

# Wigtown Spring Book Weekend

Saturday 2 - Monday 4 May 2026



ASSOCIATION OF  
**WIGTOWN**  
BOOKSELLERS

[WIGTOWNBOOKFESTIVAL.COM](http://WIGTOWNBOOKFESTIVAL.COM)



# Welcome to Wigtown Spring Book Weekend

## A Celebration of Literature, Conversation and Creativity

Welcome to the Wigtown Spring Weekend! We're thrilled to have you join us for a vibrant programme packed with inspiring authors, lively discussions and hands-on workshops. This year's event promises an eclectic mix of themes, exploring the enduring legacy of the Covenanters, the bold narratives of women crime writers, tales of historical courage and a celebration of Galloway dark skies and our natural environment.

Whether you're here for the stories, the workshops, or simply to immerse yourself in the festival atmosphere, we hope you'll find something to inspire you at every turn. Enjoy every moment, make new friends, and celebrate the magic of literature and creativity in Wigtown!

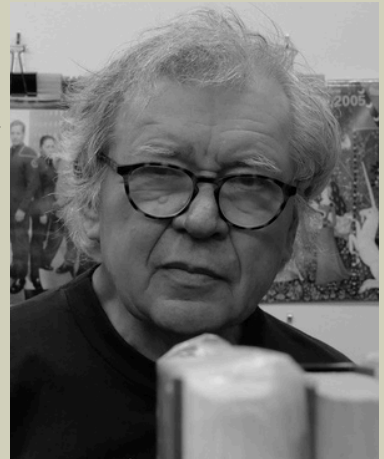
Jacqui Robertson

Chair of The Association of Wigtown Booksellers

P.S. A heartfelt thank you to all volunteers, sponsors, and participants whose contributions make the Wigtown Spring Weekend possible. Your continued support and commitment are fundamental to our success.

## Remembering Richard

This winter Wigtown lost one of our long-time booksellers. Richard van der Voort was born in London in 1949, to a Welsh mother and a Dutch father. Together with his wife Marion he opened At the Sign of the Dragon, specialising in fantasy and science fiction, in 1971, and in 2002 they moved the successful business to Wigtown. As a widower he continued trading, latterly in partnership with Carol Weaver of Transformer Books. Extremely knowledgeable about his chosen specialism, his other interests were in Astronomy and History recent and ancient. He was a strong supporter of environmental issues and of Scottish Nationalism. Fond of cats and dogs, local cats would often greet him on his walks. He was a loyal friend, and never broke his word.



© Glenn Cooksley

# Saturday 2 May



## **Andy Webb**

Dianarama - The Betrayal Of Princess Diana

**10am | County Buildings | £8**

Journalist, broadcaster and film maker Andy Webb reveals the true extent of the deception Princess Diana experienced before her iconic 1995 Panorama interview and the ensuing cover-up. Webb, with unrivalled access to the key players, outlines his tale of meticulous investigation and dogged legal fights.

## **Donna Brewster**

Martyrs' Walk

**10am | Meet County Buildings | £8**

From the Martyrs' Cell hidden within the Victorian County Buildings, we walk down the street of the medieval town to the stone pillar on the inks marking the place of the deaths of two 17th century Covenanter women drowned for their unbending principles. Then, back in the ancient kirkyard where stone memorials pay tribute to their courage, and that of others, we find the story that has never left us, one that has inspired prose, poetry, art, song, and that still remains in the memory of descendants. Lasts approximately 90 minutes. Wear sensible footwear.

## **Iain Stewart**

**& James Robertson**

The Killing Time

**12 noon | County Buildings | £8**

The Killing Time is a personal pilgrimage for Edinburgh-based landscape photographer Iain Stewart, unearthing his family's Covenanter connections in the south-west of Scotland. A collection of dark, lyrical images and writings examine the killings of the Solway Martyrs and the Lads of Kirkcalla in 1685, revisiting the woodlands and waterways of Galloway, places of worship and remembrance, punishment and death: the very sources of the Martyrs' stories.

James Robertson is the author of seven novels, including Joseph Knight, And the Land Lay Still, The Testament of Gideon Mack. His first, The Fanatic, examined the era of Covenanter persecutions. James will ask why the Covenanters have become less remembered in modern Scotland and discuss some literary responses to the period known as the Killing Time.

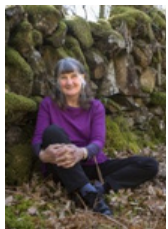
## **The Reading Room**

Hazel Stevens

**12 noon | Number twenty-six | FREE**

Hazel Stevens has published two books in her trilogy - Our Ede and Our Ike, set in 1950/60s Yorkshire - along with two children's books, Poppy Is Lost In the Garden and Poppy Wants To Bake A Cake. She talks to Fred Kluit about her work and writing influences.

# Saturday 2 May



## **Philip Paris**

in conversation with Flora Johnston  
*A Fire In Their Hearts*

**1.30pm | County Buildings | £8**

Philip Paris, acclaimed author, introduces his new novel *A Fire in Their Hearts*. Inspired by true events from the seventeenth century Killing Time, it is a powerful tale of love, faith, and survival.

Set during the same dark period of Scotland's history Flora Johnston's first novel *What We Call Free* is the story of two real historical women and their struggle for freedom in an oppressive and divided society.

## **Margaret Elphinstone**

in conversation with Anne Dunford  
*1.30pm | County Buildings | £8*

Margaret Elphinstone's novels, short stories and poems are celebrated for their lyrical prose, historical depth, and vivid sense of place. From ancient Scotland to far-flung islands, her books weave together adventure, myth, and ecological insight, offering readers journeys through landscapes both real and imagined. With rich characterisation and immersive storytelling, Elphinstone creates worlds that linger long after the last page.

## **Beth Porter**

*Lost Words Singing Workshop*  
**2-4pm | The Merse | £5 | Ages 7-14**

A workshop focusing on nature themes inspired by the beautifully illustrated book *The Lost Words* by Jackie Morris and Robert Macfarlane. Beth will teach the group songs inspired by the book which were written by Spell Songs, one of her musical projects.

Beginning with some introductions, voice exercises and warm-up games, there will be a 15-minute break for snacks around 3pm (please bring your own snack and water bottle).

## **Elaine Barton & Julia MacDonald** *Country Post*

**3pm | County Buildings | £8**

Delivering mail in rural Wigtownshire was a daily ritual demanding resilience and dedication. Postmen navigated winding country lanes, braving unpredictable weather and often covering vast distances on foot or by bicycle. The local community depended on these deliveries for news, communication, and connection, making the postman's arrival a highlight of the day.

Julia and Elaine's father worked as a postman in the Rhins for 40 years, so expect local stories and history about mail delivery in the area, along with photos of Wigtownshire post offices.

**Find more events for families on page 9**

# Saturday 2 May

## **Anna Caig**

The Wise Witch of Orkney  
**3pm | County Buildings | £8**

Set in Scotland in 1593, Anna Caig's debut novel unfolds during King James VI's ruthless witch hunt, aimed at purging evil from his kingdom. Despite the turmoil, his wife, Anna of Denmark, calls upon Elspet—a spae-wife known for her wisdom and healing skills and sometimes regarded as a witch—from Orkney to help deliver her baby and place a protective spell on the newborn.

## **Flora Johnston**

The Endeavour of Elsie Mackay  
**4.30pm | County Buildings | £8**

After her debut novel *What We Call Free*, Flora Johnston has written a further two acclaimed novels *The Paris Peacemakers* and *The Endeavour of Elsie Mackay*.

*The Paris Peacemaker*, part inspired by letters written by the author's great aunt, takes place against the backdrop of *The Paris Peace Conference* and explores the aftermath of war and the fragile hopes for Europe's peace, delving into the characters' personal journeys of love, loss and healing in 1919 Paris.

Set in 1927, *The Endeavour of Elsie Mackay* follows the Honourable Miss Elsie Mackay as she strives to become the first woman to fly across the Atlantic, overcoming challenges and shaping her own destiny.



## **Sip and Sorcery**

Cocktails and Magic

**7.30pm | ReadingLasses | £35**

Join us for a magical evening celebrating iconic female literary characters with bespoke cocktails. Savour delicious Middle Eastern mezze as vibrant flavours and lively conversation fill the air and be prepared to be dazzled by mesmerising close-up magic from magician Bethan Sims.

Come along and toast unforgettable literary heroines, be dazzled by enchanting magic, and share culinary delights. Women only. Ticket includes two cocktails.

## **Ian McNeillie**

Being John McNeillie's Son

**7pm | The Wigtown Ploughman | FREE**

A special evening celebrating the powerful novel after which the hotel is named. Ian McNeillie, son of author John McNeillie, will share insights into his father's life and work, alongside his friend - Guardian writer and BBC radio presenter - Mark Lawson. Expect stories, reflections, and conversation around this important piece of Galloway's literary heritage.

# Sunday 3 May



© Charlie Hopkinson

## **Beth Porter**

### **Lost Words Singing Workshop**

**10am-3pm | The Merse | £25**

A nature-themed singing workshop inspired by *The Lost Words* by Jackie Morris and Robert Macfarlane. Working with music written by Spell Songs, one of Beth's musical projects, you will be guided through a magical and uplifting day of song. All welcome, no experience needed. This workshop is for adults - see Sat 2 May for children's workshop.

## **In Memory of Alastair Reid**

**10.30am | County Buildings | £8**

This year marks the centenary of the birth of renowned Whithorn-born poet, translator and essayist Alastair Reid. Join us as we celebrate the life and work of the son of a local minister and doctor through readings, recollections and anecdotes.

*Sponsored by Wigtown Festival Company*

## **Gina Lawson**

### **Air Dry Clay Drop-in Workshop**

**10.30am-12noon | The Hut at ReadingLasses | FREE Unticketed**

Drop in at any time to create your very own air dry clay decoration to take home, using cutters and embossing tools. All materials provided. Ages 3-12 (must be accompanied by an adult).

## **Alex Gray**

### **Blood on Old Stones**

**12 noon | County Buildings | £8**

Alex Gray, renowned for her gripping crime fiction and the bestselling DSI Lorimer series, brings Glasgow's mysteries to life with vivid atmosphere and authentic detail. Join Alex as she shares insights into her creative process, explores the art of crafting compelling characters, and discusses her latest novel. Expect engaging conversation, fascinating behind-the-scenes stories, and inspiration for aspiring writers and crime fiction fans alike. Don't miss this chance to meet one of Britain's leading crime authors.

## **Andy Cassell & Peter Aitchison**

### **The Lowland Clearances**

**12 noon | County Buildings | £8**

Peter Aitchison and Andrew Cassell provide an oral and audio journey setting out the extraordinary events which began in Galloway and spread across Scotland, emptying the straths and glens of their people and presaging an unprecedented period of emigration. They describe the rapid changes which helped create a new economic world in which many rural Scots lost their centuries-long hold on the land and how the industrialisation and urbanisation of the lowlands impacted upon the popular perception of the clearances and dispossession north and south of the Highland line.

# Sunday 3 May



## **Willie Johnston & Glenn Cooksley**

70 Years at the Beeb

**1.30pm | County Buildings | £8**

Two former BBC journalists reflect on their long careers in news, sport and documentary making. They discuss the stories they've covered, including the Lockerbie bombing and the Solway Harvester disaster, and recall some of the many personalities and characters they've interviewed over the years.

## **Jen Mouat**

The Silent Twin

**1.30pm | County Buildings | £8**

Jen Mouat (Jen L. Crow) delves into her new gripping psychological thriller, *The Silent Twin*. At the heart of the novel lies a haunting family secret, chilling suspense, and the mysterious bond between twins – a story that will keep readers on the edge of their seats from start to finish.

## **Sarah Stewart**

Sewn Bindings

**2pm-4pm | Number twenty-six | £20**

Explore sewn books with artist and printmaker Sarah Stewart. Participants will learn a variety of bookbinding stitches and create their own mini "library" of notebooks.

## **Marsali Taylor**

Becoming a Writer and Keeping Going

**3pm | County Buildings | £8**

Marsali Taylor is acclaimed for her atmospheric crime novels set amidst the wild beauty of Shetland. Combining gripping mysteries with rich local detail, her work features complex characters and evocative storytelling that transport readers to windswept coasts and close-knit communities. Marsali's novels, including the popular Cass Lynch series, offer clever plotting and authentic insight into island life, making her a favourite among lovers of classic British crime fiction. Join her for a lively exploration of storycraft and crime writing.

*Sponsored by Well-Read Books of Wigtown*

## **Tim Cowen**

Wild Words Writing Workshop

**3pm-5pm | The Hut at**

**ReadingLasses | £6**

Feeling depressed by all that's happening in the world right now? War, climate chaos, the rise of the far right. Things can seem overwhelming. But is there an alternative story to be told? Taking inspiration from the power of nature, Wild Words will help rekindle our collective hopes for a better future. Join us for 2 hours of laughter and inspiration. Suitable for adults and young adults. Both experienced and new writers are welcome.

# Sunday 3 May

## Lynne McEwan

In conversation with Joyce Cochrane  
**4.30pm | County Buildings | £8**

Former newspaper photographer turned crime author Lynne McEwan's gripping crime novels are set amidst the wild landscapes of Dumfries and Galloway, featuring the tenacious DI Shona Oliver. Her stories combine taut mysteries, evocative Scottish settings, and complex characters, exploring themes of justice, community, and resilience. With atmospheric detail and a strong sense of place, McEwan's books invite readers into the heart of rural Scotland, where secrets lurk beneath the surface and the pursuit of truth is never straightforward.

## Silent Book Club

**7pm | The Old Bank Bookshop | FREE, Unticketed**

Relax after a full day of events with your book and a complimentary glass of wine, as we read in companionable silence.

You can join our regular Silent Book Club which runs all year round at any time. For more information please check Wigtown's Silent Book Club on Facebook.

The National Year  
of Reading 2026

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Wigtown Spring Weekend is organised by



ASSOCIATION OF  
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BOOKSELLERS**

# Monday 4 May



## **Stephen Rutt**

Saltmarsh Library

**10.30am | County Buildings | £8**

Join Stephen Rutt to celebrate his creative non-fiction work on the stories hidden within the Wigtown saltmarshes.

## **Mike Alexander**

Astronomy – The Weird and Wonderful

**10.30am | County Buildings | £8**

Astronomy is filled with fascinating discoveries, ranging from the miraculous to the downright bizarre. We will explore some of the intriguing findings made by astronomers over the centuries about our busy and chaotic home, the Milky Way Galaxy and wider Universe, where all the action takes place mostly in slow motion. For instance, did you know that our galaxy contains billions of gallons of alcohol?

## **Saskia Coulson & Colin Tennant**

Photography Workshop

**10am-12 noon | Wood of Cree | £10**

A walk in one of Galloways temperate rainforests with guidance on how to photograph different elements using any type of device from camera phones to DSLR cameras. No photography experience is required.

## **Fraser Hunter**

Scotland's Early Silver

**12 noon | County Buildings | £8**

The Viking-age Galloway Hoard has dominated views of silver in recent years – but Scotland's silver story starts much earlier than this. The first silver reached Scotland from Roman hands in the first century AD, and over the next 500 years its use varied from money to bribes, bullion, and power symbols. This talk will look at star items from Scotland's early history and place them into a story of frontier politics and showing off with silver.

## **Andy McGrillen**

UFOs: From Fringe to Front Page

**12 noon | County Buildings | £8**

The author and podcaster brings a balanced, thought-provoking look at one of the world's most enduring mysteries: UFOs. He will explore how the subject has moved from the fringes of popular culture into mainstream debate, touching on eyewitness accounts, government interest, media coverage and why the UFO question continues to fascinate people.

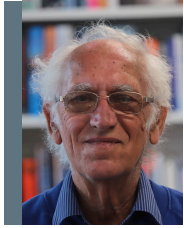
## **Stephen Rutt**

Writing Workshop

**12 noon | The Hut at ReadingLasses | £8**

An exploration of what makes the temperate rainforest of Galloway so special. Through readings and writing exercises, create your own piece of prose responding to the wild woods of here. Lasts 90 minutes.

# Monday 4 May



## Andy Nicholson

New Finds, Old Stories

**1.30pm | County Buildings | £8**

From mammoth bones to Second World War secret bunkers, Bronze Age burials to medieval coin hoards, Dumfries and Galloway contains a multitude of archaeological and historical treasures. Andrew Nicholson reveals a selection of those that have come to light over the last five years.

## David Sumner

Two Summers Make a Swallow

**3pm | County Buildings | £8**

At the end of 1990 David and Jill Sumner moved into Mosspark Cottage, three miles from Whithorn. In 1996 they started the Swallow Theatre in an empty byre on their property, and over the next eight years restored and converted other buildings on the site to provide facilities for performers and audiences. The theatre celebrates its 30th anniversary in June.

## Fiddlers in the Hut

**7pm | The Hut at ReadingLasses |**

**FREE Unticketed**

Calling all fiddle, bodhran, guitar, mandolin, whistle players and singers! Bring your trad tools and voices and help us celebrate the end of Wigtown Spring Weekend in style. Bar available.



## FAMILY EVENTS

**Birds, Bugs and Blooms**

**with Renita Boyle**

**Daily 1pm-3pm**

**McGuffie Memorial Gardens**

### Saturday 2 May

Meet Eagle and Little Wren and discover who can fly the highest and furthest far away.

Bird stories, books, songs, crafts and activities.

### Sunday 3 May

Join Bear and the Bees for an adventure buzzing with laughter and fun. Bee stories, books, songs, crafts and activities.

### Monday 4 May

Join fox for a frolic in the falling apple blossom. Apple stories, books, songs, crafts and activities.

### All weekend

Craft Corner  
outside The Book End Studio

Children's Book Nook  
in the McGuffie Gardens

Window Spotting  
Competition  
Entry sheets available  
from the ticket desk  
in the County  
Buildings foyer

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# How to Book

## Online

Secure ticketing at [wigtownbookfestival.com](http://wigtownbookfestival.com)

## By phone

During office hours (Mon-Fri 10am-4pm) on  
**01988 403222**

## In person during the Festival

At our ticket desk in the **County Buildings Foyer**  
(10am-5pm Sat 2 - Mon 4 May).



## BOOK TOWN BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS SATURDAY 16 MAY 2026 IN THE MCGUFFIE GARDENS

### FOOD AND DRINK

#### **Books & Bakes**, 6 Bank St

10am-4pm Sat and Mon;

9.30am-1.30pm Sun

#### **Cafe Melba**, Bladnoch Distillery

10am-4pm Sat

#### **Cafe Rendezvous**, 2 Agnew Cres

10am-6pm Sat;

10.30am-3.30pm Sun

#### **Cobwebs**, 31 South Main St

12 noon-5pm Sat and Sun;

12 noon-4pm Mon

#### **The Galloway Bar**, 24 South Main St

12.30pm-1am Sat;

12.30pm-11.30pm Sun;

1pm-11.30pm Mon

#### **North Street Deli**, 2 North Main St

8am-5pm Sat;

9am-5pm Sun;

7am-2.30pm Mon

#### **The Wigtown Ploughman**,

30 South Main St

See website for times -

[thewigtownploughman.co.uk](http://thewigtownploughman.co.uk)

#### **Pop Up Bar**, 4 South Main Street

4pm-11pm Fri; 1pm-11pm Sat-Mon

#### **ReadingLasses**, 17 South Main St

10am-5pm Sat-Mon

