweed,
Northumberland TD15 1JT

info@berwickliteraryfestival.com
berwickliteraryfestival.com



@berwicklitfest #berwicklitfest

Details correct at time of printing. We may need to change details due to circumstances beyond our control, in which case we will try to advise ticket holders as soon as possible.

IMAGE CREDITS

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