

Derby Book Festival

22 - 31 May
2026



Illustration by
Ailija Davidaviciute

Bringing Books to Life



derbybookfestival.co.uk



National
Year of
Reading
2026



Supported using public funding by
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ENGLAND**

Welcome to our Summer Festival



Introduction from Professor Keith McLay, Chair of Derby Book Festival and Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the University of Derby



It is my pleasure to welcome you to Derby Book Festival and to tell you more about the busy programme of events that are planned for 2026 – the National Year of Reading.

The Festival is now in its 11th year and its success in inspiring a love of reading across all ages in Derby and Derbyshire is something to be celebrated. Every year Derby Book Festival brings together communities, provides creative opportunities and strengthens partnerships.

For 2026, we have introduced a brand-new Shared Reading Podcast to celebrate the joy of Shared Reading with local voices and authors from across the East Midlands. In March, we hosted our second World Book Day event at Derby Market Hall: an event filled with storytelling, authors, illustrators and books.

The Summer Festival, which will run from 22 May to 31 May, will showcase a broad programme that brings together politics, history, popular culture, environment and appearances from celebrated and favourite authors.

Alongside this, the community programme provides creative opportunities, including the Flash Fiction Writing Competition, with this year's theme 'Hope', and the Derby Children's Picture Book Award.

There is plenty to look forward to and I hope that you enjoy the Derby Book Festival summer programme. The team and I look forward to meeting you.

Thank you from Professor Kathryn Mitchell CBE DL, Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive of the University of Derby



Derby Book Festival is a wonderful celebration of stories and ideas, championing the power of reading to bring people together.

As a Civic University and a committed champion of local arts and culture, the University of Derby is proud to support the Festival and its vital role in enriching Derby's cultural life. We firmly believe in the transformative power of learning, curiosity and creativity to make a positive difference both locally and globally.

This commitment is reflected in the Festival's vibrant programme of events, which offers something for everyone: from captivating author talks to inspiring workshops and community activities.

As a founding and strategic partner, it has been a privilege to see Derby Book Festival grow and flourish over the past decade, reaching people across our city, region and beyond.

We hope you enjoy this year's Derby Book Festival and thank you for being part of its continuing success.

Accessibility

We want our Festival to be inclusive and all our venues are accessible. We work closely with them to ensure they can deal with your needs - check their websites for further details.

We work with Communication Unlimited to provide translations of events into BSL. If there is an event you would like to attend and need assistance at the venue or a BSL interpreter, email hello@derbybookfestival.co.uk and we will arrange this.



Front cover illustration by Ailija Davidaviciute.
Design by Gravity Digital.

Derby Book Festival is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation registered with the Charity Commission for England & Wales Number 1159763.

How to book your tickets

You can find full event details at: www.derbybookfestival.co.uk where you can book tickets online for ALL events at ALL venues. You can also link to the website by scanning the QR code.

You can also book tickets ...

- For events at QUAD: online, in person for the events they are hosting. Please check QUAD's website for opening times.
- For CivicLAB events at Derby Theatre: online, by phone (**01332 593939**) or in person.
- Online only for all events at other venues (Derby College, Derby Museums, Kedleston Hall, Landau Forte College, St Peter's Church).
- Online only for all recorded events and the Digital Pass.

Please note: A booking fee will be added by the venue to all tickets for events at QUAD. QUAD has allocated seating and you will need to choose your seat/s when you book.

Tickets are non-refundable and non-exchangeable unless an event is cancelled. If events sell out we will have a waiting list held by the box office for that event.



Student and School tickets

We offer the following for all events, other than ones with refreshments:

- University of Derby students £5 tickets
- FREE tickets to students aged 15 – 18 at Derby City secondary schools and Derby College for most Festival events.

To book tickets: students must email from their University of Derby email address and school students need to email giving their school name to: hello@derbybookfestival.co.uk

If schools want to bring groups of students to events, please mail the same address so we can discuss arrangements.

How to watch events

We offer three ways to enjoy the Festival. You can buy:

- tickets to join us in-person at our venues
- individual recordings of events, so you can watch them at home after the Festival ends
- a Digital Pass to give you access to all recorded events. Check Derby Book Festival's website for full details of in-person and recorded events.

Individual recorded events

Cost: Each recording costs half the in-person ticket price unless otherwise stated on the website eg. catered events, which will cost £5 each.

Digital Pass

Cost: £60 for 29 events

Our Digital Pass enables you to watch recordings of 29 events filmed at venues during the Festival. These are indicated with this symbol  in the programme. You will receive the links giving you access to our YouTube channel after the end of the Festival and they will be available to view for a period of six weeks* from 5th June to 17th July.

To buy your Digital Pass, visit our website.

*Please note that some events may be available for a shorter period of time if the author has requested this. We will give you this information when you book your Digital Pass.

Tickets

If you want a physical ticket, print off your confirmation email which you will receive after booking online. If you are unable to book tickets online, please email: hello@derbybookfestival.co.uk and we will help you.

Please arrive in good time to pick up your tickets for the event and get to your seat.

Most Festival events last approximately one hour, with a 45 minute author talk/ interview followed by a 15 minute Q&A with the audience. At most events we have a bookstall plus author signing after the event.

Travel and Parking

We are committed to finding ways to reduce the environmental impact of the Festival. We would encourage you to walk, cycle or use public transport to get to our venues but realise this is not always practical. If you are arriving by car, you can get discounted parking when visiting most of our venues. Check website for details.

Takeover Day Pass - Sunday 24 May

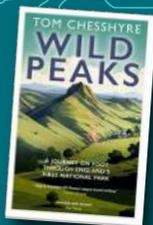
Join us at Derby College for our Takeover Day - Pass and individual tickets available. See pages 7 - 9 for full details.

Friday

22 May

Tom Chesshyre

Wild Peaks: A Journey on Foot Through England's First National Park



11am - 12pm

St Peter's Church | £10 | 

In 1932, 400 disgruntled ramblers embarked on a 'mass trespass' of Kinder Scout aiming to establish a right to roam, against the wishes of wealthy landowners. Eventually they succeeded.

In 1951, the Peak District became Britain's first national park. Home to striking dragon-back ridges of rock, vast expanses of peat, farms and villages, cloughs and caverns, the Peak is much more than the 'howling wilderness' described by Daniel Defoe.

To mark the park's 75th anniversary, Tom Chesshyre hit the trails on a 363-mile ramble to find out how this dramatic landscape has fared - and to celebrate this symbolic home of hiking.

Peter Ross

Upon a White Horse

1.30pm - 2.30pm

St Peter's Church | £10 | 

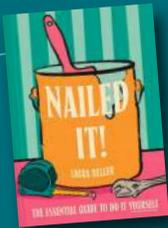


Peter Ross returns to Derby with a celebration of landscape and people - and all that is beautiful, strange and old. The prehistoric sites of Britain and Ireland are places of wonder and wondering, but who made these structures, why, and what do they mean to us now?

Peter journeys from midwinter at Stonehenge to midsummer at Sycamore Gap. Along the way he encounters bog bodies in Dublin, a wooden goddess in Edinburgh and a chalk giant in Dorset. What was it like to live within the great stone circle at Avebury, what rituals occurred in an Anglesey tomb, and what draws volunteers to care for the Uffington White Horse?

Laura Deller

Nailed It!



5.15pm - 6.15pm

Museum of Making | £10/£24
for both author event & workshop

Do you dream of a beautifully decorated home, but have never been taught the practical skills to achieve this? Are you overwhelmed by DIY stores with their endless aisles and jargon-laden signage?

Blogger Laura Deller of @houseprojectuk teaches you everything you need to know with budget-friendly and doable projects, from upcycling to flat-pack hacks. Laura will give you an introduction to power tools, decorating hacks and answer your DIY dilemmas.

Workshop with Laura Deller

6.30pm - 7.30pm | Museum of Making
£14 to include materials

Laura will demonstrate and take you through how to make a bobbin picture frame to take home. All materials and tools supplied for the workshop.

Jonathan Wilson

The Power and the Glory: A New History of the World Cup

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7.30pm - 8.30pm

QUAD | £12 | 



Guardian sports journalist Jonathan Wilson returns to Derby at a time when World Cup fever will be peaking. The football World Cup is the most watched sporting event on the planet. It has become a global obsession: 211 nations initially entered the 2022 edition. It has been running for almost a century.

Yet there has never been a comprehensive history of the World Cup that has considered not only the matches and goals, the players and coaches, the tales of scandal and genius, the haggling and skulduggery of the bidding process, but has also placed the tournaments within a socio-political framework.



Saturday

23 May

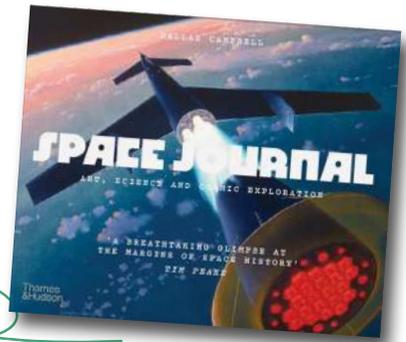
Dallas Campbell

Space Journal: Art, Science and Cosmic Exploration

11.15am - 12.15pm | QUAD | £10 | 

Dallas Campbell is best known for presenting popular science shows, including *Stargazing Live* and *City in the Sky* on BBC2. He is also a podcaster looking at the history of inventions and how new space technologies are re-shaping our world. *Space Journal* is a celebration of space exploration told through the visual imagination of great dreamers from the 16th Century to today.

From Galileo's shopping list to speeches annotated in President John F. Kennedy's own hand, from *The Clangers* to *Space Invaders*, he sets out the radical thinkers and doers who have launched us towards the final frontier.



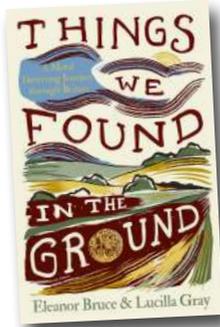
Eleanor Bruce & Lucilla Gray

Things We Found in the Ground

1.30pm - 2.30pm
QUAD | £10 | 

Meeting for the first time in over 20 years at their grandfather's home in Lincolnshire, metal detectorist cousins Ellie and Lucie quickly learn that each has a fascination with unearthing historic artefacts, which sets them off on their metal detecting journey ...

Over many weeks and months spent digging countless holes, the pair make startling discoveries; about the objects they find and what they tell us about our ancestors, about themselves and about the power of community, as they forge connections with local villagers, detectorists and history lovers.



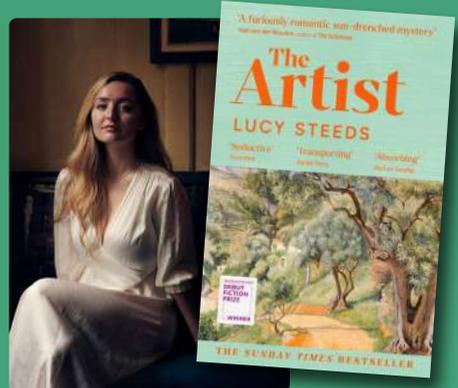
Lucy Steeds

The Artist

3.30pm - 4.30pm
QUAD | £10 | 

Lucy's debut novel has garnered many awards in 2025, including Waterstones Book of the Year, and was longlisted for the Women's Prize for Fiction.

Set in Provence in 1920, it is a beautiful, haunting story of a young art critic who secures an interview with the reclusive painter, the great Edouard Tartuffe. He lives alone in a remote farmhouse with his mysterious niece Ettie, who silently creates the conditions that make her uncle's genius possible. But she has secrets which have been hidden for years and are finally revealed over the course of the summer.



Saturday 23 May

Continued

National Trust

Deepa Anappara

The Last of Earth

5.30pm - 6.30pm

Kedleston Hall

£12 to include a visit to the exhibition after the event



Kedleston Hall's latest exhibition, *How Did We Get Here?* is a collaboration between the National Trust and members of the Tibetan community living in Britain. Spotlighting a few of the Tibetan objects from Kedleston's colonial museum collection, it explores how they came to be in Derbyshire, what they mean to the British-Tibetans today, and what the National Trust is doing to uncover these stories. At the heart of the exhibition is a specially commissioned film by British-Tibetan artist Nyima Murry, capturing poignant encounters between people and objects at Kedleston.

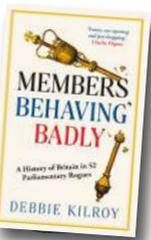
Deepa Anappara's new novel, *The Last of Earth*, complements the exhibition well. It is set in Tibet in 1869, when the Forbidden Kingdom was closed to foreigners and Britain began training Indians – permitted to cross borders that white men may not – to undertake illicit, perilous expeditions within Tibet. The story involves Balam, a surveyor-spy, and Katherine, an unlikely explorer who has a plan to become the first European woman to reach Lhasa and the legendary Potala Palace.

Debbie Kilroy

Members Behaving Badly: A History of Britain in 52 Parliamentary Rogues

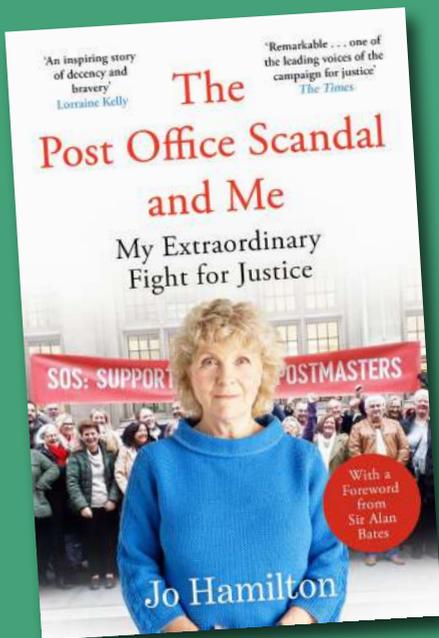
5.30pm - 6.30pm

QUAD | £10 |



It's not just in recent times that Britain has had scandalous stories of MPs who behaved very badly indeed, making history for all the wrong reasons.

The House of Commons has been full of MPs standing up against tyranny; remarkable people doing remarkable things for the good of all. Yet there have been just as many cheats and liars who have played games, played the markets and played the people who put their trust in them. Debbie tells the story of our nation from 1603 to 1945 through 52 of these Parliamentary villains.



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Jo Hamilton

The Post Office Scandal and Me: My Extraordinary Fight for Justice

7.30pm - 8.30pm | QUAD

£12 ticket only/£20 for book and ticket



Jo Hamilton became a familiar face on our TV screens as one of the leading campaigners for justice for over 700 sub-postmasters who, between 2000 and 2014, were prosecuted on the basis of information from the Post Office's faulty Horizon accounting system. She was told to put right a wrong she hadn't committed and was pushed to the very brink of her existence - remortgaging her house, borrowing from anyone she could in order to repay money that she hadn't taken and questioning her own sanity.

Immortalised in ITV's drama, *Mr Bates v The Post Office*, Jo's story is one of hope, the strength of community and the ability of a few to fight back against the odds.

Sunday Takeover Day

24 May

Takeover
Day Pass
£40

Join us for our Takeover Day at Derby College (Roundhouse Campus).

You can buy individual event tickets or a Day Pass to attend all seven events (excluding Writing Workshops and the Festival Book Quiz) in one location.

Events last 55 minutes (45 minute event, 10 minute Q&A), enabling 20 minutes between events, so people can move comfortably between rooms for the next event. Refreshments are available throughout the day at a Starbucks concession.

Derby College has a large, FREE car park available to people attending Festival events. The car park is located off the roundabout between the College campus and the railway station. Security will be present to raise the barrier.

Gilly McArthur

The Beauty of Cold

10am - 10.55am | Engine Room | £10

From reducing stress to improving sleep, the mental and physical health benefits of cold water swimming are well-known. It is one of nature's most powerful resets - a plunge into the wild that clears the mind and awakens the body.

But, beyond the science, there's something more profound: a chance to silence the noise of everyday life and rediscover ourselves through the healing power of cold and the calming embrace of blue spaces. Cold water coach Gilly shares her passion for icy water and wild places, every encounter or 'glimmer' offers a chance for reflection and renewal.



Robert Verkaik

*The Writer and the Traitor:
Graham Greene, Kim Philby
and the Great Betrayal*

11.15am - 12.10pm
Carriage Shop | £10 |

Graham Greene and Kim Philby's friendship is a mystery: Greene, the celebrated novelist who wrestled with themes of faith and betrayal in his work; Philby, the British intelligence officer-turned-spy for the Soviets. The two men met as young MI6 officers during World War Two, working together to defeat the Nazis.

But after Greene suddenly resigned just days before D-Day, questions started to arise. He returned to writing and used his MI6 experience for his novel *Our Man in Havana* and the screenplay of *The Third Man*. Lurking within the pages lay suspicions about his friend, with characters and plots echoing Philby's life.



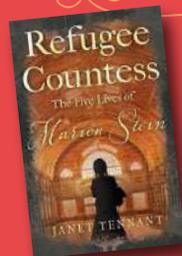
Janet Tennant

*Refugee Countess:
The Five Lives of
Marion Stein*

12.30pm - 1.25pm
Engine Room | £8

Born in Vienna, Marion Stein's family escaped Nazi persecution and settled in London. Destined to become a concert pianist, she lived for a time with composer Benjamin Britten and his partner, before marrying the Earl of Harewood. She had a glittering lifestyle, hosting royalty, travelling widely and developing friendships with many famous musicians and singers. But the marriage did not last.

Alone again, she was courted by famous and influential men. However, the politician she chose was not what he seemed and he was soon involved in a sensational trial. Her loyalty was sorely tested ... as Mrs Jeremy Thorpe.



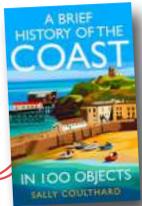
Sunday 24 May

Continued

Sally Coulthard

A Brief History of the Coast in 100 Objects

3pm - 3.55pm
Engine Room | £10



With Derby being 'furthest from the sea', our coast has a special significance for local people who have less access to it than many UK residents. Sally vividly captures the enduring magic and significance of our shores. Through the lens of 100 carefully selected objects, she delves into the myriad ways our coastlines have shaped, and been shaped by, our history, culture and identity. From Roman lighthouses to rosary beads, knitted jumpers to Viking slave shackles, each object serves as a portal to a unique story.

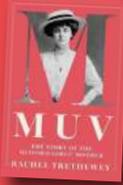
Rachel Trethewey

Muv: The Story of the Mitford Girls' Mother

1.45pm - 2.40pm
Carriage Shop | £10



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Nancy, Pamela, Diana, Unity, Jessica, Deborah: these are the flamboyant Mitford Girls, the Bright Young Things who defined their era. The trials, tribulations and outrageous escapades of these six controversial sisters continue to fascinate us.

Yet what about the seventh and arguably most vital Mitford woman of them all – their mother? Sydney Redesdale, known as 'Muv', is often portrayed as different from her daughters. Without doubt, she was a divisive character: was she a scapegoat or saint, mother or manager? In reality, Sydney was far from 'ordinary': she was the original Mitford girl, from whom much of her daughters' legendary strong will, self-confidence and extremism were born.

Bee Wilson

The Heart-Shaped Tin

4.15pm - 5.10pm
Carriage Shop | £10 |



We all have everyday objects which we cherish, conjuring up deeply personal meanings in our lives.

One ordinary day, the tin in which Bee Wilson baked her wedding cake fell to the ground at her feet. This should have been unremarkable, except that her marriage had just ended.

She began a search for others who have attached strong and even magical meanings to kitchen objects: a beloved parent's salt shaker, a cracked pasta bowl or an inherited china dinner service - all objects which keep the past alive.

Festival Book Quiz



7pm - 8.30pm | Engine Room
£40 for a team of six people (includes finger food platters of veggie or meat dishes). Licensed bar.

No Takeover Day would be complete without the fiercely contested and entertaining Festival Book Quiz! Quizmaster Paul is devising more mind-boggling questions so, if you know your Brontë from your Blyton, come along! You could be the proud recipients of the coveted Winner's Trophy (retained **yet again** last year by Scarthin Books!)

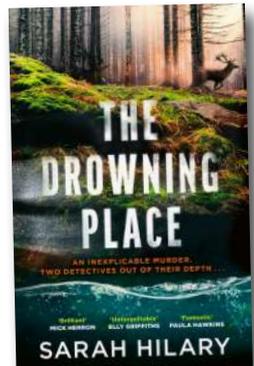
Please note: Whilst there is FREE car parking at Derby College, cars **MUST NOT** be left overnight.

Sarah Hilary

The Drowning Place

5.30pm - 6.25pm
Engine Room | £10

We are delighted to introduce a new Peak District-set crime series by novelist Sarah Hilary. Set in Edenscar, a fictitious town steeped in history and horror, the series follows DS Joseph Ashe, a young man haunted by the ghosts of his past and struggling with survivor's guilt, and DI Laurie Bower, an outsider fighting to fit in. Sarah will explore what makes the Peaks such a great crime setting.



Writing Workshops

(Derby College)

Sunday 24 May

Continued

Do you have a burning desire to write, but don't really know how to get started? Join us to find some inspiration from publishing experts covering a range of genres. Each workshop lasts for 90 minutes. All materials provided.

Ben Davies

Writing for Kids



10.30am - 12pm
£20

The Writing for Kids workshop will focus on how to create engaging stories for ages 6+.

Learn about what is needed for a memorable main character that kids will love. Ben will then move on to plotting: what does our character want? What situation are we placing our character in? And how will they get themselves out of it?

He will also look at how to turn real-life experiences into fun story ideas and how to stop your reader getting bored.

Tracy Bloom

When Writing is Murder!

12.30pm - 2pm
£20

Author of 14 women's fiction novels, No.1 bestselling author Tracy Bloom will publish *The Book Club Murders* on 22 May, the first in a new murder mystery series, under the pseudonym Maggie Allswell. She will advise on developing your writing and navigating the publishing industry. What are the key ingredients for a successful murder mystery novel? What makes a great sleuth? How do you choose your victim, develop multiple suspects and hit those key story beats of a classic cosy crime?

Lisa Greener

World Building Workshop

3.15pm - 4.45pm
£20

Whether you're crafting an intricate fantasy realm or a heartfelt romance, the magic of storytelling lies in the details. This workshop will guide you through the essential planning that turns ideas into immersive worlds and compelling narratives. Before the first sentence is written, you'll learn how to shape your setting, deepen your characters and structure your story so every element works together. By mastering the art of preparation, you'll gain the confidence to bring your unique world to life on the page.

Monday

25 May

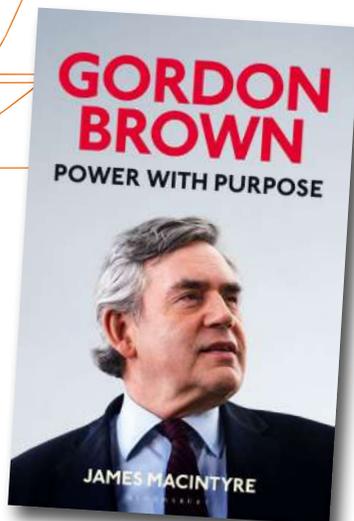
James Macintyre

Gordon Brown: Power with Purpose

2pm - 3pm | Museum of Making | £10 |

More than 15 years since he left Downing Street, at the age of 75 Gordon Brown continues to wield significant influence. Polls regularly suggest he is the most popular living former prime minister. Yet his short time in Number 10 ended in bitterness and election defeat.

James Macintyre gained unprecedented insight into his family life, his faith and what it is that still motivates him. From his political birth as a student at Edinburgh University to his ongoing efforts to improve children's education globally, his passionate engagement in politics remains undimmed. James offers fresh perspectives on key events in Gordon Brown's career: the battle for the Labour leadership, the invasion of Iraq, the challenges of coping with the global financial crash in 2008, the Scottish independence and Brexit referendums.



Tuesday

26 May

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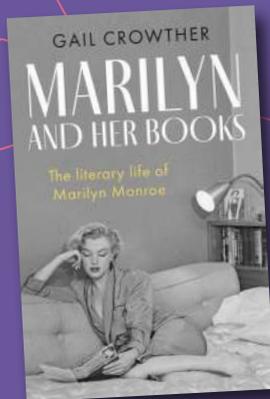
Morning Coffee with Gail Crowther

Marilyn And Her Books: The Literary Life of Marilyn Monroe

10.15am - 11.30am | Museum of Making | £12.50 | 
(includes tea/coffee and biscuits)

Marilyn Monroe would have turned 100 in 2026. Gail examines the bookshelf and literary life of the icon and actress. She was, of course, briefly married to one of America's best-known playwrights, Arthur Miller, and met a number of other writers who moved in his literary world.

Far from Hollywood film sets and press flashbulbs, Marilyn, who left high school before graduation, embarked on an impressive and progressive programme of self-education, hungry for knowledge, and devouring books as an active and engaged reader.



Charlie Bingham

The Life Affirming Magic of Birds

7pm - 8pm
Electric Daisy
£10

Nature and wildlife enthusiast Charlie Bingham explains how birdwatching is for everyone. Her book is both a memoir and a practical guide to slowing down and noticing what's around you, how even the smallest encounters with nature can offer a renewed sense of connection. Birdwatching helped Charlie navigate grief, financial strain, ADHD, mental health and other major life challenges.

It's an event for all birdwatchers or anyone who struggles to find motivation to get through the daily grind.



Ashley Giles

The King of Spain and I

2.30pm - 4pm (event from 3pm - 4pm)
Bar open from 2.30pm
Central Co-op County Ground | £8

As a player and administrator, Ashley Giles has seen it all. He has been at the heart of some of English cricket's biggest moments this century, including hitting the winning shot in the decisive Test of the greatest Ashes series. Documenting how the game roused itself in the build-up to the 2005 Ashes, Giles brings an astute eye to the madness of that unforgettable summer, offering the inside track on a series that would irrevocably change the course of English cricket.

A sportsman on the edge, he survived the enemies of self-doubt and imposter syndrome to remain a constant presence in the combustible dressing rooms of Pietersen, Flintoff, Vaughan and Hussain.

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Wednesday

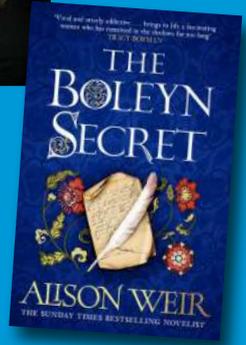
27 May

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Alison Weir

The Boleyn Secret



2pm - 3pm | Museum of Making | £10

At twelve years old, Kate Carey attends her aunt, Queen Anne Boleyn, to the scaffold.

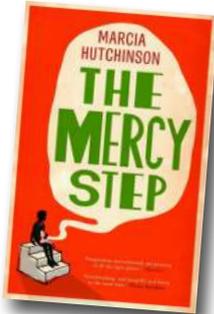
As the Boleyns fall from favour, Kate serves her cousin, the young Lady Elizabeth. Bound by Boleyn blood, the two girls are like sisters, until Kate marries for love - and leaves a jealous Elizabeth behind.

Only when her mother, Mary, lies dying, does she learn the life-shattering truth that the Boleyns have been hiding for years. It is a secret that will haunt Kate throughout her life, as her family flee into exile, only returning home when Elizabeth becomes queen. But the bond between the Boleyn cousins will never be the same again ...

Marcia Hutchinson

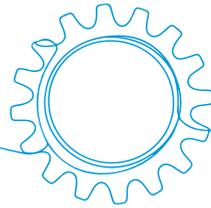
The Mercy Step

6pm - 7pm
Waterstones | £8



Named one of the Best New Novelists for 2025 by *The Observer*, and nominated for the 2026 Women's Prize for Fiction, Marcia's debut novel begins in Bradford in December 1962.

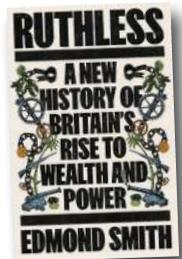
Born into a family that doesn't understand her, Mercy finds solace in books, her imagination, and the quiet comfort of her faithful toy, Dolly. But escapism has its limits, and as the grip of family, faith and fear threaten to close in, Mercy learns she must act if she wants a different future; one where she is seen, heard, and her family is set free. *The Mercy Step* is a sharply-witted and tender portrait of a young girl's quiet rebellion, and her refusal to be broken.



Edmond Smith

Ruthless: A New History of Britain's Rise to Wealth and Power, 1660 - 1800

7pm - 8pm
Museum of Making | £10



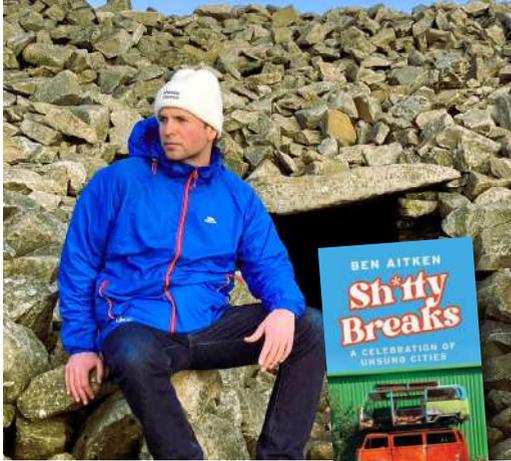
A revelatory new history of Britain's industrial revolution and the scale and breadth of brutality that it depended upon, with an exploration of Derby's role in it.

Was Britain's industrial revolution the result of its machines, which produced goods with miraculous efficiency? Was it the country's natural abundance, which provided coal for its engines, ores for its furnaces and food for its labourers? Or was it Britain's colonies, where a brutalised, enslaved workforce produced cotton for its factories?

Acclaimed historian Edmond Smith shows how the world's first industrial nation was founded on the ruthless exploitation of technology, people and the planet.

Thursday

28 May



Sponsored by



Marketing Derby Bondholder Breakfast Event: Ben Aitken

London 0 Derby 4

8.30am - 10am | Museum of Making
£12 (includes breakfast cob and tea/coffee)
FREE to Marketing Derby Bondholders - book through Lindsey Hatfield |

Ben Aitken is a travel writer, but with a difference. He takes a wry and witty approach to travelling and his six books have included living for a year in Poland, following Bill Bryson round the country, joining OAPs on coach tours, moving in with an 85 year old during lockdown and, his latest, featuring some of the UK's uncelebrated and least visited cities. And he loves Derby and wants to sing its praises for all to hear.

Share Ben's love of the city and discover even more reasons to shout about Derby.



Cream Tea with Kate Strasdin

Sponsored by



Dressing the Queen: Two Hundred Years of Makers and Monarchy

2.30pm - 4pm
Museum of Making
£20 (includes tea/coffee, scone, cream & jam) |



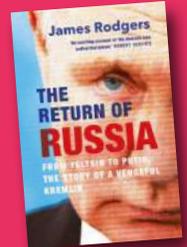
From walkabouts to the dazzling spectacle of a Coronation, the clothes worn by royal women have always been a fascination. From Queen Victoria to the modern Elizabethan age, *Dressing the Queen* shows the incredible craftsmanship and painstaking effort that creates the 'Royal Wardrobe', from handmade boots to Crown Jewels, country tweeds to delicate stockings.

Dress historian Kate Strasdin reveals a tribe of previously unsung women and men - and some renowned, including Norman Hartnell and Louis Vuitton. But most are ordinary, highly talented working people from across Britain, whose skilled labour and vanishing trades are a vital part of our country's history.

James Rodgers

The Return of Russia: From Yeltsin to Putin, the Story of a Vengeful Kremlin

5.30pm - 6.30pm
Landau Forte College | £10 |



James has reported on Russia since the end of the Soviet period, completing three postings in Moscow for Reuters and the BBC.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 triggered the most violent conflict seen on European soil for decades. Millions of people have been displaced and thousands killed. Why has Putin followed his ambitions to such extreme ends?

From the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 to the present day, James argues that, while Putin has long distrusted the West, Western policies have made the situation much worse. He shows that Putin's political career, with its transformations from supportive ally to implacable critic of the West, has been the defining influence on Russia's place in the contemporary world.

Roger Moorhouse

Wolfpack: Hitler's U-Boat War

Thursday 28 May

Continued

7.30pm - 8.30pm | Landau Forte College | £10 | 



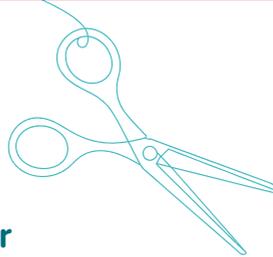
Winston Churchill famously remarked that the threat of the German U-Boats was the only thing that had "really frightened" him during World War Two.

The U-Boats claimed a bitter harvest among Allied shipping: nearly 3,000 ships were sunk, nearly 70% of Allied shipping losses. But Germany's U-Boat crews posted the highest per capita losses of any combat arm, with 30,000 German submariners killed - over 75% of the total number deployed - the vast majority of whom have no grave except the seabed. Roger recounts a history of the U-Boat war told through the experiences and recollections of the U-Boat crews themselves, giving the U-Boatmen back their voice.



Friday

29 May



Cream Tea with Clare Hunter

Making Matters: In Search of Creative Wonders

2.30pm - 4pm | Museum of Making

£20 (includes tea/coffee, scone, cream & jam) | 

As children, we made things: snowmen, paper boats, eccentrically costumed plays. Making things fired our minds and imaginations - it altered our small worlds and shaped who we became. But as adults, it is hard to find the space for creativity and to remember its power.

Exploring craft traditions and forms of making across centuries and cultures, Clare encourages us to use our hands again, to see beauty in unexpected places, to play and protest and embrace imaginative possibilities.

Making Matters celebrates individual and collective creativity. It blends history, culture and politics with rich storytelling, wonderful characters and tales of remarkable objects. Be inspired!

Sponsored by



Arthur Snell

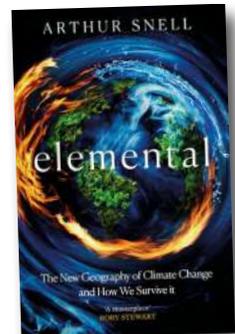
Elemental: How We Will Live on a Warming Planet

Sponsored by

Pennine 

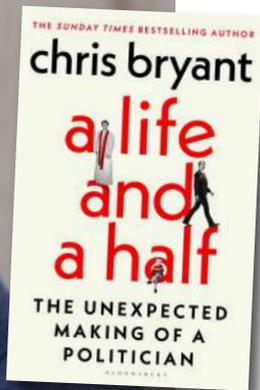
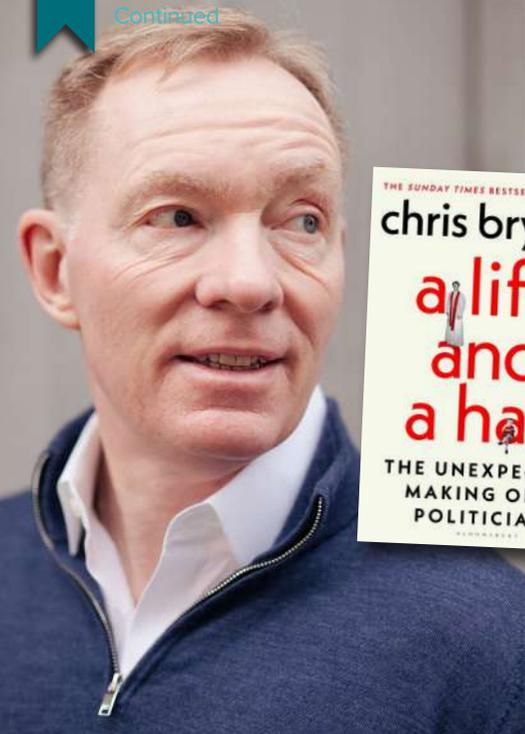
5.15pm - 6.15pm | QUAD | £10 | 

The climate crisis is already affecting the lives of millions and, coinciding with a breakdown in geopolitical order, increasing conflict and economic crises. Whilst presenting unprecedented challenges, opportunities are also being created for new players and pioneering ways of living. Arthur presents a vision in which Africa powers Europe with solar energy, where autocratic oil states are no more, and new shipping routes across the melting Arctic bring Asia, Europe and North America closer than ever before. In Russia, huge areas of highly fertile land will be exposed by the melting ice. What will living on a warmer planet really look like?



Friday 29 May

Continued



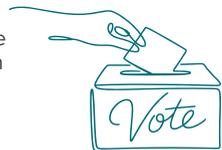
Chris Bryant MP

A Life and a Half: The Unexpected Making of a Politician

7.30pm - 8.30pm | QUAD | £12 |

Labour Minister Chris Bryant had a truly unconventional life before becoming a politician. Growing up in General Franco's Spain, he later acted alongside some of the most talented names of the day, and subsequently cared for his brother and mother as she descended into addiction. He ran the family home from 16, became ordained at 24 and came out as gay shortly after. And that's just the early years.

A Life and a Half tells a gripping story stuffed with moments of joy, hilarity, sorrow and abuse, against a landscape of late 20th-Century British politics, from Thatcher to the birth of New Labour.



Saturday

30 May

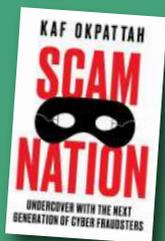
Kaf Okpattah

Scam Nation

11am - 12pm | QUAD | £10 |

For decades, we have thought of scammers as offshore con artists or opportunistic criminals who target the elderly, the ill-informed and the vulnerable, looking to gain access to their money or their identities. But this is changing.

Kaf Okpattah, an investigative reporter and ITV journalist, reveals how a new generation of fraudsters are using AI, encrypted messaging and social media to commit increasingly audacious crimes. These criminals – many of them still teenagers – stay constantly one step ahead of the authorities and exploit our social and digital weaknesses. Kaf offers strategies for how we can protect ourselves.



North Mill Volunteers

The Strutt Mills of Belper and Milford

11am - 12pm | Belper Library | FREE but places must be booked - check website for details

The Strutt Mills have long dominated Belper and neighbouring Milford. But who were the Strutts? And why have their innovations at the mill sites warranted Belper's inclusion in the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage List? In time for the 250th anniversary of the first Strutt Mill in Belper, the volunteers of the Belper North Mill Trust have put together a book packed with information about the innovative architecture, continued use of water power, the mill workers and the Strutt family's impact on Belper and Milford. Volunteer Jane Whitaker will be talking to Belper writer and photographer, Ashley Franklin.



Jacqueline Riding

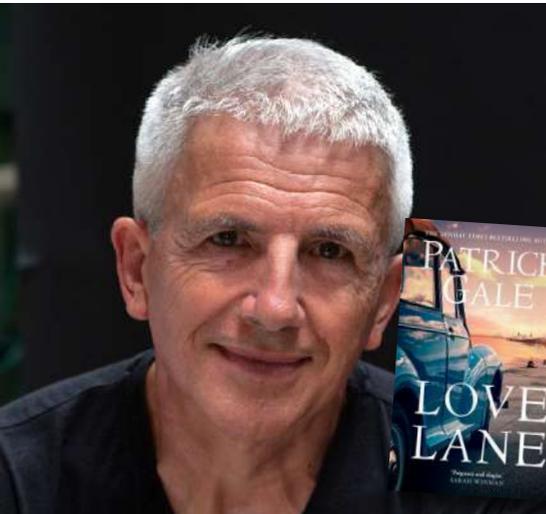
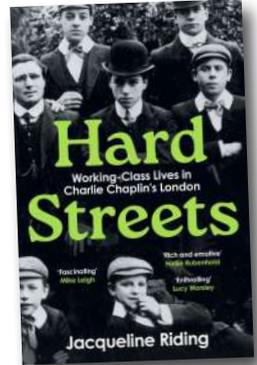
Hard Streets: Working-Class Lives in Charlie Chaplin's London

1pm - 2pm | QUAD | £10 | 



Charlie Chaplin rose from the hard streets of Victorian London to become one of the world's most beloved comedians. With his threadbare jacket, baggy trousers and puzzled expression, his 'Little Tramp' alter ego was shaped by his London childhood - a place of ribald variety shows and hard drinking, radical politics and desperate poverty.

Weaving through Chaplin's rags-to-riches story are the lives of music hall stars, political reformers and George Tinworth, a neighbour of Chaplin's mother, a poor wheelwright who became a nationally renowned sculptor. Hardship was the norm, but talent, determination and luck could bring opportunity and success.



Patrick Gale and Joanna Cannon: Reunited

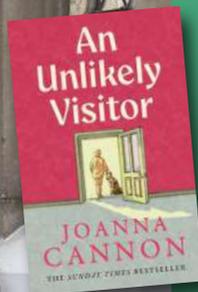
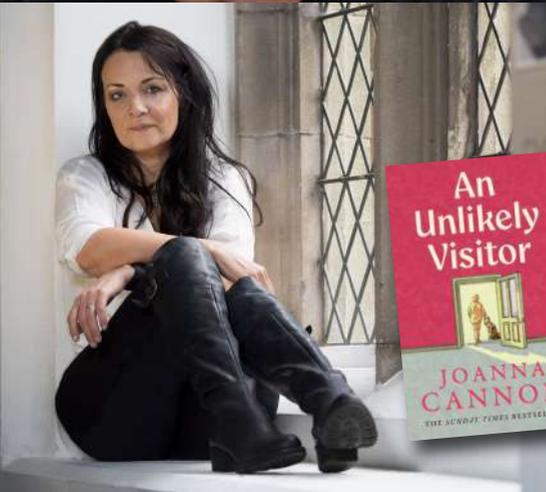
3pm - 4pm | QUAD | £12 | 

Reunion is a theme which runs through both of the new novels from celebrated novelists Patrick Gale and Joanna Cannon, who are also reunited on stage in Derby after their last visit together in 2023.

For Patrick, *Love Lane* picks up the story of Harry Cane, immortalised in his acclaimed novel, *A Place Called Winter*. After many years he returns to Britain from the wheat fields of Canada to meet his abandoned family.

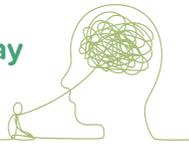
Joanna is well established as an author treasured for her ability to give a voice to those who sit on the fringes of society, a theme she continues in *An Unlikely Visitor*. Margaret has known the tragedy of the unexplained disappearance of her daughter, but unexpectedly she might yet discover the truth.

They both have a gift for exploring the extraordinary secrets buried under the surface of seemingly ordinary lives.



Saturday 30 May

Continued



Sponsored by



Claudia Hammond

Overwhelmed: Ways to Take the Pressure Off

5.15pm - 6.15pm | QUAD | £10

We are all familiar with the unsettling sensation of being overwhelmed: it's as if there's ever more to do, and ever less time in which to do it. Claudia Hammond, award-winning writer and presenter of BBC Radio 4's *All in the Mind*, shows us that there is a way out, helping us to take the pressure off with a psychological toolkit that is both practical and evidence-based.

Each chapter addresses a particular problem that can trap us into feeling overwhelmed - from procrastination to the fear of regret, imposter syndrome, perfectionism and a seemingly never-ending to-do list - and offers science-backed solutions.

Kadiatu Kanneh-Mason

To Be Young, Gifted and Black

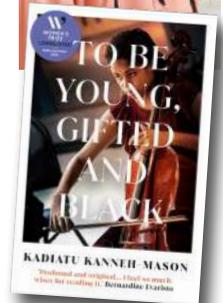
7.30pm - 8.30pm

QUAD | £12 |

When Kadiatu Kanneh-Mason's eldest daughter, Isata, made her solo debut at the BBC Proms in 2023, she could not have been prouder. Watching years of hard work transform into a transcendent performance was profoundly moving, as both music-lover and parent.

But only a few days later, her younger daughter turned to her in tears having read online abuse about her sister. How do you prepare your child for the fact that no matter their talent, technique or dedication, they will be told they do not belong?

Through conversations with her extraordinarily gifted family, Kadiatu explores what it's like to come of age at a time when Black artistic self-expression is so often met with disparagement and abuse online – and offers a hopeful, powerful way through.



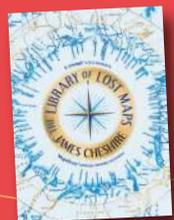
Sunday

31 May

Professor James Cheshire

The Library of Lost Maps

11am - 12pm | QUAD | £10 |

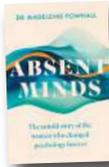


At the heart of University College London, nestled in the centre of Bloomsbury, lies a long-forgotten map library packed with thousands of maps and atlases. After Professor James Cheshire stumbled upon it, he spent three years sifting through hundreds of dusty drawers to see what was there. He was stunned to uncover some of the most significant maps and atlases from the last two centuries - many of which had not seen the light of day for decades.

Brimming with astonishing discoveries, *The Library of Lost Maps* reveals why cartography really matters and how map-making has helped transform our understanding of the world around us.

Dr Madeleine Pownall

Absent Minds: The Untold Story of the Women who Changed Psychology Forever



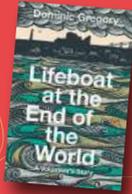
1.15pm - 2.15pm | QUAD | £10 |

In *Absent Minds*, award-winning psychologist Dr Madeleine Pownall takes readers from the advent of the discipline through to psychologists' responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and screentime debate. She uncovers lost legacies, documenting how women shaped the field and provided alternative, creative and more critical ways of thinking about the human experience, the benefits of which we still feel today.

Dominic Gregory

Lifeboat at the End of the World

3.30pm - 4.30pm
QUAD | £10



For 200 years, the Dungeness lifeboat has launched in storms and heavy seas to save lives. Like all lifeboat stations, it is led by a coxswain and staffed by volunteers. Dominic depicts the experience of volunteering on a lifeboat.

Dungeness is a place apart; overshadowed by its nuclear power station and made famous by Derek Jarman's flotsam garden. It now finds itself at the centre of one of today's biggest political stories. The arrival of inflatable dinghies – overloaded with people – on the shores of Dungeness provides the lifeboat crew with perhaps their greatest test.

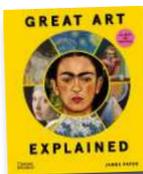
James Payne

Great Art Explained: The Stories Behind the World's Greatest Masterpieces

5.30pm - 6.30pm | QUAD | £10 |

Based on his successful YouTube channel, *Great Art Explained* unveils the fascinating stories behind some of the world's most iconic paintings and sculptures. James shows that it's how you view the work, place it in context and understand its history that makes an artwork truly come alive.

James sheds new light on 30 different masterpieces from around the globe and reveals what makes them truly timeless works of art, looking at not only the art itself but also the artist's life, as well as the work's place in their wider oeuvre; in other words, what makes it 'great'.

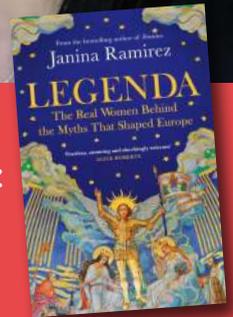


Sunday 31 May
Continued



Professor Janina Ramirez

Legenda: The Real Women Behind the Myths that Shaped Europe



7.30pm - 9pm | QUAD | £15 |

In *Legenda*, best-selling historian Professor Janina Ramirez peels back the layers of time to reappraise the medieval women whose lives have been exploited over centuries for political, nation-building ends.

Their names are well known, and summaries of their achievements have been recited in classrooms for decades, but medieval women like Joan of Arc, Lady Godiva and Isabella of Castile have been misrepresented, their stories twisted and weaponised. Meanwhile, ground-breaking 18th- and 19th-Century women who blazed a trail through revolutionary Europe have been forgotten, their legacies too easily dismissed or ignored.

Questioning established narratives and searching for the real women behind the legends, Janina interrogates what defines a nation and who gets to build it, shining a light on how history is so often hijacked to serve the ideological and political interests of the present.

Sponsored by



CivicLAB is based at the University of Derby. The city is a UNESCO City of Life Long Learning and home to a World Heritage Site. CivicLAB has been designed to support academics, creative and cultural industry professionals, freelance creatives and the public to share their insights on research and practice through a place-based approach to knowledge generation. Booking is essential and details can be found on the Festival website.

Tuesday 26 May

Dr Robin Sims: *The Green Man, the Ecogothic and Eric Mottram's A Book of Hernel*

2pm - 3pm

Derby Theatre Community Hub | FREE

Across Europe, churches feature carved male heads with foliage bursting from the mouth, nostrils or, in more grotesque examples, the eyes. In the 20th Century, the folklorist Lady Raglan linked these with popular rituals and aspects of myth to posit a pagan god, the 'Green Man', of whom these sculptures were supposedly traces. The Green Man has subsequently been adopted in modern paganism as well as eco-activism - and he featured too on invitations to the Coronation in 2023. However, the figure also connects to a darker tradition in literature, concerning something sinister in the forest.

Thursday 28 May

Simon Heywood and Shonaleigh: *A Garment for the Moon*

10am - 11am | Derby Theatre Community Hub | FREE

A Garment for the Moon is Anglo-Dutch storyteller Shonaleigh's first-ever written collection, featuring 18 of her favourite stories from her family's long tradition, which she learned in childhood from her grandmother. These are fabulous wonder tales with names like *The Clever Girl*, *Avram and the Fireflies*, *The Cloud Sheep*, *The Worms' Complaint*, *The Dandelion Dancer*, *Prince Cockereel* and *Ashmedai's Melting Bride*. Twelve of these are beautifully illustrated by artist Katherine Soutar and edited by Tom Muir and Simon Heywood. They are the first fruits of a long collaboration telling, teaching, touring and documenting the family tradition.



Become a Festival Friend

We really value the support we receive from our audience members who generously buy tickets, books, merchandise, raffle tickets and help us spread the word about the Festival.

But some people want to do a bit more, including our Festival Friends. As a Festival Friend you can enjoy a range of benefits including priority bookings for events and free tickets in the run-up to our Festivals. We also hold special events during the year which we invite Festival Friends to.

If you are interested in becoming a Festival Friend, annual single membership costs £30 and joint membership for two people (not necessarily living at the same address) costs £50. Visit website for details: www.derbybookfestival.co.uk/get-involved/festival-friends

We also welcome donations and you can donate on our website via the Donate button at the top of the Home page.

Wednesday 27 May

Dr Shelby Judge: *The Boom of Feminist Greek Myth Retellings*

10am - 11am

Derby Theatre Community Hub | FREE

Since at least Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), women writers have adapted figures from Greek myth, but over the past 20 years, there has been an explosion in this field. Bookshop tables groan under the weight of ever-replenishing Greek myth retellings. This market is cornered by women, who often use these ancient myths to explore the challenges of being a woman in the 21st Century. But why are these myths turned to time and again for modern-day worries? And why are Greek myths in particular so ripe for retelling?



Children & Family Events

Check Derby Book Festival website for more details.

Adults are required to accompany children at all events, unless otherwise indicated.

Thursday 21 May

Luke Palmer

Big Words

6pm - 7pm | Electric Daisy
FREE for 16 and under/ £8 for 16+

Luke Palmer is an award-winning author and poet whose YA novels explore masculinity and friendships against the backdrops of loss, mental health and coercion. His latest novel, *Big Words*, is super-readable, accessible and dyslexia-friendly.

16+
years



Saturday 23 May - Sunday 31 May

6-9
years

Story Streets Book Trail

Across Derby City Centre | FREE

Inspired by the wonderful books that were longlisted for the Derby Children's Picture Book Award 2026, come and discover beautiful illustrations and brilliant authors as you wander around our amazing city centre. Collect a physical copy of the trail from Waterstones or City Lab or download an electronic copy from the Festival website.

Saturday 23 May

Roma Agrawal

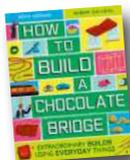
Making Science Fun!

10am - 11am | Chapel Street Arts Centre
11.30am - 12.30pm | Construction Workshop
£8 | Workshop £3

Award-winning engineer turned best-selling author Roma Agrawal makes STEM accessible, intriguing and aspirational, and encourages children to be endlessly curious about the 'things' that make up our world.

Technology and engineering surround us. From HUGE things, like spaceships and skyscrapers, to much smaller things like the toaster in our kitchen and the shoes on our feet. Join us for a hands-on workshop led by the Festival team. Who can build the highest skyscraper out of spaghetti?

7-11
years



Monday 25 May

Down to Earth Derby
& Derby Book Festival
Present:

Sponsored by



Bookworms: The Kids Takeover at Electric Daisy

10am - 3pm | Electric Daisy, Bold Lane
£5 per child, FREE for babes in arms
and adults - booking essential

Calling all Bookworms! Head down to Electric Daisy for a day of stories and nature play. A full programme of storytelling from authors, illustration draw-a-longs and lots of nature! Free play in the garden with nature play and craft activities. Check website for full details.

Monday 25 May - Friday 29 May

Drop in for Storytime

10.30am each day
Waterstones Derby

Head to Waterstones Derby for a browse amongst the book treasures and join staff for storytime at 10.30am daily during half term. No booking required. Head to the children's section on the top floor.

0-8
years

Book Reading Corner

11am - 3pm | The Loggia, Kedleston Hall
(in the garden) FREE drop-in activity
Normal admission to the Hall applies

If you head down to the garden you will find a very special reading den where families can choose from a range of books to read together.

ALL
ages

Tuesday 26 May

**Creative Comics
with Laura Howell**

10.30am - 1.15pm | Springwood Library
1pm - 1.45pm | Spondon Library
FREE - booking essential

If you like drawing – or even if you think you can't draw at all – this 45-minute cartooning class with *Beano* and *Regular Show* artist Laura Howell is for you. Starting with doodles so simple you can do them with your eyes closed, it's perfect for budding artists who want to improve their drawing skills and also learn some new ones, exploring character design, putting together a comic page and more.



**Tuesday 26 May -
Saturday 30 May**

Spring Into Joy

10am - 4pm | Derbion,
Level 1 outside Boots | £3 for craft
Booking advised | Reading area **FREE**

Families are invited to step inside a beautifully styled potting shed filled with flowers and a programme of hands-on spring crafts.

Visitors can also enjoy the cosy reading corner outside the potting shed. Choose a book from the bookshelf and spend some quiet time reading.



Wednesday 27 May

**Drop in Story and
Craft morning**

9.30am - 2pm
Chapel Street Arts Centre
FREE, suggested donation £2

Join us in the cafe to get crafty and listen to some brilliant stories told by our volunteers.



Frances Stickley

Capybara Disco Dreams
10am - 10.45am
Chapel Street Arts Centre | £5

Join best-selling picture book author Frances Stickley as she and Colin the Capybara teach you all the latest moves from their new book, *Capybara Disco Dreams*. From the hip-hopping hippo to the boogying bear, you'll all be dancing like you just don't care.



Playful Moves:

*The Very Hungry
Caterpillar*

**A story-inspired music
and movement workshop
led by 'Dance with Rosy'**

10am - 10.45am & 11am - 11.45am
Chapel Street Arts Centre | £5

Get ready to move and munch! In this workshop the children, alongside their grown-ups, are invited to listen to the classic tale of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle and to move their bodies in ways inspired by the story. Using music and creative movement, dance teacher Rosy will support the children to use their imagination as they explore props and instruments in an exciting and vibrant way.



Pippa Curnick

Pocket-sized Picture Books
11am - 11.45am | Chapel Street Arts Centre | £5

Come along and create an illustrated world, and take away your own mini book! Author and illustrator Pippa Curnick will help you to create your own imagined world and create a tiny book from a single sheet of paper! Create characters, get drawing and use your brilliant imaginations in this playful creative workshop.



Ben Davis

Postman Planet
1pm - 2pm
Chapel Street Arts Centre | £5

Join award-winning author and real life postman Ben Davis for a fun, interactive event about his new book, *Postman Planet*. Expect talking robot dogs, scary Space Vikings and a man-eating pig called Fancy Kenneth.



Wednesday 27 May

Drop in Workshop

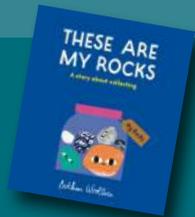
These are my Rocks - A Story about Collecting

10.30am – 12.30pm & 1.30pm – 3.30pm | Museum of Making

Suitable for families | FREE, suggested donation £3

Inspired by Bethan Woollvin's book, *These are my Rocks*.

What things do you collect? Have you seen the collections displayed throughout the Museums? Join our facilitators to create your own collage mini exhibition of your favourite things. Derby Book Festival volunteers will read *These are my Rocks*.



Thursday 28 May

Manga Drawing Workshop

10.30am - 12pm | Art in the Park,

Markeaton Craft Village,
Markeaton Park DE22 3BG

£15 - book through Art in The Park
website (parking included)

Learn how to draw Manga-style illustrations inspired by
Rune by Carlos Sanchez with all the materials provided.



STEAM Babies

10.15am - 11.15am

Museum of Making | £3 per family

Places are limited so booking is essential.

Babies and their adults will explore a range of themes through the lens of the Museum's fabulous collections. There are opportunities to look at materials in different ways and get creative with how to play. The theme is Rocks & Stones.



Manga Drawing Workshop

1pm - 3pm | Art in the Park,

Markeaton Craft Village,
Markeaton Park DE22 3BG | £20

- book through Art in The Park website (parking
included). No parental supervision required.

Come along to Art in the Park for a Manga-themed
drawing workshop. Learn how to draw Manga style
illustrations inspired by *City* by Keiichi Arawi with all the
materials provided.



Manga Drawing with illustrator & artist Chie Kutsuwada

3pm - 4pm

Landau Forte College | £6

Learn about the history of manga and create your own
Manga-inspired character in a step-by-step session with
Chie.



Friday 29 May

Sam Sedgman

The Galileo Heist

1pm - 2pm | QUAD | £6

Unlock your inner mystery-solver with Sam, best-selling author of the *Adventures on Trains* series. He will talk about the third adventure in his *Isaac Turner Investigates* series.



The Brothers McLeod

Knight Sir Louis

3pm - 4pm | QUAD | £6

Get ready to laugh your socks off with the *Knight Sir Louis* adventures! Draw along with the BAFTA-winning Brothers McLeod, Greg and Myles.



Saturday 30 May

Introduction to Dungeons and Dragons Family Workshop

3pm - 4pm | QUAD | £6

Learn how to play the *Dungeons & Dragons* game! Learn how to create your own quirky and questing characters and get top tips on the art of being a Dungeon Master!



Derby Book Festival

Community Programme



Our Community Programme continues to broaden its reach to include people in communities across the city, in particular through our Shared Reading and Schools' programmes.

Shared Reading

Stories shared, connections made

Shared Reading is a welcoming space where pieces of writing are read aloud, with time to pause and reflect together. There's no reading in advance and no pressure to speak, you can simply listen.

Shared Reading might sound simple but it changes lives. Connecting with others through reading stories, poems, song lyrics, letters (and all sorts of other writing) helps reduce loneliness, improve wellbeing, and build confidence and connection.

Each session is led by trained volunteers who read aloud and offer gentle pauses for anyone who'd like to share a thought, a feeling, or a memory the words bring up. It's not a book club and you don't need to 'know the right answers' - it's about sharing the moment, in whatever way feels comfortable.

How to get involved ...

- Join a group: Free, regular sessions across Derby and Derbyshire in libraries, cafés and community venues, no need to book just turn up.
- Volunteer: Be part of something special. Help bring connection, conversation and comfort to people through the joy of words - training and ongoing support provided.
- Partner with us: Host a group for your organisation or community, or explore sponsorship and partnership opportunities.



"The sessions are fun, welcoming and I've made new friends."

- Shared Reading Participant

"It gives me a welcome, enjoyable diversion as a Carer - something to look forward to."

- Shared Reading Participant

"I get so much joy from seeing people light up when they connect with a story or poem. It's an hour of warmth and belonging every week."

- Shared Reading Volunteer

"There's no right or wrong in Shared Reading - we just explore what the words mean to us."

- Shared Reading Volunteer

Local stories, shared voices, real connection - Discover our New Shared Reading Podcast

Want a feel for what Shared Reading is like? Listen to our podcast for readings, reflections and behind-the-scenes stories. At this year's Festival we'll be recording a special Festival episode, so look out for us when you visit.

Scan the QR code or email us at shared.reading@derbybookfestival.co.uk for group information, the podcast, newsletter sign-up, volunteering, and partnership enquiries.



Proud to support Derby Book Festival



Now into its 11th year, Derby Book Festival shares the joy of stories, imagination and creativity with children and families, and Cosy is proud to have sponsored the Festival for the past 10 years, helping to bring books, authors and storytelling to life.

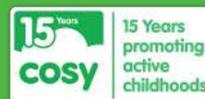
This partnership reflects Cosy's core aims over the past 15 years, inspiring children in Derby and around the world to read, explore, and dream big.

This year, designated National Year of Reading, we are once again supporting the Festival's Meet the Author events in Derby Theatre, where children from the city's primary schools come together and experience the joy of seeing and hearing top children's authors and illustrators. The Children's Laureate, Frank Cottrell-Boyce, with the important role of championing reading, storytelling and creativity for children everywhere, and author and illustrator Joe Todd-Staunton will be our guests. These events are also live-streamed to schools across the city and county, with 9000 children having these experiences in 2025.

In 2026, Cosy will again support Derby Book Festival in celebrating the power of books and the joy they continue to bring to young minds.



Find out more at:
www.cosyfoundation.com



Derby Book Festival

Community Programme



Derby Children's Picture Book Award

Now in its eighth year, our Children's Picture Book Award celebrates books in which all children can see themselves, their lives and the world around them. Each year we invite children's publishers to submit books that meet these criteria. This year a group of 22 Derby teachers volunteered to choose the shortlist: *The Great Green Island* by Becky Colvin; *That's Not Stella* by Donna Fredin, and *My Rice is Best* by Selina Brown and Maxwell A. Oginni.

This year 73 Derby schools will take part, receiving copies of the three books for each class, involving 235 classes. Around 7,100 children in Years 2 and 3 will vote for their favourite book after reading them in class during the spring term. The winning author and illustrator will arrange a virtual visit to meet the children in the summer term.



CHILDREN'S BOOK APPEAL

Since 2023 we have been holding our Children's Book Appeal encouraging people to donate good quality, pre-loved children's books so we can redistribute them to children in the city who may not have their own books at home. We do this through schools, nurseries, childminders and charities, including Derby Kids' Camp. To date, thanks to the generosity of local people, over 16,000 books have been donated enabling us to spread a love of books and encourage a new generation of readers!

Many local businesses organise their own in-house collections – you may want to encourage this where you work?

You can drop off donations at a number of locations across the city – or bring them along to the Festival venues when you join us for the Summer Festival. You can find full details of the locations and opening hours at: derbybookfestival.co.uk/community/book-appeal

50-word Flash Fiction Writing competition

School iP

Every year we hold a 50-word Flash Fiction Writing competition on a different theme. In 2026 the theme was 'Hope' and the competition was generously sponsored by Derventio Education. There are three age categories: 11s and under, 12 – 17s and 18s and over, plus a category for women at HMP Foston Hall and men at HMP Sudbury. We received 508 entries this year. You can read the winning stories on our website.

The stories are shared with second year Creative Communications students at the University of Derby who compete to illustrate the stories, which are reproduced on our Festival bookmarks. The winner and runners-up are invited to pitch for the Festival programme cover design the following year. This year's cover design is by Ailija Davidaviciute, who won last year's Flash Fiction Illustration competition.

Early Years project

Even if they can't yet read books, children can still enjoy hearing stories and looking at the pictures. University of Derby Early Childhood Studies' students enjoyed a masterclass with local author Katherine Wheatley on the importance of reading in the Early Years and the power of storytelling, using props to engage children with books.

The students will develop Story Sacks using a mixture of Katherine's books and books from the Children's Book Appeal which they will then use in their placement nurseries.

Meet the Author for secondaries

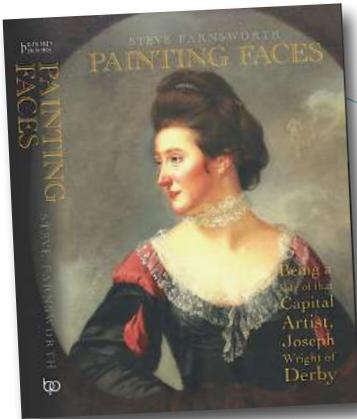
In 2026 we worked again with the organisers of the Derbyshire Schools Book Award and 13 schools met novelist Sarah Hagger-Holt, who talked about her book, *Just Like Everyone Else*.

Other Events

to look forward to ...

We will continue to bring you great events outside the Festival dates and here are a few we and our partners have planned in the coming months ... plus a sneak preview of one in our Autumn Edition:

Sunday 19 July



Steve Farnsworth

Painting Faces: Being a Life of that Capital Artist, Joseph Wright of Derby

1.30pm - 2.30pm

Old Library, Derby Museum & Art Gallery | £10

Wright of Derby: From the Shadows exhibition will be held at the Art Gallery from 13 June - 1 November 2026

Steve's novel presents Joseph Wright for the first time as the complex, compromised character his life and work reveal him to be. *Painting Faces* tells the story of a unique talent and an extraordinary career. No other 18th Century artist has the range and variety of Wright, and his story spans both the cultural currents of the London of his day, the rise of the industrial behemoths of the textile and manufacturing dynasties then being created, the sparkling intellectual life of the 'Lunatics' and his own struggles with his health, his hypochondria and his depressions.

Like his exact contemporary George Romney, Wright approached the end of his life unsure that he had even achieved much at all. But he can lay some claim to the creation of some of British art's most sublime images.

We look forward to welcoming you to our Autumn Edition

(Friday 13 – Sunday 15 November). The programme will be published in late September when tickets go on sale.

Friday 13 November

Fergal Keane

7.30pm | Derby Theatre | Price TBC

Following his departure from the BBC after 37 years, we are delighted to welcome journalist Fergal Keane to Derby. During his time at the BBC, Fergal has become one of the most recognisable and respected voices in world affairs, winning multiple awards. He has covered stories ranging from South Africa's transition to democracy, the handover of Hong Kong and the horror of the Rwandan genocide. More recently, he has reported on the conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza, demonstrating his ability to connect with audiences and powerfully and compassionately telling the stories of the people and places impacted by war and destruction. He has also highlighted the effect of PTSD, not least on himself. Fergal will talk about his career and his plans for the future, including writing his first novel and a new work of non-fiction.

Meet Your Local Author in libraries

Following the success of these author events in 2025, and to support the National Year of Reading, we have teamed up again with the Society of Authors, Derby City Libraries and Derbyshire Library Service to organise further talks by local authors in libraries across the city and county in 2026.

These will cover a broad range of topics – fiction and non-fiction. Our aim is to support local authors on their writing journey enabling them to promote their books, bring them to a wider audience and gain feedback from them. We also want to encourage more people to attend – and join – libraries and to delight existing library members with an expanded range of activities to enjoy in the comfort of a local library. There will be a small charge for the events which is given to the author, who will also be selling copies of their books at the event. Each author will also donate a copy of their book/s to the library. Check Festival website for talk details.

Date for your diary
13 - 15
Nov 2026

Thank you to...

Our Funders, Sponsors and Partners without whose support we could not deliver Derby Book Festival and our community programmes.

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DERBY**

gravity



If you are interested in supporting the Festival as a Sponsor or Partner, please contact hello@derbybookfestival.co.uk

You can find out more about becoming a sponsor on our website:
derbybookfestival.co.uk/get-involved/become-a-sponsor

Festival Planner

Key: AIP: Art in the Park | BL: Belper Library | CS: Chapel Street Arts Centre | CCCG: Central Co-op County Ground
 DC: Derby College | DT: Derby Theatre Community Hub | ED: Electric Daisy | KH: Kedleston Hall | LF: Landau Forte College
 MoM: Museum of Making | OL: Old Library | Q: QUAD | StP: St Peter's Church | SL: Springwood Library | SpoL: Spondon Library
 W: Waterstones | *Please note children's events are highlighted*

Date	Event Title	Venue	Start	Finish	Ticket	Pg
Thur 21 May	Luke Palmer: <i>Big Words</i>	ED	6pm	7pm	Under 18 FREE/£18+ £8	19
Fri 22 May	Tom Chesshyre: <i>Wild Peaks: A Journey on Foot Through England's ...</i>	StP	11am	12pm	£10	4
Fri 22 May	Peter Ross: <i>Upon a White Horse</i>	StP	1.30pm	2.30pm	£10	4
Fri 22 May	Laura Deller: <i>Nailed It!</i>	MoM	5.15pm	6.15pm	£10	4
Fri 22 May	Laura Deller: Workshop	MoM	6.30pm	7.30pm	£14	4
Fri 22 May	Jonathan Wilson: <i>The Power and the Glory: A New History of the ...</i>	Q	7.30pm	8.30pm	£12	4
Sat 23 May	Roma Agrawal: <i>Making Science Fun!</i>	CS	10am	11am	£8	19
Sat 23 May	Construction Workshop	CS	11.30am	12.30pm	£3	19
Sat 23 May	Dallas Campbell: <i>Space Journal: Art, Science and Cosmic Exploration</i>	Q	11.15am	12.15pm	£10	5
Sat 23 May	Eleanor Bruce & Lucilla Gray: <i>Things We Found in the Ground: ...</i>	Q	1.30pm	2.30pm	£10	5
Sat 23 May	Lucy Steeds: <i>The Artist</i>	Q	3.30pm	4.30pm	£10	5
Sat 23 May	Deepa Anappara: <i>The Last of Earth</i>	KH	5.30pm	6.30pm	£12 to include exhib	6
Sat 23 May	Debbie Kilroy: <i>Members Behaving Badly: A History of Britain in ...</i>	Q	5.30pm	6.30pm	£10	6
Sat 23 May	Jo Hamilton: <i>The Post Office Scandal and Me: My Extraordinary Fight ...</i>	Q	7.30pm	8.30pm	£12/£20 book & ticket	6
Sun 24 May	Gilly McArthur: <i>The Beauty of Cold: The Restorative Power of Cold ...</i>	DC	10am	10.55am	£10	7
Sun 24 May	Writing Workshop: Ben Davies: <i>Writing for Kids</i>	DC	10.30am	12pm	£20	9
Sun 24 May	Robert Verkaik: <i>The Writer and the Traitor: Graham Greene, Kim Philby ...</i>	DC	11.15am	12.10pm	£10	7
Sun 24 May	Janet Tennant: <i>Refugee Countess: The Five Lives of Marion Stein</i>	DC	12.30pm	1.25pm	£8	7
Sun 24 May	Writing Workshop: Tracy Bloom: <i>When Writing is Murder!</i>	DC	12.30pm	2pm	£20	9
Sun 24 May	Rachel Trethewey: <i>Muv: The Story of the Mitford Girls' Mother</i>	DC	1.45pm	2.40pm	£10	8
Sun 24 May	Sally Coulthard: <i>A Brief History of the Coast in 100 Objects</i>	DC	3pm	3.55pm	£10	8
Sun 24 May	Writing Workshop: Lisa Greener: <i>World Building workshop</i>	DC	3.15pm	4.45pm	£20	9
Sun 24 May	Bee Wilson: <i>The Heart-Shaped Tin</i>	DC	4.15pm	5.10pm	£10	8
Sun 24 May	Sarah Hilary: <i>The Drowning Place</i>	DC	5.30pm	6.25pm	£10	8
Sun 24 May	Festival Book Quiz	DC	7pm	8.30pm	£40	8
Mon 25 May	Bookworms	ED	10am	3pm	£5	19
Mon 25 May	James Macintyre: <i>Gordon Brown: Power with Purpose</i>	MoM	2pm	3pm	£10	9
Tue 26 May	Morning Coffee with Gail Crowther: <i>Marilyn And Her Books ...</i>	MoM	10.15am	11.30am	£12.50	10
Tue 26 May	Creative Comics with Laura Howell	SL	10.30am	11.15am	FREE	20
Tue 26 May	Creative Comics with Laura Howell	SpoL	1pm	1.45pm	FREE	20
Tue 26 May	CivicLAB: Dr Robin Sims: <i>The Green Man</i>	DT	2pm	3pm	FREE	18
Tue 26 May	Ashley Giles: <i>The King of Spain and I</i>	CCCG	3pm	4pm	£8	10
Tue 26 May	Charlie Bingham: <i>The Life Affirming Magic of Birds</i>	ED	7pm	8pm	£10	10
Wed 27 May	Drop-in Story & Craft Morning	CS	9.30am	2pm	FREE/£2 Donation	20
Wed 27 May	CivicLAB: Dr Shelby Judge: <i>The Boom of Feminist Greek Myth ...</i>	DT	10am	11am	FREE	18
Wed 27 May	Frances Stickley: <i>Capybara Disco Dreams</i>	CS	10am	10.45am	£5	20
Wed 27 May	Playful Moves: <i>The Very Hungry Caterpillar</i>	CS	10am	10.45am	£5	20
Wed 27 May	<i>These Are My Rocks - A story about Collecting</i>	MoM	10.30am	12.30pm	FREE/£3 Donation	21
Wed 27 May	Playful Moves: <i>The Very Hungry Caterpillar</i>	CS	11am	11.45am	£5	20
Wed 27 May	Pippa Curnick: <i>Pocket-sized Picture Books</i>	CS	11am	11.45am	£5	20
Wed 27 May	Ben Davis: <i>Postman Planet</i>	CS	1pm	2pm	£5	20

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Date	Event Title	Venue	Start	Finish	Ticket	Pg
Wed 27 May	<i>These Are My Rocks - A story about Collecting</i>	MoM	1.30pm	3.30pm	FREE/£3 Donation	21
Wed 27 May	Alison Weir: <i>The Boleyn Secret</i>	MoM	2pm	3pm	£10	11
Wed 27 May	Marcia Hutchinson: <i>The Mercy Step</i>	W	6pm	7pm	£8	11
Wed 27 May	Edmond Smith: <i>Ruthless</i>	MoM	7pm	8pm	£10	11
Thur 28 May	Marketing Derby Bondholder event: Ben Aitken	MoM	8.30am	10am	£12	12
Thur 28 May	CivicLAB: Simon Heywood and Shonaleigh: <i>A Garment for the Moon ...</i>	DT	10am	11am	FREE	18
Thur 28 May	STEAM Babies	MoM	10.15am	11.15am	£3	21
Thur 28 May	Manga Drawing Workshop	AIP	10.30am	12pm	£15	21
Thur 28 May	Manga Drawing Workshop	AIP	1pm	3pm	£20	21
Thur 28 May	Cream Tea with Kate Strasdin: <i>Dressing the Queen</i>	MoM	2.30pm	4pm	£20	12
Thur 28 May	Manga Drawing with Chie Kutsuwada	LF	3pm	4pm	£6	21
Thur 28 May	James Rodgers: <i>The Return of Russia: From Yeltsin to Putin</i>	LF	5.30pm	6.30pm	£10	12
Thur 28 May	Roger Moorhouse: <i>Wolfpack: Hitler's U-Boat War</i>	LF	7.30pm	8.30pm	£10	13
Fri 29 May	Sam Sedgman: <i>The Galileo Heist</i>	Q	1pm	2pm	£6	21
Fri 29 May	The Brothers McLeod: <i>Knight Sir Louis</i>	Q	3pm	4pm	£6	21
Fri 29 May	Cream Tea with Clare Hunter: <i>Making Matters</i>	MoM	2.30pm	4pm	£20	13
Fri 29 May	Arthur Snell: <i>Elemental: How We Will Live on a Warming Planet</i>	Q	5.15pm	6.15pm	£10	13
Fri 29 May	Chris Bryant MP: <i>A Life and a Half</i>	Q	7.30pm	8.30pm	£12	14
Sat 30 May	Kaf Okpattah: <i>Scam Nation</i>	Q	11am	12pm	£10	14
Sat 30 May	North Mills Volunteers: <i>The Strutt Mills of Belper and Milford</i>	BL	11am	12pm	FREE	14
Sat 30 May	Jacqueline Riding: <i>Hard Streets: Working-Class Lives in Charlie ...</i>	Q	1pm	2pm	£10	15
Sat 30 May	Introduction to Dungeons and Dragons Workshop	Q	3pm	4pm	£6	21
Sat 30 May	Patrick Gale and Joanna Cannon: <i>Reunited</i>	Q	3pm	4pm	£12	15
Sat 30 May	Claudia Hammond: <i>Overwhelmed: Ways to Take the Pressure Off</i>	Q	5.15pm	6.15pm	£10	16
Sat 30 May	Kadiatu Kanneh-Mason: <i>To Be Young, Gifted and Black</i>	Q	7.30pm	8.30pm	£12	16
Sun 31 May	James Cheshire: <i>The Library of Lost Maps</i>	Q	11am	12pm	£10	16
Sun 31 May	Dr Madeleine Pownall: <i>Absent Minds</i>	Q	1.15pm	2.15pm	£10	17
Sun 31 May	Dominic Gregory: <i>Lifeboat at the End of the World</i>	Q	3.30pm	4.30pm	£10	17
Sun 31 May	Professor James Payne: <i>Great Art Explained</i>	Q	5.30pm	6.30pm	£10	17
Sun 31 May	Professor Janina Ramirez: <i>Legenda: The Real Women Behind the ...</i>	Q	7.30pm	9pm	£15	17
Sun 19 Jul	Steve Farnsworth: <i>Painting Faces: Being a Life of that Capital Artist ...</i>	OL	1.30pm	2.30pm	£10	25

Dates for your diary:

Derby Book Festival Autumn Edition: 13 - 15 November 2026

Derby Book Festival is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation registered with the Charity Commission for England & Wales Number 1159763. Designed by Gravity.

e. hello@derbybookfestival.co.uk

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