

MORPETH



BOOK FESTIVAL

22 & 23 March 2025

A Weekend of Words





MARI HANNAH

As the patron of Morpeth Book Festival, I'm delighted to see the event return to the town on Saturday, March 22nd & Sunday, March 23rd, 2025.

After the phenomenal success of last year, it promises to be a unique experience; an exciting, inclusive, fun-filled weekend, including storytelling events for children. Come and meet national and regional authors and poets, brought to you by our hard-working programming committee. The festival is a collaboration between writers, readers, the Greater Morpeth Development Trust and Northumberland Libraries. Their staff have been working hard to put the festival together. Whatever your taste in books, the festival has you covered, delivering a packed schedule and line-up to be proud of. I can't wait to welcome you. Don't miss it!



FRANK RESCIGNO

This is our third Morpeth Book Festival and we are delighted to say that the calibre of writers who will be taking part is a reflection not just of its growing popularity, but of the reputation we believe we are building as small, premiere literary event in Northumberland.

Some of our big name authors will be joining us for the first time, while others will be making a return visit to Morpeth, hopefully because they enjoyed their first experience with us. Rubbing shoulders with the established authors will be local writers because we believe it is equally important to give them the opportunity to take part in an event such as ours that is on their own doorsteps. Together, they represent a cross-section of writing with something to cater for many different tastes. Once again we will also have sessions aimed at our young people because we believe you are never too young to fall in love with the written word. 2025 promises to be a stellar event and myself and our organising committee are so much looking forward to welcoming everyone to our town to enjoy Morpeth Book Festival.

Frank Rescigno, Festival Director

The events will be held at:

St George's United Reformed Church
Bridge St, Morpeth NE61 1PD

Morpeth Library at the Leisure Centre
Gas House Lane, Morpeth NE61 1SR



**Greater Morpeth
Development Trust**
Regeneration of town & countryside
www.gmtdt.net



We would like to thank all of our supporters, funders and volunteers; we couldn't do this without you. Not forgetting too those who support the festival by attending the events.

SATURDAY

22 MARCH

St George's United Reformed Church

11.00-12.00

Mari Hannah: In Conversation with Gerry Foley

12.45-13.45

Gervase Phinn: The School Inspector Calls

14.30-15.30

B.A. Paris: In Conversation with Gerry Foley

16.15-17.15

James Naughtie presents...

18.00-19.00

Sara Cockerill: The Queens that made history

Morpeth Library

11.00-12.00

Colin Green: Trust, Proof, Resolve...GUN

11.00-12.00

Jodie James: The Dandy Lion, a story and craft workshop for children

12.45-13.45

Alexis James: Not All Heroes Wear Kits

14.00 -15.00

Kjartan Poskitt: Murderous Maths

14.00-15.00

Jessica Irena Smith: Night of the Crash

15.30-16.30

David Willem: Ancient Relics and Lost Treasures

15.30-16.30

Louise Dodd: Hoot for Happiness

SUNDAY

23 MARCH

St George's United Reformed Church

13.00-14.00

Alistair Moffat: A History of the Highlands

14.30- 15.30

Chris Mullin: Didn't You Use to be Chris Mullin?

16.00-17.00

Ed Waugh: Train Wreckers: The story behind the play

17.30-18.30

Guy Morpuss: A Trial in Three Acts

Morpeth Library

11.00-12.00

Bridget Gubbins: Morpeth's Hidden History

13.00-14.00

Jean Laurie & Guests

15.00-16.00

Harry Gallagher: there is an england

Authors will follow their session with a book signing with their books on sale at the venues.

Tickets available from:

www.ticketsource.co.uk/morpeth-book-festival

The Chantry, Morpeth
Tourist Information Centre

www.gmdt.net





Mari Hannah: In Conversation with Gerry Foley

**Saturday 22 March, 11.00-12.00,
St George's United Reformed Church, £10**

HER SISTER'S KILLER - Come and hear Mari talk about the thrilling follow up to *Black Fell*.

The past and present collide with devastating consequences in this taut, breathless new thriller from award-winning crime writer Mari Hannah.

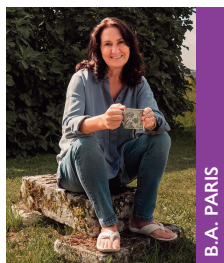
Mari is a multi-award-winning, bestselling author/screenwriter who writes across three crime series: DCI Kate Daniels (in development for TV with Sprout Pictures & Atlantic Nomad); Stone & Oliver (under option for TV with Buccaneer Media) and Ryan & O'Neil. Among her numerous awards is a Crime Writers' Association Dagger in the Library 2017. In 2020, she was the recipient of Capital Crime's Crime Book of the Year. She lives in rural Northumberland with her partner, an ex-murder detective.



Gervase Phinn: The School Inspector Calls

**Saturday 22 March, 12.45-13.45,
St George's United Reformed Church, £10**

Dr Gervase Phinn – author, poet, broadcaster, lecturer, educational guru, after-dinner speaker and ‘born raconteur’ (*the Guardian*) is perhaps best known for his best-selling series of Dales books for Penguin and his novels with Hodder. Affectionately dubbed ‘the James Herriot of Schools’, his warm-hearted reminiscences about his life as a school inspector in the Yorkshire Dales, have featured heavily on Radio 4 *Book of the Week* and *Book at Bedtime* slots. He has written a wide range of academic books, children's poetry and fiction and in 2004 was voted ‘Speaker of the Year’.



B.A. PARIS

B.A. Paris: In Conversation with Gerry Foley

**Saturday 22 March, 14.30-15.30,
St George's United Reformed Church, £10**

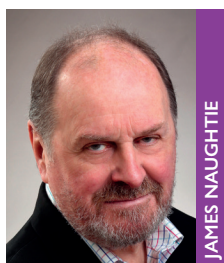
B.A. Paris is the New York Times and Sunday Times bestselling author of seven novels, including the word-of-mouth hit *Behind Closed Doors*, *The Therapist* and *The Guest*. Over seven million editions of her work have been sold worldwide and her books have been translated into 41 languages. Three of her novels have been optioned for major screen adaptations.



The film of *The Breakdown* is here!

It's an author's dream to see their book adapted to film and I'm thrilled and grateful that ***The Breakdown*** has made it to the big screen under the title **Blackwater Lane**. It was an amazing experience to see the actors and the production company take my story and make it their own, and I hope my readers will love it as much as I do.

Before becoming an author, B.A. Paris, who lived in France for most of her adult life before moving back to the U.K. five years ago, worked in finance as a trader before retraining as an English teacher and setting up a language school with her husband. She now writes from her cottage in Hampshire, or from a converted farmhouse in the Dordogne.



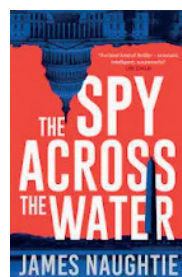
JAMES NAUGHTIE

James Naughtie presents....

**Saturday 22 March, 16.15-17.15,
St George's United Reformed Church, £10**

A special correspondent for BBC News, James Naughtie is one of Britain's best-known broadcasters. He presented *Today* on BBC Radio 4 for 25 years, and the network's Bookclub since it began nearly three decades

ago. For BBC radio and television he has written and presented a host of documentaries from around the world. As a writer, he has published books on politics and music, and an account of his travels and work in the United States. He has written three novels, the latest being the espionage thriller *The Spy Across the Water*.





SARA COCKERILL

The Queens that made history. Sara Cockerill

**Saturday 22 March, 18.00-19.00,
St George's United Reformed Church, £10**

Sara Cockerill wanted to become a historian, but took the safer route of becoming a lawyer. She wrote her first historical biography *Eleanor of Castile: The Shadow Queen* (2014) alongside practice as a barrister. Her second book *Eleanor of Aquitaine Queen of France and England, Mother of Empires* was finished after her move to a full time judicial role. She has appeared on Channel 5's *Secrets of Great British Castles* (Caernarfon) and Channel 4's *Queens That Changed the World* (Eleanor of Aquitaine). She is currently working out how to find time to write a third book alongside her current job!



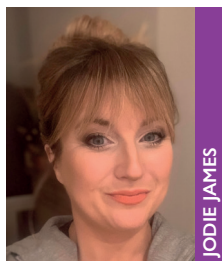
COLIN GREEN

Trust proof and resolve...GUN Colin Green.

Saturday 22 March, 11.00-12:00, Morpeth Library, £5

Formerly a pupil at what was King Edward VI Grammar School, Morpeth. He then attended college in London before returning home to his roots as a Chief Inspector for Northumbria Police. Following retirement and completion of an online

creative writing course there have now been three - *TRUST*, *PROOF* and *RESOLVE*, with another titled *GUN* on the way.



JODIE JAMES

'The Dandy Lion' a story and craft workshop

**Saturday 22 March, 11.00-12.00, Morpeth Library,
£10 to include materials**

A guided Craft Session, children have the chance to make an item to take home and keep, based on the animal characters in the story.

The session includes:

Storytime - An interactive story reading of 'The Dandy Lion', where children are encouraged to join in if they wish.

Craft Session - children are guided through a very enjoyable craft session, where they have the chance to make an item to take home and keep, based on the animal characters of the story.

Closing talk about the themes in the book for all participants.



ALEXIS JAMES

Not All Heroes Wear Kits

Saturday 22 March, 12.45-13.45, Morpeth Library, £5

Alexis James is an author, journalist, and podcaster whose work encompasses untold stories and unsung personalities from the fringes of sport and society. In 2022 his debut book, *Unsung: Not All Heroes Wear Kits*, offered an illuminating insight behind the scenes of professional sport that introduced and celebrated its unheralded heroes. He followed that up in 2024 with *Off-Field*, a

photo-rich anthology spanning the globe to unearth sport's rich subcultures, hidden legends, and passionate communities.

Alexis also presents the *Unsung* podcast, featuring full-production audio documentaries and exclusive interviews that shine a rare spotlight on the integral men and women in sport's shadows. He lives in Morpeth with his wife and their two daughters.



KJARTAN POSKITT

Kjartan Poskitt: Murderous Maths

**Saturday 22 March, 14.00-15.00, Morpeth Library,
£3.50 per child, accompanying adults free**

A Morpeth Festival Regular. Bring along your kids to *A stand-up maths routine has children and teachers in fits of laughter...
...maths has never been so much fun.*

Kjartan has had previous events filmed at BBC Scotland and streamed to schools across the UK.



JESSICA IRENA SMITH

The Night of the Crash

Saturday 22 March, 14.00-15.00, Morpeth Library, £5

Jessica Irena Smith is a glass artist from County Durham. She has a BA in Glass & Ceramics and an MA in Glass, both from the University of Sunderland, where she was based at the National Glass Centre. Her debut novel, *The Summer She Vanished*, was released in 2023. Her second novel,

The Night of the Crash, was released in October 2024.





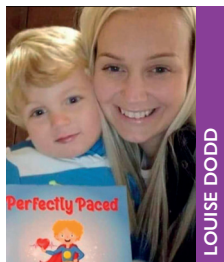
DAVID WILLEM

Ancient Relics and Lost Treasures

Saturday 22 March, 15.30-16.30, Morpeth Library, £10

David Willem is a writer of history and a diarist. His journalism has appeared in the Times, the Guardian, the Independent on Sunday and the Irish Times. He has worked in Wales, England, Japan, Ireland and Scotland, and he writes about gatherings and artefacts, and how they support the creation of identity.

He is the author of *St Cuthbert's Corpse*, a post-mortem biography of the saint's remains over 1300 years; and *Black Rood*, which tells the story of Scotland's first crown jewel.



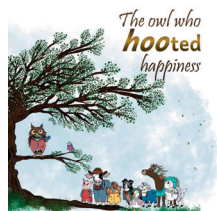
LOUISE DODD

Hoot for Happiness

Saturday 22 March, 15.30-16.30, Morpeth Library, £3.50

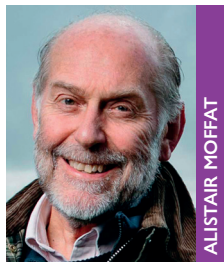
Bring your little ones along to HOOT alongside with Louise Dodds reading her new book.

The Owl Who Hooted Happiness.



Written by Louise Dodd

Illustrated by Lucy Hudson



ALISTAIR MOFFAT

Alistair Moffat: A History of the Highlands

Sunday 23 March, 13.00-14.00, St George's United Reformed Church, £10

Alistair Moffat tells the extraordinary story of the Highlands in the most detailed book ever written about this remarkable part of Scotland.

This is the story of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland as it has never been told before. From the formation of the landscape millions of years ago to the twenty-first century, it brings to life the events and the people who have shaped Highland history, from saints, sinners and outlaws to monarchs, clan chiefs and warriors.

Highly readable and informative, it mines a wide range of sources including medieval manuscripts and sagas, poetry and popular culture. Picts, Romans, Irish missionaries, Vikings, Jacobites and the flood of emigrants who left to forge new lives abroad are just some of the important players in the drama. As he paints the bigger picture, Alistair Moffat also introduces many key aspects of Highland culture and explores the experience of ordinary Highlanders and Islanders over thousands of years.





CHRIS MULLIN

Didn't You Use to be Chris Mullin? Diaries 2010-2022

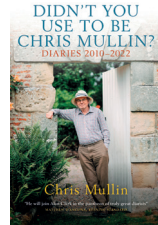
**Sunday 23 March, 14.30-15.30,
St George's United Reformed Church, £10**

No longer in the tent, but not quite out of it, former minister and celebrated diarist Chris Mullin gives his take on the 12 turbulent years

since he left parliament. With his trademark wit and a keen eye for the absurd, he recounts events from the fall of New Labour to the death of the Queen.

'He will join Alan Clark in the pantheon of truly great diarists,' Matt D'Ancona, London Evening Standard

- *'One of Mullin's charms is his readiness to like people who don't echo his politics,'*
- Jenni Russell, Sunday Times



Chris Mullin was the Member of Parliament for Sunderland South from 1987 to 2010. He is a former chairman of the home affairs select committee and was a minister in three departments. He is the author of four novels, the best known of which *A Very British Coup* was made into an award-winning television series. More recently he published a sequel, *The Friends of Harry Perkins*. His three previous volumes of diaries have been widely acclaimed.



ED WAUGH

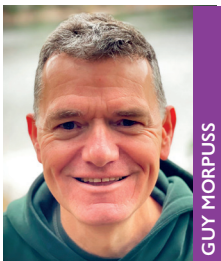
Train Wreckers: The story behind the play

**Sunday 23 March, 16.00-17.00, St George's United
Reformed Church, £10**

Listen to the fascinating story of *The Cramlington Train Wreckers*. On May

10th 1926 Strikers accidentally derailed the Flying Scotsman at Cramlington!

You won't want to miss this one.



GUY MORPUSS

A Trial in Three Acts

**Sunday 23 March, 17.30-18.30,
St George's United Reformed Church, £10**

A one not to miss. *A Trial in Three Acts* - Witty, clever and an utter delight. This outstanding thriller, from barrister Guy Moppuss KC, combines nail-biting courtroom drama with a Christie-esque locked room murder mystery. This is a page turning legal thriller.



BRIDGET GUBBINS

Morpeth's Hidden History

Sunday 23 March, 11.00-12.00, Morpeth Library, £5

An epic seven book series on the history of Morpeth Over 2011 to 2018, with Greater Morpeth Development Trust and some of the books funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, Bridget has written seven books covering different aspects of Morpeth's illustrious, if at times, somewhat murky past.

Morpeth has had its full share of medieval history - a Royal market charter, the kings' wars, child birth at the castle, a hated king, the illegal hunting and killing of deer in the king's forest, a wicked sheriff and a child marriage...it is all there.

Together, her books will stand the test of time as enduring social records of life in the town perhaps not widely known or written about in the way Bridget has done.



JEAN LAURIE

Jean Laurie & Guests

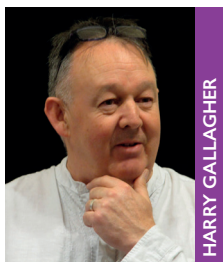
Sunday 23 March, 13.00-14.00, Morpeth Library, £7

Jean Laurie has published many poems and short stories including an anthology about Seaton Delaval Hall and *Illuminated Landscape*, a collaboration with Northumberland Libraries. Come along and meet Jean with guests Lesley Mountain and Ellen Phethean.

Lesley Mountain is a gardener, climate emergency worrier and poet. She has three pamphlet collections: *Hunting the Air* (Vane Women);

Dance of the Disappointed (Red Squirrel) and *Vamoose* (Mudfog).

Ellen Phethean's work has been broadcast on BBC Radio and performed widely. The poetry includes: *Wall*, *Portrait of the Quince as an Older Woman*; *Shedding the Niceties* and *A Young Adult Trilogy*, *Ren and the Blue Hands*.



HARRY GALLAGHER

there is an england

Sunday 23 March, 15.00-16.00, Morpeth Library, £7

Well known in his native Tyneside, Harry's bestselling *Northern Lights*, the most borrowed book in Middlesborough Library, took aim at the appalling treatment of the North East.

there is an england [note the lack of capitals] widens the scope of Harry's pen to the current state of the country. In his own words:

"A country with a parliament dating back over 800 years: a country which boasts a long line of engineers, inventors and pioneers who between them nigh-on made the modern world as we know it. Yet it was also a country which - to the eyes of many outsiders - seemed hell-bent on a level of self-harm which would previously never have been believed possible."

"...like a spark in a furnace" - Wendy Pratt, *Northern Soul* - about *Northern Lights*

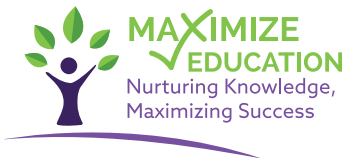


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RUTHERFORD & Co



Expect the unexpected

Rutherfords is an exclusive family-owned department store which has been the heartbeat of Morpeth since 1846.

Priding ourselves as a contemporary lifestyle store, stocking exclusive womens and mens fashions, luxurious home furnishings from candles to cushions, cookware, shoes, cosmetics and handbags.

Once you have shopped till you've dropped, our mouth-watering café is the perfect haven where you can relax in comfort and enjoy a bite to eat.

Look no further than Rutherfords for fashion, home, beauty... and the unexpected.