



WIGTOWN BOOK FESTIVAL

25 SEPTEMBER - 4 OCTOBER 2026

A 10-DAY CELEBRATION
in Scotland's National
Book Town

Patina, gloss and whorl

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*This list was accurate at
the time of printing.*

BOOKS WRITTEN BY History



Visit us at the Festival Cafe in the County Buildings

 **HISTORIC NEWSPAPERS**

VISIT HISTORIC-NEWSPAPERS.COM FOR MORE INFORMATION

Welcome



THIS HAS BEEN a year of change and refreshment – a new home for the Festival Company together with new team members – as we continue to pursue our year-round objectives.

From nurturing young readers and supporting established and emerging writers to working with schools across the region, we are committed to our vision that ‘a community of books changes lives’.

But this year has also been tinged with sadness as we mourn the passing of Sandra McDowall, a genuine Wigtownshire lady who devoted herself to so many different committees and causes, including our own. She made a real difference to this community – she will be greatly missed.

We continue to be so grateful to all our generous supporters – friends, funders, sponsors, volunteers, the local community, our authors, our audiences and of course our tireless festival team, with particular thanks to our festival programmer, Lee Randall.

Please enjoy a wonderful Wigtown welcome as you immerse yourself in this year’s festival – ten days of extraordinary and memorable literary and cultural experiences.

Cathy Agnew Chair of Trustees



“PATINA, GLOSS AND WHORL... weathering is what I would like to do well,” wrote Wigtownshire poet Alastair Reid in his famous poem. In his centenary year, this festival brings

together some remarkable stories: brothers who rowed across the Pacific, witnesses to the war in Ukraine, explorers of the stars, and seekers of treasures beneath the earth. From kirkyard chronicles to literary boot camps, endangered languages to a planet under pressure, and family matters of all shapes and sizes. This year’s programme celebrates life in all its complexities – a celebration of ‘weathering’, perhaps.

Take some time with us. Dive into creative trails, tours and discoveries throughout the festival. In this National Year of Reading, from Scotland’s National Book Town, we’re excited to share with you this love letter to stories of every kind.

Isla Rosser-Owen CEO



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Wigtown Book Festival

26 South Main Street
Wigtown
DG8 9EH

Tel: 01988 402036

wigtownbookfestival.com

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for our full
programme



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 **SCOTLAND**

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Themes 2026



Family Matters

Our lives are governed by family — the ones we have, the ones we lack, the ones we create. Across a range of fiction and non-fiction offerings, our authors are exploring ideas around love, grief, estrangement, birth, death, motherhood, ageing and caring.



Change the Stories

Climate change can feel too big to contemplate, much less affect. Wigtown Book Festival continues its commitment to finding fresh ways to look at the ongoing crisis, while alerting you to the inspiring people and countries finding ways to make a difference.



Phraseology

We celebrate Scots, Gaelic, lost languages, and literature in translation, with events diving deep into humanity's most important communication tool: language.



Lives & Times

From the 'Great Dictator' Barbara Cartland to celebrated Scottish scientist James Hutton, with stops along the way to marvel at spy-makers, the world's first female surgeon, Chinese emperors and others, this year sees a raft of fascinating people spring to life on our stages.



Workshops

Get inspiration, insider information, and one-to-one tuition from a range of talented writers, photographers, and storytellers appearing at this year's festival. Places are limited, so book early!



Scottish Debut Novels

Meet tomorrow's stars today, and get in on the ground floor of careers that are full of promise. Support a new writer now and you'll be able to say "I was there first!"



Out & About

If you love being outdoors, we've got you covered with walks featuring local lore, bookshop visits and women's history, outdoor workshops for writers, filmmakers, and foragers, even a literature-inspired series of boot camp fitness hours!



Witches & Other Lore

Whether it's tales of dark sorcery or real-life stories of persecution, surprising news about Scottish vampires or a history of fairies, we've got something for anyone musing about whether there's magic at play in the world.



The Write Stuff

Adding to this year's film strand, Driftwood Cinema has joined forces with Wigtown Book Festival to present a curated selection of films with literary links and sessions with filmmakers exploring aspects of the industry.



YA: Poetry, Protest, Place

Make a scene, slam!, explore silence as safety, celebrate schools along the Solway, learn Scots and sign-painting, play with stories and eco-zines, nature and more. Our young adult events are open to all and free if you're under 26.

the 2026 Programme

25
SEP

FRIDAY

4.30PM

Sally Hayden

This is Also a Love Story

Festival Marquee | £12

The acclaimed Irish foreign correspondent and Orwell Prize-winner searches for stories of love and caring in the world's most troubled and dangerous places and returns with uplifting stories to renew your faith in humanity. [001]



Peter Irvine

Crossing the Sound

County Buildings | £9

From the man who brought punk rock to Scotland comes a debut novel that rips away the glitz and glamour to reveal how the music industry really works – at least until the walls come tumbling down. [002]

Mathijs Deen

Down Old Roads

The Merse | £9

Humanity has always traversed Europe, and under every footpath and motorway lies a trail into the past. Come hear the stories of the people who crossed the continent's highways and byways. Part of New Dutch Writing, presented by the Dutch Foundation for Literature. [003]



The Maclean Brothers, 6pm, Friday 25 September



Harriet Tyce, 7.30pm, Friday 25 September



BSL

British Sign Language interpretation.



LIVE STREAMING

Events also available online. More details on our website.

5PM



The Edinburgh Society of Unapologetically Imperfect Mothers

Galloway Distillery | £20 | 18+

Fresh from the Edinburgh Fringe, and after several celebratory bevvies, the two-time Scottish Podcast Award nominees dive into the chaos of motherhood with hilarious honesty, celebrating life, and friendship, in all its messy glory. Join them for this live recording, and maybe a cocktail or two! 120 min. [004]

6PM

The Maclean Brothers

Three Brothers in a Boat

Festival Marquee | £12

In 2025, three Scottish brothers set out to row 9,000 miles non-stop across the stormy Pacific Ocean. Discover how they broke the record for the fastest ever crossing and survived life-threatening dangers along the way. [005]

7.30PM



Harriet Tyce

Witch Trial

Festival Marquee | £15

The best-selling Scottish crime writer who became the breakout star of the BBC series *Traitors* discusses her new legal thriller set in Edinburgh's High Court, with echoes of Scotland's historical persecution of those accused of witchcraft. [006]

8.45PM

Festival Fireworks

North Main Street | **FREE**

The traditional pipers' procession and fireworks over Wigtown Bay.

9PM

The 2026 Festival Party

County Buildings

We invite speakers, sponsors, volunteers and Friends to celebrate the start of the 2026 festival. To become a Friend visit wigtownbookfestival.com.

Book at Bedtime

New Chapter Books | Pay What You Can

Themed readings and hot chocolate with festival storyteller Renita Boyle. [007]

26
SEP SATURDAY

8.30AM

Slow Flow Morning Yoga

With Jeny Nevard

The Merse | £5

Start your day refreshed and vitalised with the ancient practice of yoga, designed to energise you at the beginning of the day. Open to all abilities. Please bring a mat if you have one. 45 min. [008]

9AM

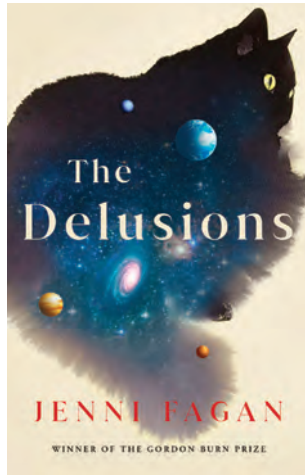


Stephen Rutt

Nature Writing on the Merse

Meet at the Harbour Car Park | £12

The award-winning nature writer guides you on an exploration of how to express what you hear, see and feel out on Wigtown's fascinating saltmarsh. Writing materials provided. Please wear weatherproof clothing



Jenni Fagan, 10.30am, Saturday 26 September



Peter Irvine,
4.30pm, Friday
25 September



Sally Hayden, 4.30pm, Friday 25 September

and suitable outdoor footwear. 90 min. [009]

9.30AM



Kriss Nichol

Wigtown Women's Walk 1

Meet at Foggie Toddle Books | £9

Discover the stories of Wigtown's remarkable women from history. [010]

10AM



Annaliese Avery
Building Worlds

Number 12 | U26 **FREE** / £9

A world-building creative writing workshop with keen astronomer and popular fantasy fiction author Annaliese Avery. [011]

10.30AM

Shaun Bythell

Return of the Bookseller Diarist

Festival Marquee | £15

Local bookseller Shaun Bythell debuts a new work covering the three years following publication of his international bestseller, *Diary of a Bookseller*, which recounted the trials and tribulations of running the largest second-hand bookshop in Scotland. [012]



Paul Burrell

The Royal Insider

County Buildings | £12

For over two decades, Paul Burrell was a silent witness to the making of history – most famously, as a confidante of the late Princess Diana. Now, with a unique perspective shaped by time and change, he's ready to share his own story alongside theirs. [013]

Jenni Fagan

The Delusions

Sacred Heart Church | £9

Take a journey into the afterlife with the award-winning Scottish author and poet as she discusses her biting satirical, deeply moving new novel. [014]

12 NOON

THE JAMES MIRROR LECTURE

Nicholas Stern

The Growth Story of the 21st Century

Festival Marquee | £12

The next decade will determine whether we avoid climate, biodiversity and economic catastrophe – or unlock a new era of sustainable, resilient and inclusive growth. In this year's lecture, Nicholas Stern talks us through the economics and opportunity of climate action. [015]



Aimee MacDonald & Rebecca Ferrier

Witches, Time Switches and Ancient Curses

County Buildings | £9

Do you love tales about witches, ancient curses, sea gods and dangerously toxic behaviour? Two debut novelists bring it all to the table. Step right this way to be part of a conversation about magic, inspiration, terror, and Gothic fiction. [016]

Colin Grant, Clementine Burnley & Marjorie Lotfi

What We Leave We Carry

Sacred Heart Church | £9

What does it mean to be a migrant in 21st-century Britain? Who are the asylum seekers and refugees we keep hearing about? Meet the storytellers from this oral history project and discover the truth behind the headlines. [017]



Literary Boot Camp

John Buchan: 39 Steps

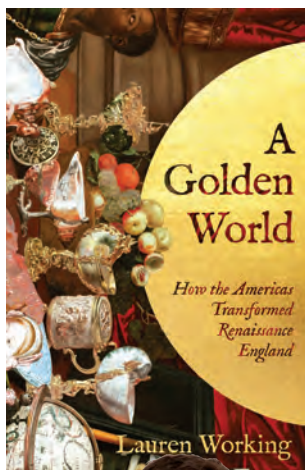
Interval Workout

Meet outside County Buildings | £5

Ken Ilgunas leads a lively workout inspired by Buchan's famous thriller. Expect short bursts of cardio, bodyweight strength and simple intervals in an accessible session full of movement, pace and suspense. [018]



Peter MacQueen, 1.30pm, Saturday 26 September



Lauren Working, 1.30pm, Saturday 26 September

Coinneach MacLeod, 4.30pm, Saturday 26 September



Taylor Dyson
Scots Poetry

Showcase

County Buildings | U26 **FREE** / £9

A captivating hour of Scots language poetry and conversation with the National Library of Scotland's Scots Scribe. Chaired by Hamish MacDonald. [019]

1.30PM



Peter MacQueen

Tails of Scotland: The Story of Scottish Dogs

Festival Marquee | £12

Celebrate the canine breeds of Scotland with the dog-loving author, TV presenter and crofter. From Border Collies to Highland Terriers, what makes our native dogs special and loved around the world? Here's the man with the answers. [020]

Lauren Working

A Golden World

County Buildings | £9

Renaissance adventurers journeyed to the Americas expecting to find cities of gold. What they found instead forever altered life in Elizabethan England. [021]



Stephen Rutt

The Waterlands

Sacred Heart Church | £9

Journey from the Lowther Hills to the Firth of Clyde and beyond in the company of an award-winning naturalist who'll explain the threat to our water supplies and reveal why there are still reasons to be hopeful about our wetlands. [022]

Southlight 40 Launch

County Buildings | **FREE**

Readings of freshly published work from regional and national creatives to celebrate 40 editions of *Southlight*. Meet the editors, enjoy the buzz of

conversation between writers, artists and listeners, and buy a copy of the magazine. [023]

Hamish MacDonald

Square Baw
County Buildings | U26 **FREE** / £9
From the terraces of the lower leagues to Wembley and wartime: family, life and community are explored through the lens of 'the beautiful gemme'. [024]

Dumfries Women's Signwriting Squad

Signwriting and the Art of Lettering
Number 12 | U26 **FREE** / £15
Explore the craft of traditional hand-painted lettering in this unique signwriting workshop inspired by poetry. 120 min. [025]

3PM

Professor Catherine Heymans

How to Design a Universe
Festival Marquee | £15
The Astronomer Royal for Scotland takes us on a mind-bending journey through the science of reality. From the quantum quirks of subatomic particles to the mysteries of dark matter, she explores whether humanity could ever create a virtual universe as diverse as our own. [026]

James Robertson

Ayont the Thistle
County Buildings | £9
In the centenary year of Hugh MacDiarmid's poem 'A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle', its idiosyncratic, eccentric and controversial creator is celebrated by a contemporary Scottish literary giant. [027]

Lucy Lapwing **Love is a Toad**

Sacred Heart Church | £12
Join the Springwatch star and self-confessed nature nerd on



Prof. Catherine Heymans, 3pm,
Saturday 26 September



Lucy Lapwing, 3pm, Saturday 26 September



Hamish MacDonald, 1.30pm, Saturday 26 September

a journey around the UK as she seeks joy in the natural world all around us and raises a warning about how close we are to losing it. [028]

Ben Please & Shaun Bythell

Bookshops & Back Stories
Meet outside County Buildings | £9
Visit Wigtown's bookshops and hear about local history on this guided tour from a best-selling author and one half of The Bookshop Band. [029]

4.30PM

Coinneach MacLeod **Hebridean Hygge**

Festival Marquee | £12
The TV star and internationally best-selling cookbook author is on a mission to celebrate life's quieter pleasures, offering ideas for enjoying seasonal creature comforts. [030]

Joshua Blackburn

The Language-Lover's Lexipedia
County Buildings | £9
Meet the man behind the hugely successful game *League of the Lexicon* and dive into the pleasures of language, linguistics and wordplay. [031]

Polly Pullar

In the Company of Sheep
Sacred Heart Church | £9
Polly Pullar tells us about journeying from Dartmoor to Shetland to find out all there is to know about this humble, farm animal. [032]

Annaliese Avery **The Wycherleys:**

Love and Other Curses
County Buildings | U26 **FREE** / £9 | 13+
For the Kingdom. For the magic. And for love. Fall head over broomstick for this witchy romantic fantasy series. [033]

6PM

Dougie Payne

My Life in Culture

Festival Marquee | £15

In this special event the musician and newly minted children's author reveals his cultural inspirations and talks about life on the road with the band Travis. [034]

David Torrance

The Edge of Revolution

County Buildings | £9

It is 100 years since the General Strike saw 2 million workers down tools, soldiers deployed on the streets, and the fate of the UK hang in the balance. This is the inside story. [035]

7.30PM



RMG Parker

A Snowstorm in June

County Buildings | £12

Might the next big name in Tartan Noir be a local hero? Come meet the author who drew on the years he spent tracking down fraudsters in real life as inspiration for this taut fiction thriller. [036]

THEATRE

Saving Stella's

The Merse | Pay What You Can

Stella's Snack Bar has many loyal customers but there is a dastardly plot to close her down! Wigtownshire u3a's Theatre Group presents a play by local author Lin Liddle. [037]

MUSIC

Logan Parker

Salma: Songs of Strength and Survival

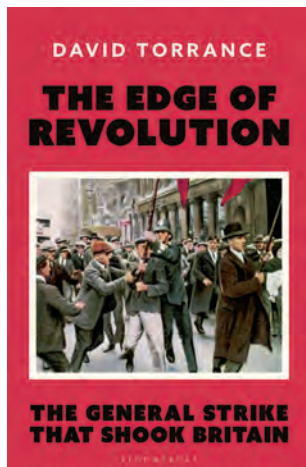
Sacred Heart Church | £12

An intimate solo performance from the British-Portuguese singer-songwriter whose music blends the guitar skills of Memphis Minnie and the vocal emotion of Blues singer Bessie Smith in heartfelt original material. [038]



STEFAN RUIZ

Dougie Payne, 6pm, Saturday 26 September



David Torrance, 6pm, Saturday 26 September



Galloway Harriers,
10am, Sunday
27 September

THEATRE

Animal Farm

The Swallow Theatre | £17

A renowned solo adaptation of George Orwell's barnyard masterpiece is a spellbinding performance that will shock, enchant and linger long in the memory. [039]

Dr Nick Savage

Stories of a Bold Galloway Spirit

Bladnoch Distillery | £15 |18+

Join Master Distiller Dr Nick Savage for an evening of stories and spirit exploring over 200 years of Bladnoch history, while sampling a selection of award-winning whiskies. [040]

27
SEP



8.30AM

Slow Flow Morning Yoga

With Jeny Nevard

The Merse | £5

See Sat 26 Sep. Open to all abilities. Please bring a mat if you have one. 45 min. [041]

9.30AM



Kriss Nichol

Wigtown Women's Walk 2

Meet at Foggie Toddle Books | £9

Discover more stories of Wigtown's remarkable women from history. [042]

10AM



Michael Mullen,

Taylor Dyson &

Mark Vernon Thomas

The Sunday Sessions

County Buildings | U26 FREE / £9

Poetry to soothe and excite.

What better way to start the day? A showcase featuring three entertaining and dynamic poetic voices. [043]



Galloway Harriers

'Run the Risk' 10k

Newton Stewart Golf Club | 16+
The Galloway Harriers' 'Run the Risk' 10k begins at the Newton Stewart Golf Club and concludes near the Minnigaff hills, with breathtaking views on the descent for home. Enter online via EntryCentral or using the link on the Galloway Harriers Facebook page. [044]

10.30AM

Emma Hepburn

The Anti-Burnout Book

Festival Marquee | £12

Drawing on clinical expertise and personal experience, the 'Psychology Mum' visits the festival to discuss the social pressures leading to burnout and offer strategies for coping if it does strike. [045]

Jessica Fox & Dr Ed Hoffman

Moon Snacks Podcast

County Buildings | £9

You're off on a trip to the Moon! What three films would you bring, and why? And what snack sends you into orbit? Find out what today's special guest has chosen in this entertaining series of live podcasts. [046]

Brian Taylor's Sunday Papers

The Merse | £9

Political broadcaster Brian Taylor and some of our visiting authors discuss the day's headlines and top stories. [047]



Paul Tarling & John Atkinson

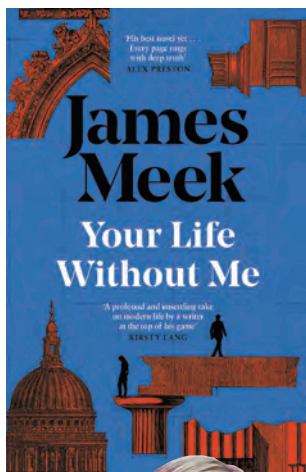
The Wanderer and the Poet

Meet outside County Buildings | £9
A stroll through Wigtown's natural history, pausing

to reflect on the beauty of nature and the long history of its eastern slope. View the saltmarsh and wonder at its macabre past. 90 min. [048]



Philip Hensher, 4.30pm, Sunday 27 September



James Meek,
1.30pm, Sunday
27 September

Emma
Hepburn,
10.30am,
Sunday 27
September



11.30AM



Next Take

Make a Scene

Number 12 | U26 **FREE**

Make a scene in a day. An exciting crash course for budding filmmakers: dialogue, storytelling, filming and editing with youth-led filmmaking group Next Take. For U26s only. 210 min. [049]

12 NOON



Elinor Cleghorn & Lara Feigel

Hidden Histories of Motherhood

Festival Marquee | £12

Two acclaimed authors discuss a radical new history of motherhood and groundbreaking stories about the fraught history of child custody. [050]

Stewart Sanderson

Weathershaker

County Buildings | £9

Join one of Scotland's most promising young poets for an hour of playful poetry that "seethes with mischievous intelligence". [051]



Literary Boot Camp

John Muir: Wilderness

Conditioning

Meet outside County Buildings | £5

Ken Ilgunas leads a workout inspired by John Muir, blending light strength, mobility and natural materials. Designed to help you feel sturdier, looser and more attuned to the landscape. [052]

1.30PM

PANEL

Stands Scotland Where It Did?

Festival Marquee | £12

Political broadcaster Brian Taylor chairs a panel of leading politicians examining the domestic and international challenges Scotland faces and explores solutions we might try. [053]

1.30PM



James Meek

Your Life Without Me

County Buildings | £9

The award-winning Scottish novelist returns with an explosive tale about fathers, families, love, grief – and a potential act of terrorism centring around a plot to blow up St Paul's Cathedral. [054]



Michael Mullen

Goonie

The Merse | £9

Catch one of Glasgow's brightest, fiercest and funniest new Scots language poets, whose work interrogates the relationship between art, class and identity, as they bring their unashamedly working-class, queer, Scottish voice to Wigtown. [055]

Silent Book Club

The Bookshop Garden | **FREE**

Bring a book and join an hour of collective silent reading. The strictly no-talking policy lets you immerse yourself in the story alongside fellow readers. [056]

THEATRE

Dylan Thomas:

The Man, the Myth

The Swallow Theatre | £16

A personal journey into the life, soul and creative genius of Dylan Thomas, created by Hannah Ellis, the poet's granddaughter, and Guy Masterson. [057]

3PM

Iain Stewart, Karine Polwart & James Robertson

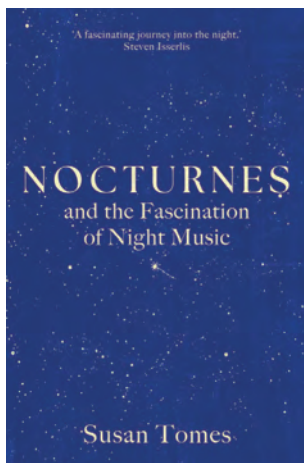
The Killing Time

Festival Marquee | £15

A discussion with poetic and musical responses to Scotland's Covenanter past, as explored in *The Killing Time*, Iain Stewart's collection of dark, lyrical photographic images and writings on the Galloway



Karine Polwart, 3pm, Sunday 27 September



Susan Tones, 4.30pm, Sunday 27 September



Michael Mullen, 1.30pm, Sunday 27 September

landscape. New writing from James Robertson and an exclusive short performance from Karine Polwart. [058]

Richard Strachan

Night Fire

County Buildings | £9

Meet the rising star of Scottish historical fiction, here to talk about his riveting story of wartime jeopardy, depicting a world on the brink of collapse. [059]

4PM



Piece of Mind

Introduced by **Daniel Kerr**

The Merse | U26 **FREE** / Pay What You Can

Victim to a devastating raid, a village honours their lost ancestors through the 'Day of Silence' festival. An event that's brought people together for centuries is starting to drive them apart. Join us for a screening of this film set in and around Wigtown. 75 min. [060]

4.30PM



Philip Hensher

A History of the Novel

in Britain

Festival Marquee | £12

Explore three centuries of the British novel in the company of one of the finest contemporary exponents of the form, as he discusses his monumental new literary history, from Daniel Defoe in the 1700s to Zadie Smith in the present day. [061]

Susan Tones

Nocturnes and the Fascination of Night Music
County Buildings | £9

From children's lullabies to Chopin and Max Richter, the celebrated pianist and author leads us on an exploration of the history of the haunting music of the night. [062]

6PM



Kim Sherwood Hurricane Room

Festival Marquee | £12

Meet the writer who has given the world of James Bond a new lease of life and discover why the Ian Fleming Estate chose her to carry on the 007 story. [063]



Remembering Alastair Reid

County Buildings | £12

A celebration of the life and works of Alastair Reid in his centenary year, with memories and readings from a few of his friends: Marc Lambert, Lucia Graves and Allan Little. [064]

Shara Atashi, Sana Nassari & Marjorie Lotfi

Iranian Women's Voices

The Merse | £9

An evening of poetry, film and music from WritersMosaic, with writer and translator Shara Atashi, and poets Sana Nassari and Marjorie Lotfi. Featuring the photography of Hengameh Golestan, whose work captures women protesting the oppression of the Iranian authorities. [065]

7.30PM



The Shepherd and the Bear

The Merse | £9

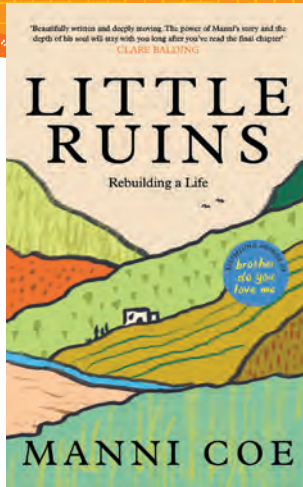
This immersive documentary finds a traditional shepherding community in France facing the reintroduction of brown bears. It's a meditation on tradition, conflict and our evolving relationship with nature. In French, with subtitles. 101 min. [066]



FILM Refugia: A Celtic Rainforest

Newton Stewart Cinema | FREE
but ticketed (donations welcome)

Refugia is an art documentary exploring the temperate



Manni Coe, 4.30pm, Monday 28 September



Richard Strachan,
3pm, Sunday
27 September



Remembering Alastair Reid,
6pm, Sunday 27 September

rainforests of Galloway. It is an ecological portrait of persistence, connection and the fragile worlds around us. This screening will be accompanied by a live performance of the original score. [067]

THEATRE

Animal Farm

The Swallow Theatre | £17

A renowned solo adaptation of George Orwell's barnyard masterpiece is a spellbinding performance that will shock, enchant and linger long in the memory. [068]

28
SEP

MONDAY

9.30AM

The Morning Show

Wigtown Ploughman | Pay What You Can

Start the day with a little music and chat. 45 min. [069]

10.30AM



Miranda Seymour The Many Lives of

Vera Gedroits

County Buildings | £9

The acclaimed biographer brings us the remarkable story of the world's first female battlefield surgeon: tutor to the doomed Romanov women, ardent supporter of workers and an innovative medical marvel. [070]

Cathy Haynes

The Fullness of Time

The Merse | £9

Knowing the time has never been easier in our digital world, but what have we lost by ignoring the natural signs signalling the changing hours? Meet an artist and writer who wants us to rediscover those skills. [071]

Distillery Tours • Whisky Tastings • Lunch



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10.30AM



Renita Boyle

Wordplay, Whimsy and Wit: Writing Poetry for Kids
County Buildings | £15

This workshop introduces Wigtownshire poet Alastair Reid's writing for children to new audiences and encourages participants to explore wordplay, imagination and visual creativity. 90 min. [072]

12 NOON

Jessica Fox & Dr Ed Hoffman
Moon Snacks Podcast

Festival Marquee | £9

You're off on a trip to the Moon! What three films would you bring, and why? And what snack sends you into orbit? Find out what today's special guest has chosen in this entertaining series of live podcasts. [073]

Robin Yassin-Kassab

Syria After the Fall of Assad
County Buildings | £9

After decades of resistance and repression, Syria's Assad regime collapsed in 2024. What is the future of the country now? Can it come to terms with its past and find a settled future? Meet the commentator who may have the answers. [074]



Literary Boot Camp

Nan Shepherd:
Mountain Strength

Meet outside County Buildings | £5
Inspired by Nan Shepherd's love of the Cairngorms, this hillwalking-themed session with Ken Ilgunas focuses on lower-body strength, balance and core stability. [075]

1.30PM



Paul French

The Last Emperor of China
Festival Marquee | £12

If you saw *The Last Emperor*, you may think you know all about

China's boy ruler, Puyi, and his Scottish tutor. Get ready to discover a whole new side to that story, courtesy of an expert on Chinese history. [076]



Dr Sarah Lonsdale

Wildly Different
County Buildings | £9

Exploration has never solely been a man's game – many women have ventured into unfamiliar corners of the world over the last two centuries. Meet five female pioneers who defied social convention to undertake voyages of discovery. [077]

Maggie Ritchie

White Raven

The Merse | £9

Why do women make such excellent spies? The award-winning author introduces us to the real-life Scottish women who inspired her Cold War thriller, following an Edinburgh teacher drawn into the intelligence service, undertaking a dangerous mission in the Highlands. [078]

THEATRE

Dylan Thomas:

The Man, the Myth

The Swallow Theatre | £16

A personal journey into the life, soul and creative genius of Dylan Thomas, created by Hannah Ellis, the poet's granddaughter, and Guy Masterson. [079]

3PM

Victoria Donovan

Life in Spite of Everything

Festival Marquee | £12

As the Russian invasion continues, discover the truth of what life is like in the Donbas region of Ukraine's borderlands, and learn more about the rich history and culture of a region being devastated by war. [080]

Jamie Lafferty

An Inconvenience of Penguins
County Buildings | £9

There are 18 species of penguin in the world, some of them living in the most inaccessible places on the planet. That fact did not stop this award-winning travel writer from going on a quest to encounter each and every one of them. [081]

Doug Johnstone

20 Years and 20 Books

The Merse | £9

Celebrating a career that's seen the publication of 20 books in 20 years, including the hugely popular crime series, The Skelfs, and the mind-bending Enceladons SF trilogy. Who better than Johnstone to solve the mystery of what it takes to make a living as a writer? [082]



Elizabeth Tindal

Reading Wigtown

Meet outside County Buildings | £9

A mindful walk, concentrating on seeing, hearing, smelling and touching the details of what surrounds us, to 'read' the environmental story that is the very essence of the place around us. 90 min. [083]

4.30PM



Manni Coe &

Reuben Coe

Little Ruins: Rebuilding a Life
Festival Marquee | £12

Meet this charming duo and authors of a touching story of brotherly love. Learn the back story of Manni's life before coming to the rescue of his younger sibling amid the emotional turbulence of the pandemic and a fracturing care system. [084]

4.30PM

Chris Romer-Lee

Sea Pools: 66 Saltwater Sanctuaries

County Buildings | £9

Discover the fascinating world of beautiful and spectacular sea pools in the company of an architectural designer in love with outdoor swimming. [085]



The Role of the Screenwriter

The Merse | £9

Join Mark McCausland, writer and composer of *The Spin*, Michael Head, the director, and Anna Zaluczkowska, a lecturer in film and screenwriting, to explore how stories move from script to screen, the collaboration between writer and director, and the challenges facing today's screenwriters. [086]

6PM

Lucy Porter

Middle-Aged Women Get Sh*t Done

Festival Marquee | £15

Discover why midlife women are the glue binding society together, in the company of the much-loved stand-up star of *Live at the Apollo*, *QI*, *Mock the Week* and *Have I Got News for You*. [087]

Lesley Fergusson

Wanderings with a Camera

County Buildings | £9

In the 1960s Erskine Beveridge's collection of more than 800 glass plate negatives was discovered in a mill in Fife. They provide a remarkable record of life in Scotland between 1880 and 1919 and tell us much about our nation's past. [088]

7.30PM



The Spin

The Merse | £9

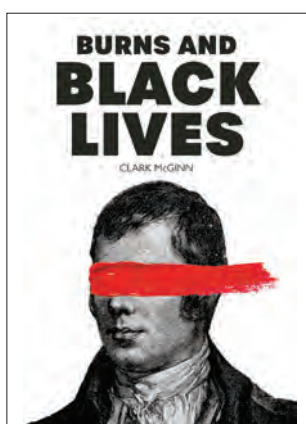
This sweet, uplifting Irish road movie from filmmaker Michael



Felicity Spector, 10.30am, Tuesday 29 September



Gerda Stevenson, 12 noon, Tuesday 29 September



Clark McGinn, 3pm, Tuesday 29 September

Head packs in the laughs as it follows Dermot and Elvis, two music lovers who run a struggling record shop in Omagh, Northern Ireland. Cert 15. 92 min. [089]

THEATRE

Animal Farm

The Swallow Theatre | £17

A renowned solo adaptation of George Orwell's barnyard masterpiece is a spellbinding performance that will shock, enchant, and linger long in the memory. [090]

29 SEP

TUESDAY

8.30AM

Slow Flow Morning Yoga

With Jeny Nevard

The Merse | £5

Start your day refreshed and vitalised with the ancient practice of yoga, designed to energise you at the beginning of the day. Open to all abilities. Please bring a mat if you have one. 45 min. [091]

9AM



Saskia Coulson & Colin Tennant

Saltmarsh from the Sky

Meet at the Harbour Car Park | £12

Discover how drone technology can reveal the beauty, scale and ecological importance of this coastal landscape. Please wear weatherproof clothing and suitable outdoor footwear. 90 min. [092]

9.30AM

The Morning Show

Wigtown Ploughman | Pay What You Can

Start the day with a little music and chat. 45 min. [093]

10AM



Renita Boyle

Happily Ever Laughter:

How to Tell a Good Story

County Buildings | £15

Rediscover connection and laughter in this storytelling workshop, that lets you explore how oral storytelling can be a playful pathway into literacy and creativity. 90 min. [094]

10.30AM

Felicity Spector

Bread and War

Festival Marquee | £12

How do you source, cook and take joy in food in the face of war and loss? Meet the journalist who has been on the front line in Ukraine to discover how a nation under attack feeds itself in a time of conflict. [095]

THE WHITHORN TRUST LECTURE

Graeme Cavers

Archaeology in the Machars

County Buildings | £9

An overview of a recent new phase of archaeological research at an Iron Age wetland settlement at the site of an early-industrial copper mine, which may have been used since prehistory. [096]

D&G Writers in the Spotlight

The Merse | FREE

Join us in supporting ten authors from the region's lively writing community as they share readings from their latest works of prose and poetry. [097]

12 NOON



Catherine Simpson

Sandwiched: Caring Up and Caring Down

Festival Marquee | £12

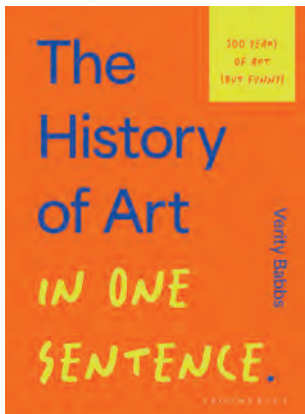
Catherine Simpson had been through a lot: parenting an autistic child, mourning her sister's death and surviving cancer. Then during Covid her father's and daughter's health



Lucy Porter, 6pm, Monday 28 September



Angela Young, 1.30pm, Tuesday 29 September



Verity Babbs, 6pm, Tuesday 29 September

began to deteriorate. This is her story of loving and caring in a time of crisis. [098]



Gerda Stevenson

Cat Wumman: Tales O

Nine Lives

County Buildings | £9

The much-loved *Braveheart* actor, singer and writer returns to celebrate her new book of short stories all told in Scots. Grab this chance to see and hear one of the country's greatest storytellers in the flesh. [099]



Literary Boot Camp

Robert Louis Stevenson:

Adventure Circuit

Meet outside County Buildings | £5

Ken Ilgunas leads a circuit inspired by *Treasure Island* and *Kidnapped*. Through cardio, mobility work and simple strength stations, this outdoor class captures something of Stevenson's spirit of travel, resilience and adventure. [100]

1.30PM

Jessica Fox & Dr Ed Hoffman

Moon Snacks Podcast

Festival Marquee | £9

You're off on a trip to the Moon! What three films would you bring, and why? And what snack sends you into orbit? Find out what today's special guest has chosen in this entertaining series of live podcasts. [101]

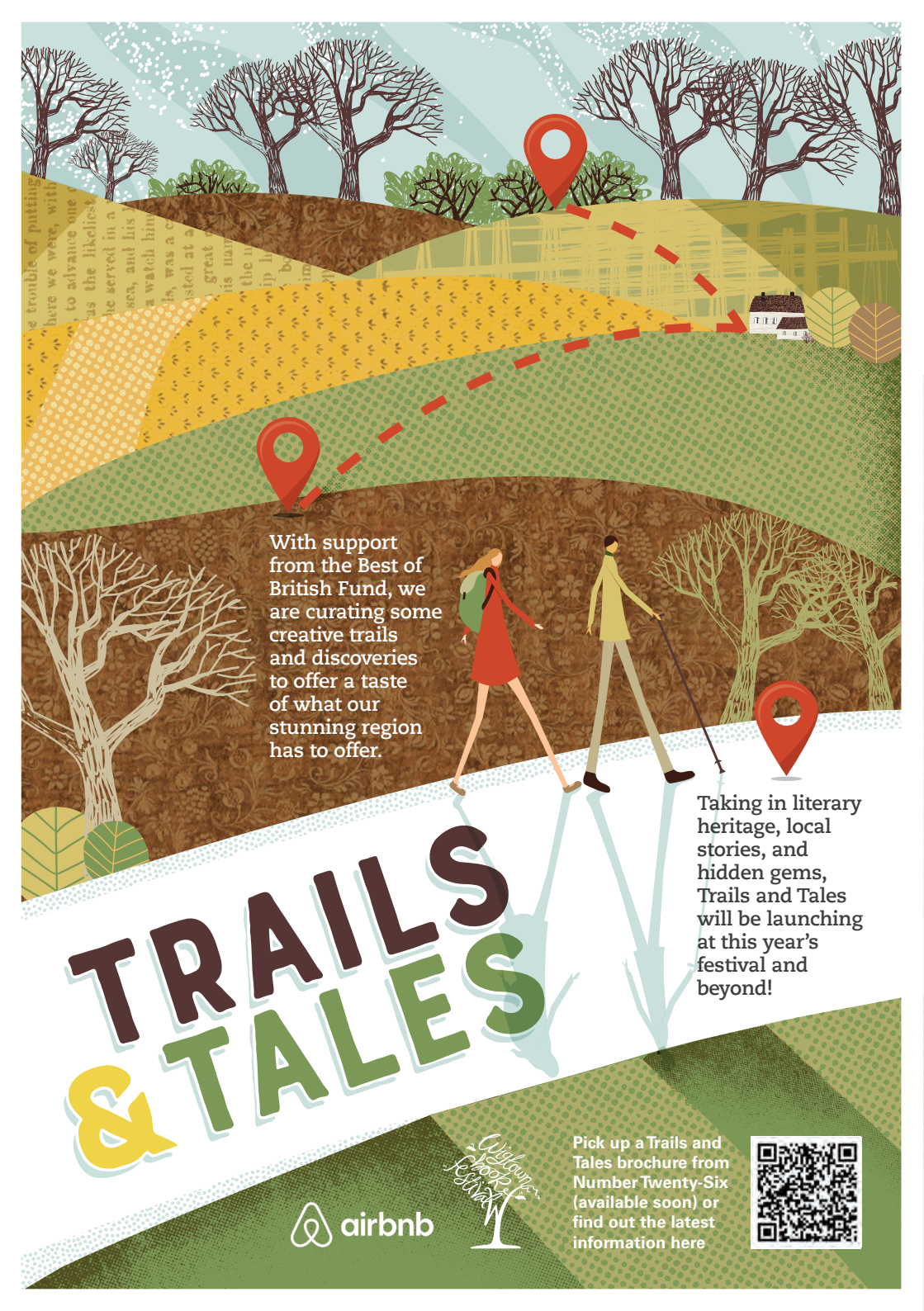


Angela Young

The Aristocrat and the Able Seaman

County Buildings | £12

Thrown together in Lifeboat Number 8 when the ill-fated Titanic went down, Young's great-grandmother, the Countess of Rothes, forged an unlikely, lifelong connection with able seaman Thomas Jones. This is the gripping story of their terrifying ordeal. [102]



With support from the Best of British Fund, we are curating some creative trails and discoveries to offer a taste of what our stunning region has to offer.

TRAILS & TALES

Taking in literary heritage, local stories, and hidden gems, Trails and Tales will be launching at this year's festival and beyond!



Pick up a Trails and Tales brochure from Number Twenty-Six (available soon) or find out the latest information here



1.30PM



Daniel Hahn
If This Be Magic

The Merse | £9

Is Shakespeare still Shakespeare when he is translated into Afrikaans or Yiddish? Meet the esteemed translator who argues that the Bard can make sense to anyone anywhere. [103]

3PM

Clark McGinn

Burns and Black Lives
Festival Marquee | £12

A renowned Burns expert explains the poet's links to the slave trade, and how his reputation and work was used in the fights for emancipation long after his death. [104]



Samantha Ellis

Chopping Onions on

My Heart

County Buildings | £12

What do we lose when languages disappear? The daughter of Iraqi Jewish refugees goes on a quest to learn more about her culture and the Judeo-Iraqi Arabic language she heard while growing up. [105]



Rachel Wood

Annie Knows Everything

The Merse | £9

Love in the 21st century has more twists and turns than anything Jane Austen ever imagined – but then Jane never navigated dating apps. Plunge into the contemporary mating game with the debut novelist rebooting the office romance. [106]



The Book Coach: Process

County Buildings | £18

Robert Twigger takes you through methodology, in a session packed with tips and techniques for story creation, avoiding writer's block, firing up your creativity, and more. 90 min. [107]

4.30PM

Nick Baker

My Life and Work

Festival Marquee | £15

Naturalist and broadcaster Nick Baker – star of *Japan's Wilderness* and *Big Week at the Zoo* – talks about moving to the Cairngorms, returning to his field ecologist roots, and his lifelong love of animals and insects. [108]

Simon Wroe

Ghost Month

County Buildings | £9

What would happen if the dead returned to visit us for one month every autumn? Join us for a little light haunting with the award-winning author of *Chop Chop*. [109]

Colin Tennant &

Saskia Coulson

The Merse: Day and Night

The Merse | £9

A celebration of filmmaking with a local voice, this is the story of the Merse – a place shaped by nature, memory and belonging. This event reveals the extraordinary atmosphere, beauty and wildlife of the saltmarsh after dark. [110]

6PM

Verity Babbs

Art History's Funniest Bits

Festival Marquee | £12

Let the art expert turned comedian be your guide for a hilarious whistlestop tour of 500 years of art history. [111]

Maia Hruska

Kafkaesque

County Buildings | £9

When Franz Kafka died, he was still unknown. His literary legacy is due to his translators, who included Primo Levi and Vladimir Nabokov. This is the story of Kafka's literary afterlife. [112]

Ian Carter & Karen Menarry

A Galloway Year

The Merse | £9

An artist and an author join forces for a broad introduction to Galloway's landscapes, from the vast, muddy Solway to the woods and farms, rushing burns, and heather-clad hills. [113]

7.30PM



Derek vs Derek

The Merse | £9

A funny film that finds an intensive farmer going up against a fan of rewilding in an almighty feud. Along the way, there are lessons about all kinds of relationships – between humans, animals, and the natural world. 90 min. [114]

THEATRE

Animal Farm

The Swallow Theatre | £17

A renowned solo adaptation of George Orwell's barnyard masterpiece is a spellbinding performance that will shock, enchant and linger long in the memory. [115]

30
SEP

WEDNESDAY

9.30AM

The Morning Show

Wigtown Ploughman | Pay What You Can

Start the day with a little music and chat. 45 min. [116]

10AM



The Book Coach: Insider Information

County Buildings | £18

An insider's tour of the publishing industry, complete with recommendations for navigating mainstream, indie or self-publishing to get your work out into the world. 90 min. [117]

10AM



Galloway Wild Foods Foraging Walk

Meet at Garlieston Harbour | £45

A guided foray exploring delicious and healthy wild foods of Galloway's merse (tidal salt marsh), beaches and maritime hedgerows, followed by a wild food picnic. Ticket holders will be notified of the exact meeting place by email prior to the event. 150 min. [118]

10.30AM

Kenneth Stevens & Claire Mann

A Song Among the Stones
County Buildings | £12

Join us for Stevens' soulful sequence of poems, telling the story of the hermit monks who made the voyage from the Hebrides to Iceland in the 7th century, beautifully interpreted by multi award-winning flautist Claire Mann. [119]

Malcolm Kempt A Gift Before Dying

The Merse | £9

His 17 years spent working as a criminal lawyer in the Canadian Arctic make this debut crime novelist uniquely qualified to describe frigid temperatures, endless winter nights and the darkness in men's souls. [120]

12 NOON

Chris Chibnall

The Parkwood Murders
Festival Marquee | £12

The creator of *Broadchurch* and former *Doctor Who* showrunner tells us about his hugely successful television career and his new CV entry: best-selling crime fiction author. [121]

Stuart McHardy Scotland's Geomythography

County Buildings | £9

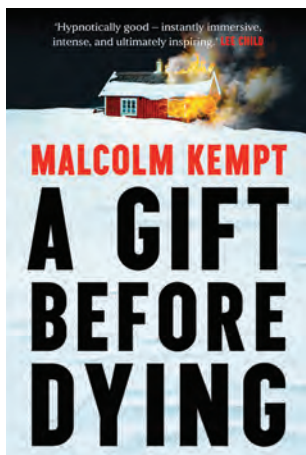
What can landscape tell us



Neil Forsyth,
7.30pm,
Wednesday
30 September



Fiona Mozley, 10.30am, Thursday 1 October



Malcolm Kempt, 10.30am,
Wednesday 30 September

about the people who inhabited Scotland in ancient times? The folklorist and historian is your guide for this journey into the pre-Christian past, demonstrating its links to the present day. [122]



Literary Boot Camp Highland Workout

Meet outside County Buildings | £5

Ken Ilgunas leads another lively outdoor workout inspired by Scotland's highland games and rugged landscape. Combining bodyweight drills and natural props, this session is designed to get the blood pumping in a way that feels playful, accessible and full of highland spirit. [123]



Elizabeth McCracken Masterclass: Inhabiting

Your Characters

County Buildings | £12

The acclaimed American author offers a workshop designed to get you thinking about the layers of 'outside' world that give your characters, and story, full-bodied interiority. [124]

1.30PM

Rachel Morris

The Years of the Wizard
Festival Marquee | £12

In 16th-century Europe science was often indistinguishable from magic. Take an imaginative journey back to a time when mathematicians cast spells, astronomers consulted with angels, and the threat of persecution was a daily worry. Meet the wizards, their wives, children, lovers and servants. [125]

Hugh McMillan Curious Histories and Questionable Tales

The Merse | £9

Pertaining to quests, bogles, sprites, romantic and dolorous incidents, death, curses, the

Holy Grail, public houses, Merlin, and sundry incidents based in some truth or utter deranged fantasy, all in the fabled realm of Galloway. [126]

MUSIC

**Lucy Russell
& Johan Löfving**

**Of Beasts, Dreams and
Bonnie Tunes**

Sacred Heart Church | £12
Music performed on violin, guitar and theorbo, in a concert including Biber's highly descriptive work of Nature herself, the Sonata Representativa, Tartini's Devil's Trill, Scots Tunes and 17th-century Stylus Fantasticus. [127]

**Paul Tarling &
John Atkinson**

The Wanderer and the Poet
Meet outside County Buildings | £9
A walk to the Martyrs' Stake and along the railway line, accompanied by poems and stories. Finishes up at the Old Station House. 90 min. [128]

2PM

FILM
**Refugia: A
Celtic Rainforest**

Newton Stewart Cinema | **FREE**
but ticketed (donations welcome)
Refugia is an art documentary film, exploring the temperate rainforests of Galloway. It is an ecological portrait of persistence, connection and the fragile worlds around us. [129]

3PM

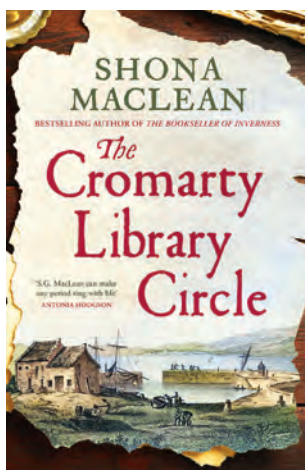
Jo Marchant

In Search of the Now
Festival Marquee | £12

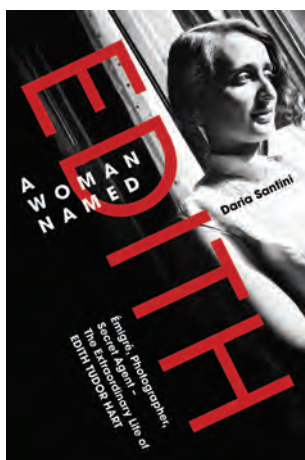
What do we mean by the word 'now'? Is the concept of time more complicated than we think? With award-winning science communicator Dr Jo Marchant as our guide, we'll



Patrick Gale, 12 noon, Thursday 1 October



Shona MacLean, 4.30pm, Wednesday 30 September



Daria Santini, 3pm, Wednesday 30 September

explore why our perception of time is so vital to our very notion of selfhood. [130]

Elizabeth McCracken

**The Long Game: How to
Write Fiction**

County Buildings | £9

The award-winning American author and teacher has warm and witty advice for those keen to start writing fiction or to up their game if they're already deep into their next project. Here's a rare chance to learn more about the ups and downs of an author's life. [131]

Daria Santini
**Émigré, Photographer
and Secret Agent**

The Merse | £9

Meet Edith Tudor Hart, émigré photographer, anti-fascist activist, secret Soviet spy and the woman who recruited Kim Philby for the Russians, who, despite being closely watched by the British Secret Service, was never caught and never confessed. [132]

**Ben Please &
Shaun Bythell**

Bookshops and Back Stories

Meet outside County Buildings | £9

Visit Wigtown's bookshops and hear about local history on this guided tour from a best-selling author and one half of The Bookshop Band. [133]

4.30PM

Gabriella Bennett
Journeys Into the

Urban Future

Festival Marquee | £12

As climate change and technological innovation transform our lives, how can we make sure the places we live in best serve their inhabitants? Here are some lessons from the cities of tomorrow. [134]

Save the date

walks

talks

poetry

music

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4.30PM

Shona MacLean**The Cromarty Library Circle**
County Buildings | £12

The award-winning author returns to Wigtown with her thrilling new historical novel set in a book group in Cromarty against a backdrop of mass emigrations and a cholera epidemic. [135]

Mark Williams**Wild Maritime Food****Sacred Heart Church | £12**

Sea buckthorn, wild thyme, wrack, cockles – there is glorious wild food all around us if you know where to look. Local foraging expert and wild food chef Mark Williams reveals the secret larder to be found on our shoreline. [136]

6PM

Louise Welsh & Chris Brookmyre**Killer Stories****Festival Marquee | £15**

Two of the country's smartest and funniest crime writers discuss their friendship, their literary careers, the state of Scottish crime fiction, and the fine art of murder. [137]

**Arthur Snell****The New Geography**
of Climate Change
County Buildings | £12

The climate crisis is real. Extreme weather is getting worse and the challenges we face are of our own making. Can we survive and adapt? Meet the former diplomat and current host of *Behind the Lines* podcast to hear about the dangers and the opportunities ahead of us. [138]

7.30PM

Neil Forsyth**From Bob Servant to BAFTA****Festival Marquee | £12**

The creator of BBC dramas *Guilt*

and *The Gold*, and more recently, Netflix's *Legends*, and the man behind Bob Servant, Brian Cox's greatest comedy role, discusses his life and career writing for television and cinema and the comedy of being human. [139]

**Virginia Woolf's**
Night and Day**The Merse | £9**

Featuring standout performances, and based on the classic Woolf novel, this is an un-romantic comedy about the passionate astronomer Katharine Hilbery, who does everything she can to avoid romantic love and marriage. 95 min. [140]

01
OCT

THURSDAY

8.30AM

Slow Flow Morning Yoga**With Jeny Nevard****The Merse | £5**

See Sat 26 Sep. Open to all abilities. Please bring a mat if you have one. 45 min. [141]

9.30AM

The Morning Show**Wigtown Ploughman | Pay What You Can**

Start the day with a little music and chat. 45 min. [142]

10AM

**Renita Boyle****Echoes and Threads****County Buildings | £15**

A gentle interactive workshop exploring multisensory storytelling as a way to support people living with memory loss and grief, exploring why this form of storytelling is such a powerful tool for engagement. 90 min. [143]

10.30AM

Robert Winder**The Extraordinary Waterways**
that Made Europe**Festival Marquee | £9**

Take a trip down Europe's three grandest rivers – the Rhine, the Rhone and the Po – to discover the part they played in shaping the histories and cultures of Germany, France and Italy. [144]

Fiona Mozley**Awake Awake****County Buildings | £9**

If you can't trust your memory, do you even know who you are? The award-winning author of *Elmet* returns with a novel exploring friendship, fear and fascism, posing the question: can we trust what our brain is telling us? [145]

Kat Hill**Bothy: In Search of Simple Shelter****The Merse | £9**

An exploration of our relationship with wild and remote landscapes, and the consolations of retreat and simple living. [146]

**Elizabeth Tindal****Reading Wigtown****Meet outside County Buildings | £9**

A mindful walk, concentrating on seeing, hearing, smelling and touching the details of what surrounds us, to 'read' the environmental story that is the very essence of the place around us. 90 min. [147]

12 NOON

Patrick Gale**Love Lane****Festival Marquee | £12**

Discover the real-life inspiration behind the hugely popular author's latest novel, which amplifies the story told in *A Place Called Winter* and is drawn from stories of his parents' and grandparents' marriages. [148]

12 NOON

Sara Lodge

The Mysterious Case of the Victorian Female Detective

County Buildings | £9

Meet the female detectives, both real and fictionalised, who brought Victorian criminals to account – hear how they became a cultural sensation. [149]

Anne-Marie Te Whiu

Mettle

The Merse | £9

This year's Cove Park International Fellowship Winner, from Sydney, Australia, will read from her debut poetry collection, tell us about her fascinating family background, her latest project and her work as a weaver. [150]



Ben Please & Shaun Bythell

Bookshops and Back Stories

Meet outside County Buildings | £9

Visit Wigtown's bookshops and hear about local history on this guided tour from a best-selling author and one half of The Bookshop Band. [151]

1.30PM

Bre Martin

Kirkyard Chronicles

County Buildings | £9

Discover the extraordinary tales of people resting in peace in Galloway's churchyards, as Wigtown bookseller Bre Martin reminds us that the most remarkable stories are sometimes found in the quietest of places. [152]



Siân Hughes

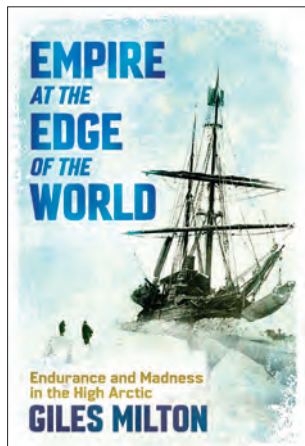
No Such Thing as Monday

The Merse | £9

The acclaimed, best-selling author of *The Pearl* is here in conversation about her new novel, tackling themes of grief, guilt, loss and dry-cleaning. Join



Sara Lodge, 12 noon, Thursday 1 October



Giles Milton, 3pm, Thursday 1 October



Anne-Marie Te Whiu, 12 noon, Thursday 1 October

us for this journey deep into the human heart. [153]

3PM



Ray Perman

James Hutton:

The Genius of Time Festival Marquee | £12

Why isn't the father of geology recognised as one of the great geniuses of the Scottish Enlightenment? Acclaimed journalist Ray Perman reveals the truth about the secret life of the half-forgotten scientist who shunned recognition. [154]

Sara Sheridan

The Jewel Keepers

County Buildings | £12

The much-loved Scottish historical fiction writer takes us back to Edinburgh on the cusp of the Victorian era and an unexpected and dangerous quest for the crown jewels of Scotland. [155]

Giles Milton

Endurance and Madness in the High Arctic

The Merse | £9

The internationally best-selling historian reveals the little-known story of an Arctic expedition to Siberia that went tragically wrong. It's a tale of imperial hubris ending in starvation, madness and death. [156]

4.30PM



Matthew Sweet

The Great Dictator:

A Life of Barbara Cartland Festival Marquee | £12

The story of the grand dame of romantic fiction – as told by one of Britain's favourite broadcasters – is wilder than you might imagine. Join her wonderfully witty and waspish biographer as he discusses this passion project and reveals the woman behind the powder and paint. [157]

Lucilla Gray

Things We Found in the Ground County Buildings | £9

Meet a woman helping to bring the hobby of metal detecting to a whole new generation. A mix of memoir, regional history and archaeology, and a must for fans of the BBC's *The Detectorists*. [158]

Lucy Waverley

Noble Beasts

The Merse | £9

Blending the hazy romance of the Scottish Highlands with the history of Trafalgar Square, this is the story of a renowned artist, a scandalous affair and a crippling addiction. There's more to the life of Edwin Landseer than *Monarch of the Glen*! [159]

6PM



David Shukman

Britain's New World of Extremes

Festival Marquee | £12

Flash floods, wildfires, heatwaves – we have never been more at risk from a hostile climate yet seem paralysed to do anything to safeguard our world. The former BBC Science Editor joins us with a persuasive argument that it's not too late, and change is possible. [160]



Dee Lawlor

Scotsferatu

County Buildings | £9

Explore the rich legacy of stories surrounding the idea of Scottish vampires through the centuries – including Galloway's very own 16th-century bloodsucker. [161]

MUSIC

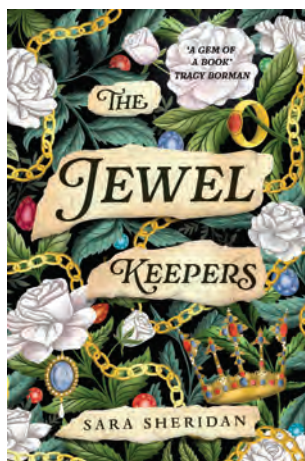
The Bookshop Band

Sacred Heart Church | £12

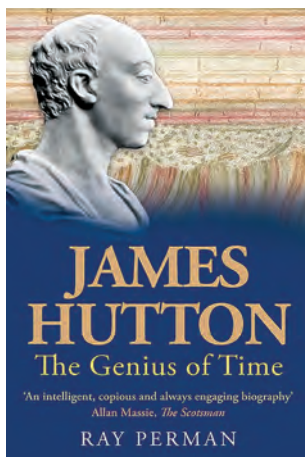
An intimate hour of music with Wigtown residents Ben and Beth and a host of musical instruments, featuring songs inspired by books. [162]



Matthew Sweet, 4.30pm, Thursday 1 October



Sara Sheridan, 3pm, Thursday 1 October



Ray Perman, 3pm, Thursday 1 October

7.30PM



H is for Hawk

The Merse | £9

Based on the memoir by Helen Macdonald, and featuring a powerful turn by Claire Foy, this is an exploration of grief that finds its expression in Helen's efforts to train a wild goshawk. What begins as an act of endurance becomes an intimate journey of resilience and healing. [163]

THEATRE

A Ghost Among the Living

The Swallow Theatre | £17

Five terrifying tales by Edgar Allan Poe from Box Tale Soup. Step closer, if you dare! [164]

9PM

Book at Bedtime

New Chapter Books | Pay What You Can

Themed readings and hot chocolate with festival storyteller Renita Boyle. [165]

02
OCT

FRIDAY

9.30AM

The Morning Show

Wigtown Ploughman | Pay What You Can

Start the day with a little music and chat. 45 min. [166]

10.30AM

Cameron Gillies

Repopulating Rural Scotland Festival Marquee | £12

Top politicians join Scottish Land & Estates' Head of External Affairs to discuss the tide of depopulation that is hollowing out rural communities and preventing them from realising their potential. [167]

10.30AM



Margie Mitchell

The Matter of My Sister

County Buildings | £12

Fifty years after her sister's murder, author Margie Mitchell realised it was impossible to honour Alix's life without understanding her death. [168]



Lorna Elcock

The Windhover

The Merse | £9

Introducing one of Scotland's most promising young writers, whose first novel delves into family secrets, fine art and birds of prey. [169]



Anne-Marie Te Whiu

Weaving Poetic Diamonds

County Buildings | £15

A workshop of exchange for those who want to integrate poetry writing with their other artistic practices. Bring pen and paper, plus an example of your other art. 90 min. [170]

12 NOON

Helen Pilcher

This Book May Cause Side Effects

Festival Marquee | £12

Can negative thinking make you ill? Discover more about the Nocebo Effect and why our brains are a key factor in our general health. [171]

Graeme Armstrong

Raveheart

County Buildings | £9

The award-winning author of *The Young Team* returns with a state-of-the-nation novel that sees a Coatbridge DJ take on an ultra-nationalist government. [172]

Dove Tales

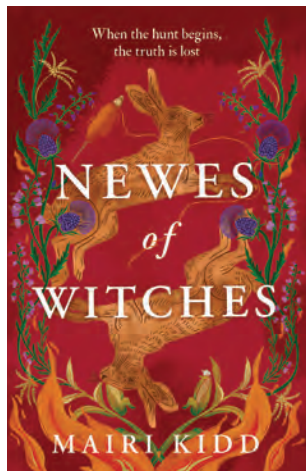
Two Sides of the Same Coin

The Merse | £9

Poetry and prose readings exploring war's ecological cost and the way modern wars are



Sophie Raworth, 3pm, Friday 2 October



Mairi Kidd, 6pm, Friday 2 October



Bruce Peter, 3pm, Friday 2 October

fought for control of the world's energy sources. [173]

1.30PM



Leah Hazard &

Lucy Inglis

The Story of Birth

Festival Marquee | £12

A timely conversation between a midwife and an historian ranging from stories about ancient birthing practices to the current state of our healthcare system and the hard-working midwives who are at breaking point. [174]

Dr Kathryn Harkup

V is For Venom

County Buildings | £12

In this fascinating tour of some of the world's best-known murder mysteries, discover more about Agatha Christie's particular penchant for writing about death by poison. [175]

Jonathan Silvertown

Nature's Magicians

The Merse | £9

Get to know the humble leaf. From deserts and rainforests to your local Scottish garden, they provide food, fuel and shelter. The renowned evolutionary biologist describes their magical properties. [176]

THEATRE

A Ghost Among the Living

The Swallow Theatre | £17

Five terrifying tales by master of the macabre Edgar Allan Poe – brought to you by Box Tale Soup, creators of the award-winning supernatural thriller *Casting the Runes*. [177]

2.30PM



As the Tide Comes In

Meet at Garlieston

Harbour | £9

Join a marine biologist from Galloway Fisheries Trust to learn more about marine habitats

while getting up close and personal with a range of fish, all of whom will be safely released. Please wear weatherproof clothing and suitable outdoor footwear. 90 min. [178]

3PM

Sophie Raworth

Running on Air

Festival Marquee | £15

From the BBC news to the Marathon des Sables, this is the inspiring story of how one of Britain's best-known broadcasters found her feet through running and discovered great friends, unexpected strength, new confidence and deep resilience. [179]

Bruce Peter

Art Deco Scotland

County Buildings | £9

Post WWI, Art Deco was the chic style favoured by high society in Paris and New York – and in Scotland, too! This illustrated talk covers our own treasures, from the Portobello Lido to the Queen Mary, and beyond. [180]



Ceitidh Campbell

Dàn nam Ban

The Merse | £9

The Gaelic poet, singer and former Wigtown Poetry Prize winner celebrates the publication of her debut poetry collection, tackling themes of love, sex, pain and loss from a fresh female perspective. [181]

MUSIC

Adrian Currie with The Bookshop Band

The Science of Lost Words

Sacred Heart Church | £12

A musical and philosophical exploration of how palaeontologists uncover the past and why it matters. This collaboration with The Bookshop



Jonathan Silvertown, 1.30pm, Friday 2 October



Helen Pilcher, 12 noon, Friday 2 October



Graeme Armstrong, 12 noon, Friday 2 October

Band introduces new songs and stories about how the deep past can inspire wonder. [182]

4.30PM

Sarah Churchwell

America at 250

Festival Marquee | £12

As America marks its 250th anniversary while Donald Trump is in the White House, the acclaimed historian asks is this a time of celebration or a moment of reckoning? [183]

Sorcha Dallas & Chitra Ramaswamy

On Alasdair Gray and

Agnes Owens

County Buildings | £9

Alasdair Gray and Agnes Owens are two of the greatest Scottish writers of the 20th century, yet, while Alasdair Gray is widely celebrated, Owens' work has largely been neglected. What role can archives play in boosting reputations and inspiring new generations? [184]



Ben Rawlence

Letters to My Children from a Changing Planet

The Merse | £9

How do we raise children during a climate emergency? What must they know in the face of ecocide? With life on Earth under serious threat, this is a chance to meet the author who has bold ideas about the way to save ourselves and those we love. [185]

6PM



Mairi Kidd

Newes of Witches

County Buildings | £9

The best-selling historical novelist transports us to 17th-century Scotland – a dangerous time to be a woman, especially if you were accused of witchcraft! [186]

6PM

Richard D Oram

The Lordship of Galloway The Merse | £9

Galloway once sat at the heart of British history thanks to Fergus, Lord of Galloway, who forged connections to the Kings of Scotland and England and an alliance with the Lords of the Isles. This provocative talk asks us to rethink the region's place in the world, and in Scotland's transformation. [187]

7.30PM

Bill Paterson

Tales from the Back Green Festival Marquee | £15

Please welcome a bona fide national treasure, as the much-loved star of *Fleabag* and the voice of BBC's *Repair Shop* tells us about his glittering career on stage and screen and what it was like growing up in 1950s Glasgow. [188]

Elizabeth May & LR Lam

CYMERA at Wigtown: Enter the World of Dark Romantasy County Buildings | £9 | 18+

Discover why romantasy writers are storming the bestseller lists and how they weave a spell over readers with their blends of epic world building and darkly spicy romance. [189]

Wigtown Poetry Prizes 2026

Bladnoch Distillery | £12

(price includes pamphlet and refreshments)

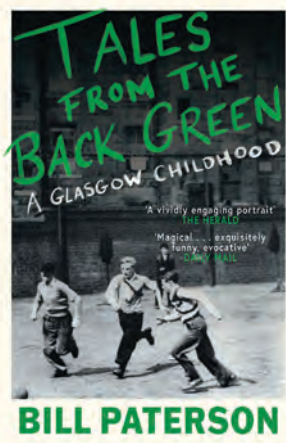
Revealing the 2026 winners of Scotland's most prestigious poetry prizes, in the company of some of the best in the business. 90 min. [190]

FILM

Lost for Words

The Merse | £9

This wide-ranging documentary is a scientific film with an artistic



Bill Paterson, 7.30pm, Friday 2 October



Ruth Padel, 10.30am, Saturday 3 October



Olia Hercules, 10.30am, Saturday 3 October

heart, an invitation to meet artists, scientists, children, the elderly, and others as a spur to rethinking our presence on Earth and rebuilding our relationship to the natural world. [191]

9PM

Book at Bedtime

New Chapter Books | Pay What You Can

Themed readings and hot chocolate with festival storyteller Renita Boyle. [192]

03
OCT

SATURDAY

8.30AM

Slow Flow Morning Yoga With Jenny Nevard

The Merse | £5

Kick off the day refreshed and vitalised with the ancient practice of yoga. Open to all abilities. Please bring a mat if you have one. 45 min. [193]

9.30AM



Kriss Nichol

Wigtown Women's Walk 1

Meet at Foggie Toddle Books | £9

Discover the stories of Wigtown's remarkable women from history. [194]

The Morning Show

Wigtown Ploughman | Pay What You Can

Start the day with a little music and chat. 45 min. [195]

10AM



Christina Riley

Zine Making

Number 12 | U26 FREE / £15

An interactive environmental, nature-themed workshop. Make your very own zine! [196]

10.30AM



Olia Hercules

A Ukrainian Family

Story, Interrupted

Festival Marquee | £12

The deeply fascinating story of Ukraine as told through four generations of the award-winning author, chef and activist's extraordinary family. [197]

Iain MacGregor

The Hiroshima Men

County Buildings | £12

The quest to build the atom bomb, and the fateful decision to use it, is told through the lives of four very different men. [198]

Ruth Padel

Girl

County Buildings | £9

The award-winning poet and author delves into her latest poetry collection, moving easily between the ancient and the modern, unpicking the experiences of young women and questioning how they're perceived by society. [199]



Ceitidh Campbell

Beyond the Ben:

Gaelic Hill Names for Beginners

Sacred Heart Church | £9

Discover the meaning behind Scotland's hill names and learn how Gaelic describes the landscape. This beginner-friendly workshop will help you recognise common elements and understand what they reveal about the hills around you. [200]

12 NOON



Vince Cable

Eclipsing the West

Festival Marquee | £15

The Western-dominated world we have known for 300 years is coming to an end. As the international order begins to crumble, no one is better placed to examine what the rise of the



Vince Cable, 12 noon, Saturday 3 October



Sally Magnusson, 1.30pm, Saturday 3 October



William Hussey, 12 noon, Saturday 3 October

Asian superstates means for the future than the economist and former leader of the Liberal Democrats. [201]



Sarah Clegg

Perilous Enchantment

County Buildings | £9

Forget Tinkerbell. Discover the darker, more dangerous, side of fairies through the ages, from witch trials to modern-day romantasy fiction. [202]

Serena Kutchinsky

Kutchinsky's Egg

Sacred Heart Church | £12

What drove a man to take on Fabergé by creating the largest jewelled egg in the world, and why did it destroy him? His daughter, head of news at the *i Paper*, has uncovered the extraordinary answers. [203]



William Hussey

The Boy I Love

County Buildings | U26 FREE / £9

Tender, poignant, heartbreaking: the critically acclaimed Carnegie medal shortlisted WW1 romance, *The Boy I Love*. [204]

1.30PM



Sally Magnusson

The Shapeshifter's Daughter

Festival Marquee | £12

Spanning mythical Asgard and modern-day Orkney, the author of *The Sealwoman's Gift* spins an electrifying reimagining of the Norse tale of Hel, queen of the underworld cruelly banished by the brutal Odin. [205]

Andrew Pettegree

The Bookshop

County Buildings | £12

A good bookshop is one of humanity's finest creations. But how did they evolve? The story is rowdier than you might expect! Join us for this fascinating history of bookselling. [206]

1.30PM



Christina Riley

Looking Down at the Stars

Sacred Heart Church | £9

Discover the world beneath the waves with an underwater artist in residence who has been recording marine life along Scotland's west coast. [207]



Solway Schools Renga

Featuring School Poetry Champions

County Buildings | **FREE** but ticketed

Join us for a showcase of our Solway Schools Renga, a collaborative poetry project led by Hugh McMillan, with performances of original work by local high school pupils. [208]

3PM



Gordon Buchanan

In the Hide: How the Natural World Saved My Life Festival Marquee | £15

The award-winning Scottish wildlife photographer and filmmaker, and presenter of *Super Cute Animals*, tells us about travelling the globe and his encounters with polar bears, grizzlies, lions and tigers. [209]



Steven Veerapen

Overlord: The Life and Reign of Henry VIII

County Buildings | £12

Henry VIII, the far-from-uxorious Tudor king, may be the most infamous ruler in England's history. But was he a misogynistic monster or a canny, brutal ruler with designs on Scotland? Veerapen gives us the lowdown. [210]



Fiona J Mackenzie

The Life of Margaret

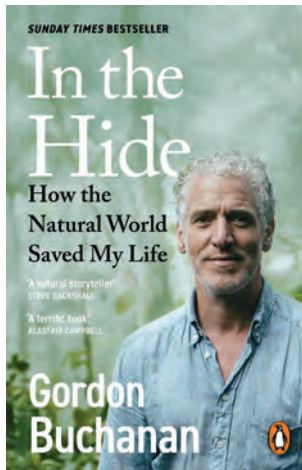
Fay Shaw

Sacred Heart Church | £9

American-born Margaret Fay



Manjeet Mann, 3pm, Saturday 3 October



Gordon Buchanan, 3pm, Saturday 3 October



Cal Flynn, 4.30pm, Saturday 3 October

Shaw arrived in the Hebrides in 1929 and became instrumental in recording the songs and traditions of Hebridean life. Gaelic singer Fiona J Mackenzie recounts Shaw's remarkable story and highlights the importance of her work. [211]



Manjeet Mann

Roar

County Buildings | U26 **FREE** / £9

An empowering novel of resistance inspired by Sampat Pal and the Pink Sari Gang from the multi award-winning author of *Run, Rebel* and *The Crossing*. [212]

4.30PM



James Bailey

Like a Cat Loves a Bird

Festival Marquee | £12

To mark the 20th anniversary of Muriel Spark's death, her new biographer offers a perspective as sharp-witted and mischievous as the writer herself, exploring the complicated connection between art and artist. [213]



Ashley Douglas

With My Own Hand

County Buildings | £9

In the margins of a 16th-century manuscript lay the secret lesbian love poetry of Marie Maitland, Scotland's own Sappho. Who was this remarkable woman and how was this trove of poems discovered? The story is fascinating and timely. [214]



Cal Flynn

The Savage Landscape

Sacred Heart Church | £9

Come with us to the remotest places on Earth in the company of an award-winning Scottish nature writer as she contemplates why it is that we seek out wild spaces and wonders how we might preserve them. [215]

YA Morag Anderson & Shasta Ali

Silence as a Place of Safety
County Buildings | U26 **FREE** / £9

As Audre Lorde wrote, "Your silence will not protect you." Join us for an exploration of poetry that empowers, takes ownership and challenges injustice. A powerful hour chaired by Marjorie Lotfi. [216]

6PM

An Audience with Larry Lamb

Festival Marquee | £15

The *Gavin and Stacey* star takes us on a deeply personal poetic journey through the highs and lows of his oh-so-colourful life and career encompassing theatre, film, television, novel writing and, now, poetry. [217]

Catriona Wilson Agnes and Mr Burns

Sacred Heart Church | £12

A fresh interpretation of the intrigue behind the love affair and creative collaboration of Agnes MacLehose and Robert Burns. Wilson interrogates the idea of reputation and gives voice to an often-overlooked woman. [218]

7.30PM

THEATRE

A Ghost Among the Living

The Swallow Theatre | £17

Five terrifying tales by Edgar Allan Poe – brought to you by Box Tale Soup, creators of the award-winning supernatural thriller *Casting the Runes*. Step closer, if you dare! [219]

8.30PM

The Festival Ceilidh

Festival Marquee | £9

Let your hair down with an evening of traditional Scottish dancing. No experience necessary! Music from Stroma. [220]



Steven Veerapen, 3pm, Saturday 3 October



Alex Howard, 10.30am, Sunday 4 October



Larry Lamb, 6pm, Saturday 3 October

04 OCT SUNDAY

8.30AM

Slow Flow Morning Yoga

With Jeny Nevard

The Merse | £5

See Sat 26 Sep. Open to all abilities. Please bring a mat if you have one. 45 min. [221]

9.30AM

Kriss Nichol

Wigtown Women's Walk 2

Meet at Foggie Toddle Books | £9

Discover more stories of Wigtown's remarkable women from history. [222]

10AM

YA Susi Briggs, Morag Anderson & Shasta Ali

The Sunday Sessions

County Buildings | U26 **FREE** / £9

Poetry to empower and excite. What better way to start the day? A showcase featuring three entertaining and dynamic female voices. [223]

10.30AM

Howard Amos Russia Starts Here

Festival Marquee | £12

Beyond the headlines of war and repression, what is Russia really like? Amos takes us to one of its poorest regions, to meet the people living amid repression and violence. [224]

Alex Howard

The Ship's Cat

County Buildings | £9

The best-selling author of *The Ghost Cat* talks about his new book, wryly dubbed "*The Odyssey for cats*", which finds an intrepid street-savvy feline embark upon the high-seas adventure of a lifetime. [225]

10.30AM

Gerry Cambridge

Selected Poems

The Merse | £9

The award-winning Scottish poet shares selections from his six volumes of poetry written over the past thirty years – work characterised by its warmth, wisdom and unmistakable love for the natural world. [226]



Dr Katie Ailes & Loud Poets

Speak Up!

Number 12 | U26 FREE

Join Scotland's award-winning Loud Poets for an inspiring workshop on spoken word poetry. Discover how to articulate with creativity and confidence. No previous experience required. For U26s only. 210 min. [227]

12 NOON



Tharik Hussain

Muslim Europe

Festival Marquee | £12

The award-winning travel writer details the oft-ignored story of Islamic Europe in a revelatory new work stretching back to the 7th century. Visiting places such as Sicily, Malta, Portugal and Spain, Hussain demonstrates Islam is no side show to Western culture. [228]

Jeanette R Davidson

Black Lives in Scotland County Buildings | £9

A revelatory exploration of Black Scottish history, told by the people who have lived it. These are poignant stories of challenge, love, hostility, support, vulnerability, strength, abandonment, resilience, empowerment, accomplishment and identity. [229]

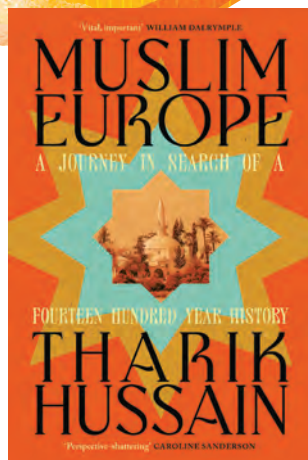


Frances Crawford

A Bad, Bad Place

The Merse | £9

What do you get if you combine



Tharik Hussain, 12 noon, Sunday 4 October



Jeanette R Davidson, 12 noon, Sunday 4 October



Frances Crawford, 12 noon, Sunday 4 October

a 12-year-old girl, her granny, a terrible murder in 1970s Glasgow and a dog named Sid Vicious? Answer: The hottest Scottish crime debut of the year. [230]

Silent Book Club

The Bookshop Garden | FREE

Come along with a copy of your current book-in-progress for an hour of collective silent reading. The strictly no-talking policy lets you immerse yourself in the story alongside fellow readers. The Silent Book Club community spans more than 60 countries to encourage reading across the globe. See you there! [231]

1.30PM



Alistair Moffat

Assassins and Secret

Listeners

Festival Marquee | £12

The ever-popular Scottish historian and author returns to Wigtown to reveal the stories of the ordinary men and women who intercepted messages and prepared for an anticipated German invasion, ultimately helping Britain win WW2. [232]

Melanie Ramdarshan Bold

Please Look After This Bear County Buildings | £9

Discover how a marmalade-loving Peruvian bear who first appeared in a 1958 children's book became a global symbol of the United Kingdom in the 21st century. [233]



Steven Veerapen

Witches

The Merse | £9

An historian's take on our cultural fascination with witches, witchcraft and witch hunters, from the time of James VI's mass witch trials to our modern-day obsession with sorcerers, enchantresses, wizards and necromancers. [234]

YA Rachael King & Scarlett Dunmore

Monsters, Myths and Horror Movies

County Buildings | U26 **FREE** / £9

Join New Zealand's Rachael King (*Song of the Saltings*) and Scotland's Scarlett Dunmore (*How to Survive a Horror Sequel*) for an entertaining conversation about imagination, atmosphere and the stories that keep readers turning pages late into the night. [235]

3PM



John Kampfner

Braver New World

Festival Marquee | £12

Housing, health, education and energy – when it comes to society's biggest challenges, we seem to be failing. Exploring inter-generational care homes in Japan and solar panels in the Sahara, one of Britain's most respected journalists has travelled the globe to find answers. [236]

Alice Strang

The Scottish Colourists

County Buildings | £12

Why was Galloway such a crucial factor in moulding the work of Scottish Colourists like Samuel John Peploe? Learn how the beauty of the region inspired four artists to transform the story of Scottish art. [237]



Coinneach MacLean

Travels in Another Country

The Merse | £9

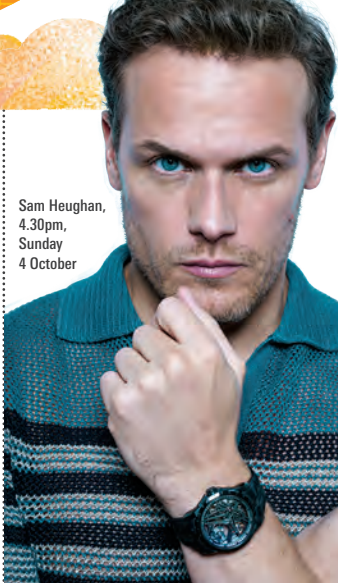
A native Gaelic speaker from South Uist joins us for an immersive dive into the real-life stories of Scotland's Highlands and Islands, regions all too often depicted through a filter of romance and mystery. [238]

Anne Brown Essay Prize 2026

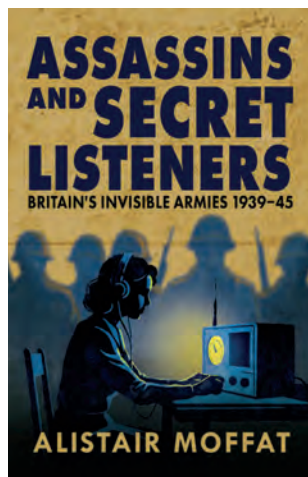
Bladnoch Distillery | **FREE**

Join judges Gerry Cambridge and Zara Janjua as the winner

Sam Heughan,
4.30pm,
Sunday
4 October



Alice Strang, 3pm, Sunday 4 October



Alistair Moffat, 1.30pm, Sunday 4 October

of Scotland's leading essay prize is revealed, and celebrate with a dram or two! Transport from Wigtown available on request. [239]



Denise Brown & Kestral Gaian

Outsiders, Obsession and Betrayal

County Buildings | U26 **FREE** / £9

Secrets. Silence. Hidden truths. Join Ayrshire's Kestral Gaian (*The Boy From Elsewhere*) and Kirkcudbright's Denise Brown (*No One Keeps a Secret*) as they explore the mysteries we carry, and the revelations that can change everything. [240]

4.30PM

An Audience with Sam Heughan

Festival Marquee | £18

In our festival finale, the star of *Outlander* and co-founder of Galloway Distillery visits Wigtown to talk about his career in acting, his love of Scotland and his long association with Dumfries & Galloway. [241]



Alastair Reid 100

To celebrate the Alastair Reid centenary, we are filling the town with his words! Look out for quotes, poems and wordplay dotted around the town, including a special installation in the Martyrs' Cell (County Buildings).

Celebrate Life Stories...

BOSWELL BOOK FESTIVAL

The World's Only Festival of Biography & Memoir



7 - 9 MAY 2027

Dumfries House Arshire

www.boswellbookfestival.co.uk   



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GALLERIES

ADMISSION FREE

COLOUR

The Palette of S. J. Peploe



SCOTTISH
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Three holiday properties, one coastal farm

Properties sleep 6 - 16 • 16km accessible private walks and tracks • Dog friendly • WiFi • Gardens



Find your space in Galloway

Claymoddie, Marl House and Dairy Cottage



Isle of Whithorn, Dumfries and Galloway



sykescottages.co.uk



@claymoddie_marl.house

Big Wig

Entertaining & inspiring events for our youngest festival-goers

★ Sat 26 Sept ★

10.30AM

An Interactive Dragon Adventure

Rachel Huggins

Wigtown Primary | £4 | 0-6

Dragons, music and storytelling in an interactive adventure for little ones. [C01]

At War with Wallace

Barbara Henderson

Wigtown Primary | £4 | 8+

Step into Scotland in 1297 for chainmail, rebellion and life-or-death decisions at Stirling Bridge. [C02]

12 NOON

Poochie Pete and His Very Big Feet

Dougie Payne & Rachel Seago

Wigtown Primary | £4 | 3-6

A heart-filled rhyming tale about a lonely dog with giant paws who finds his song, friendship, and belonging. [C03]

Cluck! The Eggstraordinary Story of Chickens

Evelien De Vlieger & Michele Hutchison

Wigtown Primary | £4 | 7-9

Discover chicken facts, including the sounds they make in different languages. Take the chicken quiz and design your own bird. [C04]

Programmed as part of Flip Through Flanders in association with Modern Culture



Evelien De Vlieger & Michele Hutchison, 12noon, Saturday 26 September



Dougie Payne & Rachel Seago, 12noon, Saturday 26 September



Alan Windram 3pm, Saturday 26 September

1.30PM

Do You Play an Instrument?

Jenna Reid

Wigtown Primary | £4 | 6-9

Award-winning fiddle player Jenna Reid combines live music and stories in this magical family event.

[C05]

3PM

The Catventures of Sparky and George

Alan Windram

Wigtown Primary | **FREE** but

ticketed | 5-9

Join Alan for an interactive, funny event featuring his cats Sparky and George, with sing-alongs, dress-up games, quizzes, and lots of fun.

[C06]

Enter Eddie Shakespeare

Barbara Henderson

Wigtown Primary | **FREE** but

ticketed | 8+

Meet Shakespeare's bothersome little brother in a dangerous, action-packed historical adventure.

[C07]

4.30PM

Cass and the Beast

Jill Calder

Wigtown Primary | **FREE** but

ticketed | 5+

Hear the magical story of Cass and the Beast, then draw your own beastly creature with illustrator Jill Calder.

[C08]

SUN 27 sept

10.30AM

Ask the Astronomer Royal Anything!

Professor Catherine Heymans
Wigtown Primary | **FREE** but
ticketed | 9+

Ask Scotland's Astronomer Royal
anything about space, black holes,
aliens, and the cosmos. 45 min. [C09]

SCOTS

Winnie-the-Pooh and Jocky Gentoo

James Robertson

Wigtown Primary | **FREE** but
ticketed | Family

Come and hear what A.A. Milne's
classic characters Pooh and his
pals sound like in Scots, and what
happens to Julia Donaldson's
gallus gentoo penguin Jocky when
he escapes from the zoo. [C10]

12.15PM

Ask the Astronomer Royal Anything!

Professor Catherine Heymans
Wigtown Primary | **FREE** but
ticketed | Under 9

Ask Scotland's Astronomer Royal
anything about space, black holes,
aliens, and the cosmos. 30 min. [C11]

1.30PM

SCOTS/GAELIC

Our World: Scotland

Ross Collins MacKay

Wigtown Primary | £4 | 0-5

Spend a day in Scotland eating
tattie scones for breakfast,
hopping on the train to visit
Granny, and counting the
highland coos. [C12]

Birdlands

Anthony McGowan

Wigtown Primary | £4 | 8-12

Three birds band together in a
story of friendship, courage and
survival in search of a place to
call home. [C13]



Kay Hutchison
& Gillebride
Mac'IlleMhaol,
3pm Saturday
3 October



Joseph Coelho, 12noon, Saturday 3 October



Joseph Lamb, 12noon, Sunday 4 October



James Robertson, 10.30am, Sunday 27 September

3PM

Abdullah's Bear Needs a Name!

Yasmin Hanif

Wigtown Primary | £4 | 3-7

To celebrate Eid, Abdullah is
given his father's old teddy bear,
but what's its name? A family
story from Pakistan helps him
solve the mystery. [C14]

The Nightkeeper's Apprentice

Jude Reid

Wigtown Primary | £4 | 10+

A wartime lighthouse, a ghostly
friend, and dark magic - will
Eilidh dare to become the
Nightkeeper's Apprentice? [C15]

4.30PM

Back of the Net: A Poetry Penalty Shootout

Paul Cookson & Julie McNeill

Wigtown Primary | **FREE** but
ticketed | 7+

Two poets go head-to-head in
a match like no other. Reading
from their football collections,
you decide which poems are a
hit or a miss. Laughter, chanting
and questionable decisions
promised. [C16]

★ tue 29 sept ★

10.30AM

Bookbug

County Buildings | **FREE** | 0-5

Stories, songs and rhymes for the
youngest festival-goers. 30 min.
Also Thur 1 Oct at 10.30am. [C17]
In partnership with D&G Libraries

★ Fri 2 Oct ★

10.30AM

GAELIC

Gaelic Bookbug

County Buildings | **FREE** | 0-5

Gaelic stories, songs and
rhymes for babies and pre-

schoolers. 30 min.
Sgeulachdan, òrain is rannan
Gàidhlig airson leanabhan agus
cloinne ro-sgoile. [C18]
*In partnership with D&G Libraries
and Gàidhlig Dumgal*

★ Sat 3 Oct ★

10.30AM

Trouble in Ogreville

Vivian French

Wigtown Primary | **FREE** but
ticketed | 7-9

A hilarious fairytale adventure
with ogres, chocolate cake, and
a quest to save the king - join
festival patron Vivian French for
chaotic, cake-filled fun. [C19]

Saltmarsh, Swallows and Geese

Renita Boyle

Wigtown Primary | **FREE** but
ticketed | Family

A gentle family drop-in shaped
by the rhythms of the bay,
its birds, shifting tides and
changing seasons. Multi-
sensory stories, songs, poems
and crafts. [C20]

12NOON

Rapunzel is a Lettuce

Joseph Coelho

Wigtown Primary | £4 | 5+

The former Waterstone's
Children's Laureate (2022–24)
shares poems to fire the
imagination around food,
journeys, secret messages and
special places. [C21]

The Uninvited

Ross MacKenzie

Wigtown Primary | £4 | 9+

A faerae refugee must trust
others to escape a deadly camp
while an unsuspecting boy with
wild magic heads his way. Join
Ross MacKenzie for his latest
gripping fantasy adventure.
[C22]



Ross Collins MacKay, 1.30pm, Sunday 27 September

1.30PM

First Aid with Nikki and Enzo

Vivian French

Wigtown Primary | £4 | 3-7

Nikki, Enzo and a clumsy
dinosaur teach us the basics
of first aid, including cleaning
scratches, treating bumps and
calling for help. [C23]



Character Consequences

Sarah Stewart

Wigtown Primary | £4 | 7+

Create a fun character from
head to toe in this consequence-
style workshop. [C24]

3PM

GAELIC

Captain Bobo: Tigers

Kay Hutchison &

Gillebrìde Mac'IlleMhaoil

Wigtown Primary | **FREE** but

ticketed | 4+

Join Captain Bobo's crew on
a bilingual adventure to catch
a tiger loose in the hills. Learn
words in Gaelic. No previous
experience necessary. [C25]



A Book Town Dragon

Kate Leiper

Wigtown Primary | £4 | 7+

Design your very own dragon
– fierce, friendly, or full of fire
– with illustrator Kate Leiper,
then turn it into a custom jigsaw
puzzle to take home. Numbers
limited. [C26]

family day passes

Available at £25 a day (Sat
26, Sun 27 Sep and Sat 3
Oct), a Big Wig Day Pass
provides access to a family
of up to 5 for the whole day.

★ Sun 4 Oct ★

10.30AM

Explore and Colour with Bentley

Sarah Plant

Wigtown Primary | £4 | 5+

Hear Bentley the sausage
dog's true story, then colour
White Cairn, craft a movable
dachshund, and sing about your
new miniature friend. [C27]

12NOON

The Black Pennant

Joseph Lamb

Wigtown Primary | £4 | 9-12

In 1796 Orkney, an orphan
becomes a pirate with no way
to escape. Come dressed as a
pirate where treasure, quizzes
and the chance to design your
own pirate flag await. [C28]

2.30PM - 4.30PM



Wigtown Primary | **FREE** |

Family

Dress as your favourite
pirate and join us for a
swashbuckling fun afternoon
including bouncy castle, face
painting, a treasure hunt
and more. [C29]

*In partnership with Wigtown
Primary School PTA.*

AROUND THE FESTIVAL

National Year of Reading

Visit our National Year of Reading tree in the County Buildings. Tell us about a book you loved or hated, an author that changed your life, a memorable story, a quote you live by.

Signwriting Squad

Look out for the hand-painted poetry-themed billboards dotted around the town, supported by Dumfries Women's Signwriting Squad.

Solway Schools Renga

Come to The Hub to see the 2000+ lines inspired by the sea written by students from four Solway schools in a stunning collaborative poem.

Visitor Experience Hub

Have time on your hands between events? Visit us in The Hub for some fun and games: tell us where you're from, help create a community artwork, take some festival selfies!

Wigtown Churches Together

11.30am, Sunday, 27 September

Explore generosity and devotion with writer and broadcaster Fiona Stewart.
11.30am, Sunday, 4 October
Celebrate abundance, support those in need and enjoy some Wigtown Pippin Crumble, made from our heritage apple.

Photography Exhibition

The Wigtownshire u3a photography group exhibition is at Wigtown Parish Church, 2-4 pm each day of the festival.

VISITOR INFORMATION

Event listings

This brochure offers an overview of the festival. To find out more about individual events, including comprehensive listings and speaker biographies, visit our website.

Festival venues

Most venues are within short walking distance. See the map on pages 44-45 for details, including information about parking and events out of town.

Accessibility

Access guide

Visitors with particular access needs are warmly invited to contact us on 01988 403222. An access map is also available from the office. To download our Access Guide, please go to wigtownbookfestival.com/visit/accessibility.

BSL signing, subtitling and induction loops

We are offering British Sign Language (BSL) signing for a number of events from 26-27 September. See  in listings for details. The Festival Marquee, The Merse, and County Buildings are equipped with induction loops.

Streaming

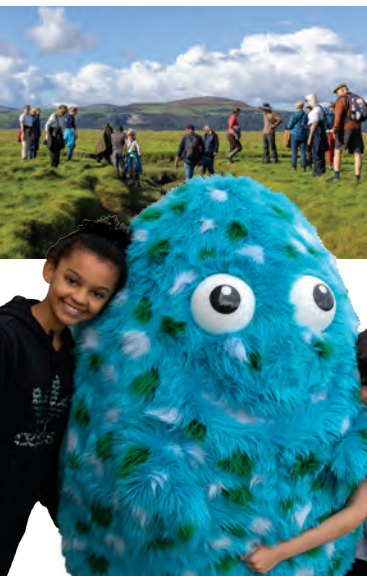
We recognise that not everyone is in a position to attend in person. A selection of events will be available for live streaming. See  in listings for details. For more information, please see our website.



Food & Drink

Places to eat and drink are listed on page 45. Pre-booking for evening meals is advised. Catering vendors will be located outside the County Buildings each weekend.

The pop-up Festival Café is located in the Supper Room on the first floor of the County Buildings, serving light lunches, snacks and drinks. It will be open 9.30am-5pm at weekends and 10.30am-5pm weekdays (12 noon-5pm Fri 25 Sep). For additional hours, please see the festival website.



Travel to Wigtown

Wigtown is in the Machars peninsula in Dumfries & Galloway. Journey time by car is approximately 2.5 hours from Glasgow and 3 hours from Edinburgh. The nearest railway stations are Barrhill (from Glasgow and Ayr), Dumfries (from Carlisle) and Lockerbie (from Edinburgh).

Useful websites to find out about travel, accommodation and other local attractions are: visitsouthwestscotland.com wigtownbookfestival.com scotlandstartshere.com

Sustainable transport

We want to help visitors to the festival travel more sustainably where possible. Our sustainable travel guide provides up-to-date information about planning your journey using electric vehicles, buses, trains and bikes. For shared transport from and to key transport hubs, please contact the box office and we will be happy to advise on times when cars or our festival minibus may be travelling.

Scan here for more information about sustainable transport



HOW TO BOOK

The easiest way to book is online. Tickets are also available on the door subject to availability.

Online

Secure ticketing via wigtownbookfestival.com 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

In person

Visit our box office at **26 South Main St, Wigtown DG8 9EH**

Our staff and volunteers will be happy to answer any queries you have.

Opening hours
Before the festival:
Mon-Sat 10am-4pm
During the festival:
Daily 9am-6.30pm

By phone

During office hours on **01988 403222**

We accept
CREDIT/DEBIT CARDS, CASH AND CHEQUES.



Concessions

Subject to availability, under-26s can attend most festival events for free (excluding Big Wig). ID may be requested at the venue. Registered students and the wageless can buy tickets at most events for £3 on the door from 15 minutes before the start, subject to availability. Carer tickets are free. We also offer festival passes - please see our website for details.



WE WELCOME ALL CREATIVES, NETWORKS, COLLECTIVES AND ORGANISATIONS.

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CatStrand
EST. 2007
OCTOBER



**BLUE ROSE
CODE**
SAT 3 OCT 7:30PM



**ALASDAIR
ROBERTS**
SAT 10 OCT 7:30PM



**QUINES -
The Bubblyjock
Collective**
FRI 23 OCT 7:30PM



THEATRE

**DO NOT
PASS GO -
Jordon & Skinner**
WED 28 OCT 7:30PM



BIRDVOX
SAT 31 OCT 7:30PM

Glenkhan Community
Oscar Trust
HIGH ST, NEW GALLOWAY
01644 420 374 GCAT.SCOT



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COMPASSIONATE CARE YOU CAN TRUST

We provide flexible private care packages
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Join our friendly and dedicated team
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- Full training provided

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Scottish Charity No. SC013765

THE BOOK TOWN

"There is no Frigate like a Book
To take us Lands away,"

– Emily Dickinson

A book town can't exist without its bookshops. Wigtown's are a national treasure, little temples to serendipity, full of books you never knew you needed before browsing. More than 250,000 titles line their shelves. Laid end to end, they would stretch to Dumfries. There is an alchemy that happens in bookshops and Wigtown is a perfect haven for book lovers. Take some time out from the bustle of the festival to explore the Book Town's many book-related businesses. Each book bought helps write the next chapter of Scotland's National Book Town.

The Festival Bookshop

11 North Main Street,
DG8 9HN
Tel: 01988 402036

Number Twenty-Six & Festival Box Office

26 South Main Street,
DG8 9EH
Tel: 01988 402036

Book End Studio

23 North Main Street,
DG8 9HL
Tel: 01988 402403

Books & Bakes

6 Bank Street,
DG8 9HP
Tel: 01988 402730

The Bookshop

17 North Main Street,
DG8 9HL
Tel: 01988 402499

Byre Books

24 South Main Street,
DG8 9EH
Tel: 01988 402133

Craigard Gallery

13 North Main Street,
DG8 9HL
Tel: 07903044929

Faodail

7 North Main Street,
DG8 9HN
Tel: 07500 965565

Foggie Toddle Books

18 North Main Street,
DG8 9HL
hello@foggietoddlebooks.co.uk

New Chapter Books

25 South Main Street,
DG8 9EH
Tel: 07938 650944

The Old Bank Bookshop

7 South Main Street,
DG8 9EH
Tel: 01988 402111

The Open Book

2 High Street, DG8 9HQ

ReadingLasses Bookshop & Café

17 South Main Street,
DG8 9EH
Tel: 01988 403266

Well-Read Books of Wigtown

1-3 Agnew Crescent,
DG8 9DS
Tel: 01988 402873

The Wigtown Emporium

1 High Street,
DG8 9HH
Tel: 01988 402278



The Making of Scotland's National Book Town

In the mid-1990s, it was suggested that a "book town" on the model of Hay-on-Wye would be a good way to help regenerate a community in Scotland.

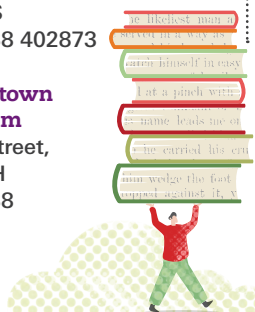
Six small towns with varying economic needs submitted bids. Half were from Dumfries & Galloway – Gatehouse of Fleet, Wigtown and Moffat. The others were Dalmellington, Dunblane and Strathaven. An international panel chose Wigtown.

The former county town of Wigtownshire had been at its lowest ebb. There were many empty and run-down properties, and the almost derelict County Buildings on the town square were threatened with demolition. Wigtown then had one of the highest levels of unemployment in Scotland, but the town boasted a beautiful setting and a rich history.

Now there are more than a dozen bookshops and related businesses here. In 1999 the new Scottish Parliament acknowledged Wigtown as Scotland's National Book Town.

Friends of Book Town

By becoming a Friend, you can support the festival and get a variety of perks at the autumn event and in Wigtown all year round. Prices start at £40. Full details on the website or from the box office.



WIGTOWN ON THE MAP

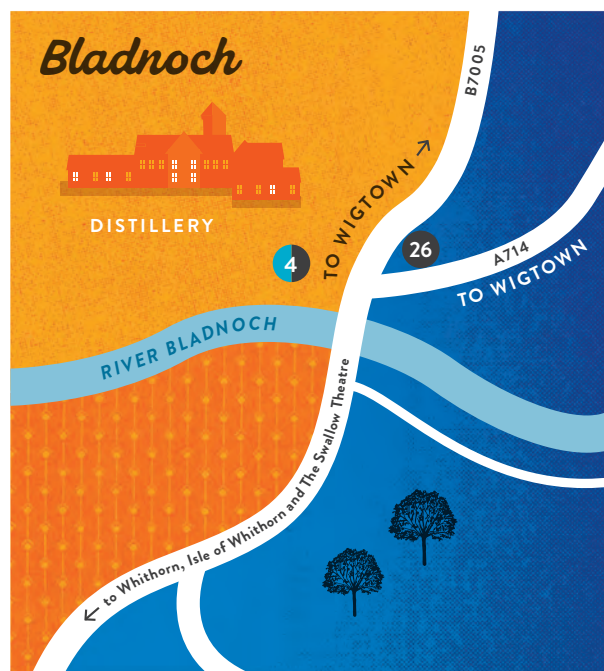
Parking

Town centre parking is limited. Please follow the signs to the festival car park at the Old Showfield (Southfield Park) when you enter Wigtown. Disabled parking and electric charging facilities can be found in the old Lorry Park opposite the County Buildings on South Main Street. Please check our website or contact our box office for the latest parking information.

Venues outside Wigtown

Please see below for postcodes of events taking place outside Wigtown. Most are around 15-30 minutes' drive away. Car sharing is encouraged. Please contact the box office should you need help with transport.

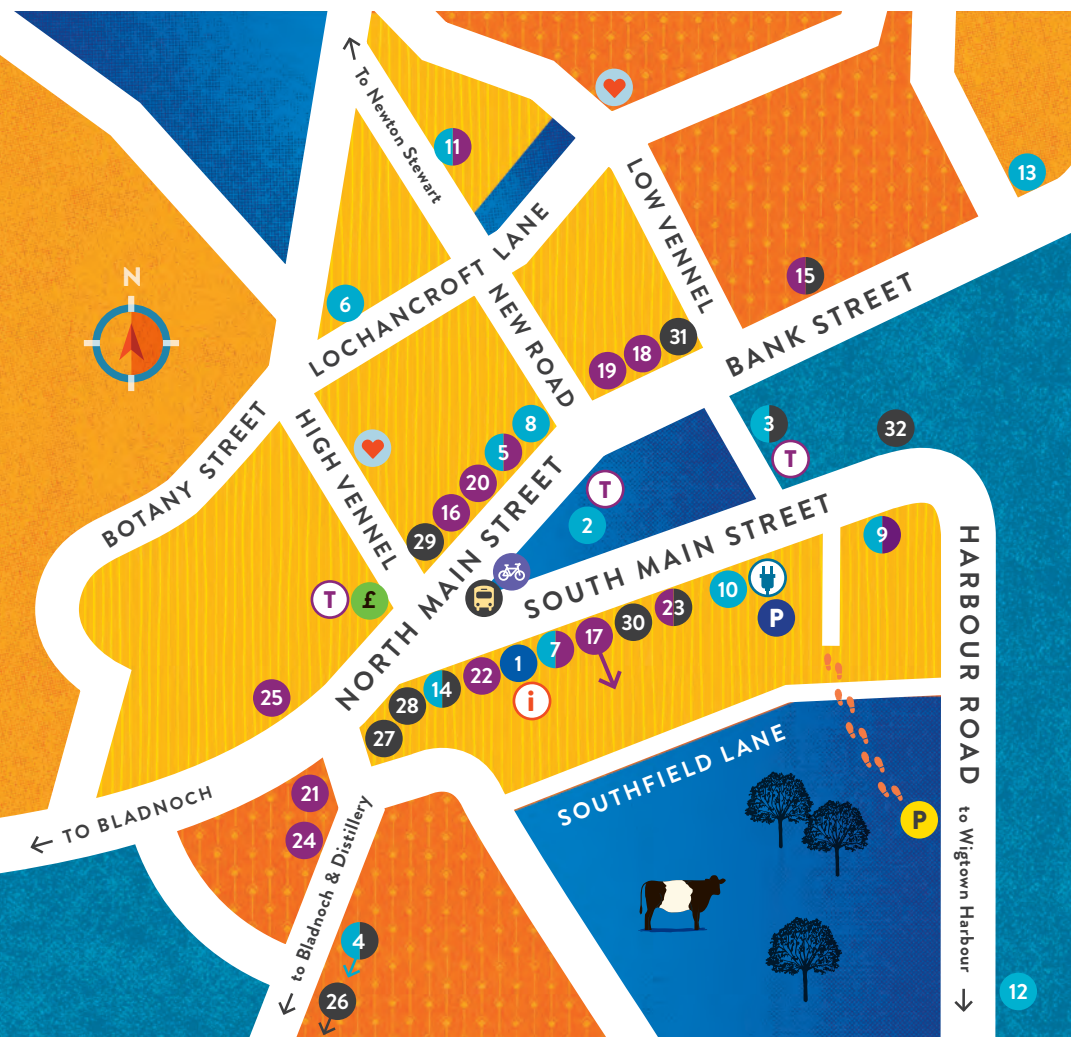
Bladnoch Distillery 1.1 miles	(DG8 9AB)
Galloway Distillery 6.4 miles	(DG8 6AS)
Newton Stewart Cinema 7 miles	(DG8 6NL)
Newton Stewart Golf Club 8 miles	(DG8 6PF)
Garlieston Harbour 8.4 miles	(DG8 8BB)
The Swallow Theatre 8.9 miles	(DG8 8DR)



Wigtown

-  **Box Office**
-  **Venue**
-  **Bookshop**
-  **Eat & Drink**
-  **Information**
-  **Electric Charging Points**
-  **Festival Parking**
-  **Accessible Parking**
-  **Accessible Toilet**
-  **ATM**
-  **Bus Stop**
-  **Bike Rack**
-  **Defibrillator**

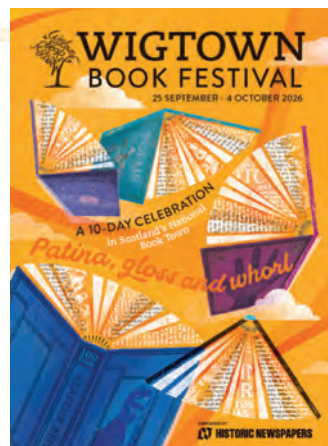
-  **Box office**
-  **Festival Marquee**
-  **County Buildings**
[including Main Hall, Festival Café,
The Hub, Library, Nature Room,
The Martyrs' Cell & toilets]
-  **Bladnoch Distillery**
[including Café Melba]
-  **The Bookshop**
[including Garden]
-  **The Merse**



- | | | |
|---|----------------------------------|--|
| 7 New Chapter Books | 16 Book End Studio | 25 The Wigtown Emporium |
| 8 Number 12 | 17 Byre Books | 26 Bladnoch Inn |
| 9 The Old Bank Bookshop
[including Garden & Friends' Yurt] | 18 Faodail | 27 Café Rendezvous |
| 10 Sacred Heart Church | 19 The Festival Bookshop | 28 Cobwebs |
| 11 The School | 20 Foggie Toddle Books | 29 The Frying Scotsman |
| 12 Wigtown Harbour Car Park | 21 The Open Book | 30 Galloway Bar |
| 13 Wigtown Parish Church | 22 Number Twenty-Six | 31 North Street Deli
[including Tasting Room] |
| 14 Wigtown Ploughman | 23 ReadingLasses Bookshop & Café | 32 Pop-Up Bar |
| 15 Books & Bakes | 24 Well-Read Books | |

A Ghost Among the Living	27, 28, 33	Victoria Donovan	17	William Hussey	31
Dr Katie Ailes	34	Ashley Douglas	32	Kay Hutchison	39
Shasta Ali	33	Dove Tales	28	Michele Hutchison	37
Howard Amos	33	D&G Writers in the Spotlight	19	Ken Ilgunas	10, 13, 17, 19, 22
Morag Anderson	33	Dumfries Women's Signwriting Squad	11	Lucy Inglis	28
Animal Farm	12, 15, 18, 21	Scarlett Dunmore	35	Peter Irvine	8
Anne Brown Essay Prize	35	Dylan Thomas: The Man, the Myth	14, 17	Zara Janjua	35
Graeme Armstrong	28	Taylor Dyson	10, 12	Doug Johnstone	17
As the Tide Comes In	28	The Edinburgh Society of Unapologetically		John Kampfner	35
Shara Atashi	15	Imperfect Mothers	8	Malcolm Kempt	22
John Atkinson	13, 23	Lorna Elcock	28	Daniel Kerr	14
Annaliese Avery	9, 11	Samantha Ellis	21	Mairi Kidd	29
Verity Babbs	21	Jenni Fagan	9	Rachael King	35
James Bailey	32	Lara Feigel	13	Serena Kutchinsky	31
Nick Baker	21	Lesley Ferguson	18	Jamie Lafferty	17
Gabriella Bennett	23	Rebecca Ferrier	10	LR Lam	30
Joshua Blackburn	11	Festival Ceilidh	33	Joseph Lamb	39
Book at Bedtime	9, 27, 30	Festival Fireworks	9	Larry Lamb	33
The Book Coach	21	Festival Party	9	Lucy Lapwing	11
Bookbug	38, 39	Cal Flyn	32	Dee Lawlor	27
The Bookshop Band	27, 29	Neil Forsyth	25	Kate Leiper	39
Renita Boyle	9, 17, 19, 25, 27, 30, 39	Jessica Fox	13, 17, 19	Literary Boot Camp	10, 13, 17, 19, 22
Susi Briggs	33	Paul French	17	Sara Lodge	26
Chris Brookmyre	25	Vivian French	39	Johan Löfving	23
Denise Brown	35	Kestral Gaian	35	Dr Sarah Lonsdale	17
Gordon Buchanan	32	Patrick Gale	25	Lost for Words	30
Clementine Burnley	10	Galloway Harriers	13	Marjorie Lotfi	10, 15
Paul Burrell	9	Galloway Wild Foods	22	Loud Poets	34
Shaun Bythell	9, 11, 23, 26	Cameron Gillies	27	Mark McCausland	18
Vince Cable	31	Colin Grant	10	Elizabeth McCracken	22, 23
Jill Calder	37	Lucilla Gray	27	Aimee MacDonald	10
Gerry Cambridge	34, 35	H is for Hawk	27	Hamish MacDonald	10, 11
Ceitidh Campbell	29, 31	Daniel Hahn	21	Clark McGinn	21
Ian Carter	21	Yasmin Hanif	38	Anthony McGowan	38
Graeme Cavers	19	Dr Kathryn Harkup	28	Iain MacGregor	31
Chris Chibnall	22	Sally Hayden	8	Stuart McHardy	22
Sarah Churchwell	29	Cathy Haynes	15	Gillebride Mac'IlleMhaoil	39
Sarah Clegg	31	Leah Hazard	28	Fiona J Mackenzie	32
Elinor Cleghorn	13	Michael Head	18	Ross MacKenzie	39
Manni Coe	17	Barbara Henderson	37	Maclean Brothers	8
Reuben Coe	17	Philip Hensher	14	Coinneach MacLean	35
Joseph Coelho	39	Emma Hepburn	13	Shona MacLean	25
Ross Collins MacKay	38	Olia Hercules	31	Coinneach MacLeod	11
Paul Cookson	38	Sam Heughan	35	Hugh McMillan	22
Saskia Coulson	18, 21	Professor Catherine Heymans	11, 38	Julie McNeill	38
Frances Crawford	34	Kat Hill	25	Peter MacQueen	10
Adrian Currie	29	Dr Ed Hoffman	13, 17, 19	Sally Magnusson	31
Sorcha Dallas	29	Alex Howard	33	Claire Mann	22
Jeanette R Davidson	34	Maia Hruska	21	Manjeet Mann	32
Evelien De Vlieger	37	Rachel Huggins	37	Jo Marchant	23
Mathijs Deen	8	Siân Hughes	26	Bre Martin	26
Derek vs Derek	21	Tharik Hussain	34	Elizabeth May	30

James Meek	14	Kim Sherwood	15
Karen Menarry	21	David Shukman	27
Giles Milton	26	Silent Book Club	14, 34
Margie Mitchell	28	Jonathan Silvertown	28
Alistair Moffat	34	Catherine Simpson	19
The Morning Show	15, 18, 21, 25, 27, 30	Slow Flow Morning Yoga	9, 12, 18, 25,
Rachel Morris	22		30, 33
Fiona Mozley	25	Arthur Snell	25
Michael Mullen	12, 14	Solway Schools Renga	32
Sana Nassari	15	Southlight 40 Launch	10
Jeny Nevard	9, 12, 18, 25, 30, 33	Felicity Spector	19
Next Take	13	The Spin	18
Kriss Nichol	9, 12, 30, 33	Stands Scotland Where It Did?	13
Richard D Oram	30	Nicholas Stern	10
Ruth Padel	31	Kenneth Stevens	22
Logan Parker	12	Gerda Stevenson	19
RMG Parker	12	Iain Stewart	14
Bill Paterson	30	Sarah Stewart	39
Dougie Payne	12, 37	Richard Strachan	14
Ray Perman	26	Alice Strang	35
Bruce Peter	29	The Swallow Theatre	12, 14, 15, 17, 18,
Andrew Pettegree	31		21, 27, 28, 33
Piece of Mind	14	Matthew Sweet	26
Helen Pilcher	28	Paul Tarling	13, 23
Sarah Plant	39	Brian Taylor	13
Ben Please	11, 23, 26	Colin Tennant	18, 21
Karine Polwart	14	Anne-Marie Te Whiu	26, 28
Lucy Porter	18	Elizabeth Tindal	17, 25
Polly Pullar	11	Susan Tomes	14
Chitra Ramaswamy	29	David Torrance	12
Melanie Ramdarshan Bold	34	Robert Twigger	21
Ben Rawlence	29	Harriet Tyce	8
Sophie Raworth	29	Steven Veerapen	32, 34
Refugia: A Celtic Rainforest	15, 23	Mark Vernon Thomas	12
Alastair Reid	15, 17, 35	Virginia Woolf's Night and Day	25
Jenna Reid	37	Lucy Waverley	27
Jude Reid	38	Louise Welsh	25
Christina Riley	30, 32	Wigtown Poetry Prizes	30
Maggie Ritchie	17	Mark Williams	22, 25
James Robertson	11, 14, 38	Catriona Wilson	33
The Role of the Screenwriter	18	Robert Winder	25
Chris Romer-Lee	18	Alan Windram	37
Lucy Russell	23	Rachel Wood	21
Stephen Rutt	9, 10	Lauren Working	10
Stewart Sanderson	13	Simon Wroe	21
Daria Santini	23	Robin Yassin-Kassab	17
Dr Nick Savage	12	Angela Young	19
Saving Stella's	12	Anna Zaluckowska	18
Rachel Seago	37		
Miranda Seymour	15		
The Shepherd and the Bear	15		
Sara Sheridan	26		



FESTIVAL TEAM

Isla Rosser-Owen Chief Executive
Anne Barclay Communities Director
Laurie Bannister Producer
Kenny Barr Travel Coordinator
Lynne Coid Office Manager
Grace Crichton Caretaker
Emma Davidson Box Office
Ewan Dodds Security
Colin Hattersley Press Photography
Kerry Irving Finance Officer
Amy Johnston Stewart Sponsorship
Emma Lindsay Production Assistant
Rosie Littler-Davis Bookshop Manager
Morgan Love Young People's Engagement
Julie McNeill CYP Producer
Jeny Nevard Volunteer Coordinator
Lee Randall Festival Programmer
Jacqueline Ross Project Manager
Matthew Shelley PR & Media
Colin Tennant Festival Photography
Amy-Dee Watson Marketing & Comms
Kevin Witt Shop Assistant

Patrons

Vivian French, Allan Little, Sally Magnusson, Bill Paterson, Emily Stair

Trustees

Cathy Agnew (chair), Nick Walker (vice), Jill Brown, Kay Christie, Antonia Clark, Roger Davis, Wendy Gallagher, Paul Heald, Andrew McConnell, David Maxwell, Kate Soriani

Volunteers

Heartfelt thanks to our volunteers, too numerous to list individually. They are the lifeblood of our festival. Without them, the magic would not happen.

2026 brochure

Design & artwork **Krista Robertson**
Festival logo **Lucy Roscoe**
Big Wig illustration **Claudia Bolt**

Weathering is what I would like to do well



 /wigtownbookfestival
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Wigtown



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