

ESSEX BOOK FESTIVAL

28 May – 30 June 2025
essexbookfestival.org.uk



100 Events | 40 Venues | 200 Writers & Artists

Welcome to the 2025 Essex Book Festival

Director

Ros Green

Festival Manager

Claire Buskin

Festival Assistants

Emma Kittle-Pey

Zoe Martin

Digital Coordinator

Jesse Farrer-Graham

Trustees

Peter Donaldson

Sade Fadipe

Tony Fisher

Pat Gaudin

James MacDonald

Camilla Shestopal

Advisers to the Board

Maja Antoine-Onikoyi

Jo Coldwell

Marc De'ath

Seona Ford

Rob Jelly

Sarah Moth
Kanyinsola Olanrewaju

Jules Pretty

Louisa Steel

Philippa Stewart

Lu Williams

Patrons

AL Kennedy

Sylvia Kent

Dave Monk

Sarah Perry

Brian Southall

Francis Wheen

How To Book Your Ticket

To book tickets please visit essexbookfestival.org.uk or where shown, tickets can be booked via Mercury Theatre Box Office (10am to 8pm Tuesday to Saturday) in person or by telephone 01206 573948. All booking links are shown on the website, which can direct you to the online booking platforms being used to deliver Essex Book Festival 2025.

Bookings will be taken up to 3 hours prior to the event commencing. If there is capacity, tickets will be available on the door.

Refunds

The festival cannot refund money or exchange tickets except if an event is cancelled. In the event of a cancellation the Box Office will contact you and issue a refund within 30 days.

Concessions

We offer concessions for Students, Under 27s and Unwaged.

Accessibility

Information about access at participating venues is posted on the Essex Book Festival website. We also have a Roger Pen hearing system, so please let us know in advance if you would like to book this by emailing us at: hello@essexbookfestival.org.uk

Essex Book Festival gratefully acknowledges the support of these key partners



Front cover by Katie Kennedy Design

Welcome to Essex Book Festival 2025

With a huge array of author events, workshops, walks, talks, exhibitions and performances taking place across the county from Chelmsford Cathedral to Harwich's Ha'penny Pier, nothing compares to the intrepid spirit of Essex Book Festival!

'Intrepid' is an apt word for a number of our participating authors, including 'Mother of the House' The Right Honourable Diane Abbott MP who will be talking about her memoir *A Woman Like Me* at the University of Essex.

It's also an apt word for this year's festival 'odyssey' around some of the county's more intriguing islands under the banner of RADICAL ISLANDS. First stop will be an afternoon in The Packing Shed on Mersea with writer & cultural historian Ken Worpole who will be chatting to scientist & storyteller Jules Pretty. Next stop will be South Essex for more RADICAL ISLANDS adventures with Essex Writers House.

If 'intrepid' is our modus operandi for 2025, our festival theme: COMMUNITIES WITHIN COMMUNITIES, is an open invitation for everyone living in our extraordinary and vibrant county and beyond to come and join in the fun.

Make sure you clear the diary from 28th May to 30th June!

See you all soon,

Ros Green & Claire Buskin

Festival Team

**ESSEX
BOOK
FESTIVAL**

LAUNCH EVENT

WED 28 MAY 7.00PM

LAUNCH EVENT

FICTION

Ben Okri *Madame Sosostris & the Festival for the Broken Hearted*

Part vision, part mystery, this story of a midsummer night's madness, in multi-award-winning poet, playwright and novelist Ben Okri's inimitable style, is as alive with echoes and reverberations as the enchanted forest itself. Think Ingmar Bergman meets William Shakespeare, with a dash of Mozart.

'Ben Okri is that rare thing, a literary and social visionary...'
Ali Smith



Venue: Electric Palace, King's Quay Street, Harwich, CO12 3ER

Tickets: £12 / £10

Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk or Mercury Theatre 01206 573948



JACKTARS AND LANDLUBBERS

23 – 26 May
Shoeburyness to Grays

Join T100 and Beach of Dreams as they make their way along the Estuary over the Bank Holiday weekend. A chance to explore the characteristics of the landscapes we pass through and connect with local communities, history and music along the way.

- Friday 23 May – Shoeburyness to Westcliff
- Saturday 24 May – Westcliff to Benfleet via Old Leigh
- Sunday 25 May – Benfleet to Stanford-le-Hope via Pitsea
- Monday 26 May – Stanford-le-Hope to Grays via East Tilbury & 2 Forts Way. Join us at The Wharf in Grays for *A Bit of a Do*, an evening of live music from local performers, celebrating the river through song!

Tickets: FREE
 Box Office: t100festival.co.uk



© M Johnston



Celebrating Collecting Dreams, Shifting Futures Beach of Dreams

Wednesday 28 May
Venues across Harwich

Join in the fun at the FINALE of Essex Book Festival and Kinetika's collaborative story-gathering project, COLLECTING DREAMS, SHIFTING FUTURES: a community celebration of Harwich's fascinating heritage and coastline, which forms part of the inspirational nationwide Beach of Dreams project.

After an early start on the beach with a Know Your Beach Workshop led by local educator and environmental campaigner Libby Scarfe, participants will have the opportunity to take part in the Beach of Dreams silk-flag procession through town, followed by mini-film screenings in the Electric Palace Cinema. For those who want to get the creative juices going, join spoken word artist TriggerBliss and digital artist Marley Karazimba for writing and film-making workshops. Don't miss our Make Your Own Eco-Podcast, and look out for our ever popular pop-up Storytelling Armchair. That's just for starters ...

For more information go to www.essexbookfestival.org.uk



© Kinetika



Radical Islands

Take a walk on the wild side and help us celebrate Essex's wonderful islands as part of Essex Book Festival's ongoing RADICAL ESSEX countywide activities in 2025/2026.

Walks, talks, pen-friends, picnics, foraging, mud workshops, wild swims...help us to celebrate the rich heritage and history, exquisite nature and wildlife, and communities that make up this island county. After all, Essex does have the most islands of any English county.

**Radical
 ESSEX**

SUN 01 JUN, 2.30PM – 5.30PM HISTORY MYTHS & LEGENDS

Radical Islands Launch

Join us for an event like no other – take a boat trip to the Packing Shed at Mersea Island, a unique piece of our Essex heritage and join two fascinating talks. There will also be an opportunity to explore the small island and Packing Shed building, ask the authors questions and get books signed. Ticket includes both author talks and boat crossings to and from the island.



Ken Worpole – The Bulwark Shore

The Essex coastline is one of the longest of England's seashores, with many distinctive islands, some playing a key defensive role in wartime, while others have provided sanctuaries for wildlife and long-standing residential settlements with rich histories. In *Brightening from the East: Essays on landscape and memory* (2025), writer Ken Worpole details the unique contribution the Essex islands have made to modern notions of 'Englishness', not only in landscape character but also in the 20th century story of environmental and social change.



Jules Pretty – Sea Sagas of the North

The isles of Essex once were hilltops. Then glaciers and ice-sheets melted, and the sea rose up. At that time, the North Sea was a wide dry plain called Doggerland. The Sky People roamed with all the herds. What happened when they became the first climate migrants, forced to flee in small boats? In *Sea Sagas of the North*, Jules Pretty uses story and saga to explore how the Essex archipelago came to be, and how the Sky People were welcomed with kindness at the shore.



Venue: The Packing Shed, West Mersea, Colchester, CO5 8PA
 Tickets: £20, includes both talks and boat crossing to and from the Packing Shed
 Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk

For more information about our Radical Islands project, go to www.essexbookfestival.org.uk

01 – 30 JUN EXHIBITION FREE

Harlow College Photography Students Community

The photography students at Harlow College are proud to present their work, on the theme of 'Community'. Throughout the work, they have discovered new insights into their home town and provided empowering representations of areas of Harlow for the viewing public, that offer unique and sensitive perspectives on the people, and culture of Essex.



© Matt Douglas



Venue: Harlow Library, Cross Street, Harlow, CM20 1HA
 Tickets: Free, no booking required

EVERY TUE IN JUNE, 10.00AM – 12.00PM WRITING WORKSHOP FREE

Adrian May Weekly Community Writing Surgery

It is no secret that *writing* is the best thing for writing – but sometimes you need some advice, or just to feel part of a community of writers. With other experienced tutors, Dr Adrian May, Community Fellow and former Deputy Director of Creative Writing at Essex University, will be there on call every Tuesday in June 10am-12pm.

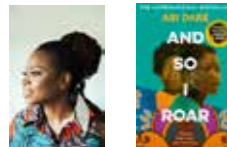


Venue: St Leonard at-the-Hythe Church, Hythe Hill, Colchester, CO1 2NP
 Tickets: Free, drop-in, no booking required.

TUE 03 JUN, 7.00PM FICTION

Abi Daré And So I Roar

Equally tender and powerful, Daré's evocative follow up to her highly acclaimed debut *The Girl With the Louding Voice* finds Adunni settling into her new life and school in Lagos, until dramatic news forces her to return to her home village.



© Ellie Smith



Venue: Grays Library, Thameside Complex, Orsett Road, Grays, RM17 5DX
 Tickets: £10 / £8
 Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk or Mercury Theatre 01206 573948

WED 04 JUN, 7.00PM CRIME THRILLER

Abigail Dean The Death of Us

Join Abigail Dean, New York Times bestselling author of *Girl A*, as she discusses her new book, *The Death of Us*. Inspired by a long-held nightmare of home invasions – and a long-held dream to write a love story – it is a heart-wrenching new novel about love, tragedy and forgiveness.



Venue: Shenfield Library, Hutton Road, Shenfield, CM15 8JD
 Tickets: £10 / £8
 Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk or Mercury Theatre 01206 573948

THU 05 JUN, 7.00PM POLITICS HISTORY

Shami Chakrabarti Human Rights

Join leading British human rights lawyer and campaigner, Shami Chakrabarti for a powerful discussion on *Human Rights: The Case for the Defence*. This urgent, powerful book demonstrates why human rights matter and why we need to secure further rights to deal with challenges of the present and future.



Venue: Anglia Ruskin University, Bishop Hall Lane, Chelmsford, CM1 1SQ
 Tickets: £12 / £10
 Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk or Mercury Theatre 01206 573948

THU 05 JUN, 7.00PM FICTION

Monique Roffey Passiontide

Costa-winning author of *The Mermaid of Black Conch*, Monique Roffey, joins us to discuss her electrifying new novel about four women who spark a revolution on a Caribbean island. Early one morning, at the close of St Colibri's carnival, a young female steel-pan player is found dead beneath a cannonball tree. In a community in which women's voices are often silenced, a group soon find themselves compelled to speak out – and to act.

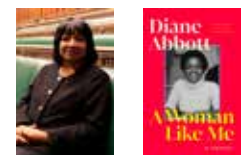


Venue: Maldon Library, Carmelite House, White Horse Lane, Maldon, CM9 5FW
 Tickets: £10 / £8
 Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk or Mercury Theatre 01206 573948

FRI 06 JUN, 7.00PM MEMOIR

Diane Abbott A Woman Like Me

We are thrilled to be joined by Britain's first ever Black female MP, Diane Abbott, who will be telling her astonishing story of groundbreaking achievement and the political and social challenges she has faced in Parliament.



© Tony Attille

Ever since the day she first walked through the House of Commons as the only state-educated Black woman MP, she has been a fearless and vocal champion for the causes that have made Britain what it is today. Get ready for a discussion full of Diane's trademark frankness and humour.



Venue: Essex Business School, University of Essex, Colchester, CO4 3SQ
 Tickets: £12 / £10
 Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk or Mercury Theatre 01206 573948

SAT 07 JUN, 12.00PM BIOGRAPHY

Robin Ince Normally Weird and Weirdly Normal

Comedian, author and one half of BBC Radio 4's *The Infinite Monkey Cage*, Robin Ince will be joining us for a quirky dive into the world of human behaviour. A powerful, personal exploration of anxiety, ADHD and neurodiversity, *Normally Weird and Weirdly Normal* reminds us all – no matter how weird we feel – that it's okay to be a little different. Complimentary coffee and cake on arrival.



Venue: Samaritans, Walsingham Road Community Hall, 34 Walsingham Road, Colchester, CO2 7BN
 Tickets: £10 / £8 (concessions includes Samaritans volunteers)
 Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk or Mercury Theatre 01206 573948



SAT 07 JUN, 2.00PM MEMOIR

Tom Lee The Bullet

In *The Bullet*, Tom Lee attempts to understand what happened to his parents - both were patients at Severalls Psychiatric Hospital in Colchester at different times in their lives - and what happened to him. It is a powerful and deeply personal exploration of mental health, and an indelible account of the legacy of familial illness and living with a fracturing mind.



© Eleanor de Zoysa

Venue: Samaritans, Walsingham Road Community Hall, 34 Walsingham Road, Colchester, CO2 7BN
 Tickets: £10 / £8 (concessions includes Samaritans volunteers)
 Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk or Mercury Theatre 01206 573948



SAT 07 JUN, 10.00AM – 2.00PM RADICAL ESSEX WALK PARTNER EVENT FREE

Thurrock Pride 2025 T100 Weekend Trail

In Partnership with Thurrock LGBTQ+ Community Network. A walk along the riverside between Purfleet and Grays followed by a picnic in Thurrock CVS community gardens.



© Mark Massey

Starting point: Purfleet Train Station, RM19 1PP
 End point: The Beehive Resource Centre, West Street, Grays, RM17 6XP
 Tickets: Free, booking essential
 Box Office: t100festival.co.uk



Chelmsford Theatre, Fairfield Road, Chelmsford, CM1 1JG
 Find out more and book tickets at chelmsfordtheatre.co.uk or call 01245 606 505 between 10am and 3pm, Mon to Sat.

The Wizard of Oz
 01 June, 1.00pm and 4.30pm

Fly over the rainbow with this exciting adaptation of *The Wizard of Oz*. This spectacular, panto-like, colourful story is packed with hilarious jokes, dazzling dance routines, glittering scenery and plenty more for all the family.



ABC: An Intimate Evening with Martin Fry – A Lexicon of Life
 04 June, 7.30pm

Coinciding with the publication of his autobiography, *A Lexicon Of Life*, join Martin Fry for an intimate evening of stripped-back music and conversation following a sold out tour of the UK. Frontman of iconic British pop band ABC, the band that redefined glamour and cool, Fry will take you on a journey through their well deserved place in pop history.



It's A Mystery
 12 June, 8.00pm

Join Tim Benzie, creator and host of *Solve-Along-A-Murder-She-Wrote*, for a new one man show taking you on a funny and engrossing deep dive into the appeal of murder mysteries.



SAT 21 JUN, 2.00PM TALK PARTNER EVENT

Dr Catherine Pearson Rosemary Rutherford: War Artist and Designer

In this talk, Dr Catherine Pearson will explore the life and work of Rosemary Rutherford (1912-1972) a prolific artist who spent much of her life in East Anglia, and will discuss the Rutherford Project, which has conserved Rosemary's artworks at Broomfield Church in Essex. Part of the Shifting Perspectives: Exploring Art Together exhibition at Chelmsford Museum in collaboration with Alzheimer's Society.



© Weston Family Archive



Venue: Museum of Chelmsford, Oaklands Park, Moulsham Street, Chelmsford, CM2 9AQ
 Tickets: £10 (£9 for Museum of Chelmsford members)
 Box Office: chelmsford.gov.uk/museums/whats-on

A CRIMINALLY GOOD DAY

Sunday 08 June
Maldon

This year we are heading to the historic town of Maldon for our Criminally Good Day. Join us for a thrill-packed afternoon featuring three tantalisingly good crime-writers. In partnership with Maldon Books.

Venue: Maldon Town Hall, Market Hill, Maldon, CM9 4RL
 Tickets: £12/£10 per event. All 3 events for £30 (£26).
 Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk or Mercury Theatre 01206 573948



Make a day of it! All three author talks for £30

SUN 08 JUN, 1.00PM CRIME THRILLER

Sarah Hornsley *Bad Blood*

A night that changed everything...

Essex-based author Sarah Hornsley lived for years in Maldon, where her thrilling debut *Bad Blood* is set. A huge new voice in crime fiction, Sarah will be talking about writing and releasing her tense, compelling and cleverly plotted thriller. Secrets, lies and family ties unspool in this gripping, twisty, thrill-ride of a book.



SUN 08 JUN, 2.45PM CRIME THRILLER

Cara Hunter *Making a Killing*

Author of Sunday Times & New York Times bestseller and TikTok sensation, *Murder in the Family*, the always impressive Cara Hunter will be discussing her latest book in the DI Adam Fawley series. *Making a Killing* is a brilliantly twisty and hugely entertaining police thriller.

'Inimitable Cara Hunter: immersive, bold, twisty and tender'
 - Nicci French



© Matthew Hood



SUN 08 JUN, 4.30PM CRIME THRILLER

Stig Abell *The Burial Place*

Times Radio presenter, Stig Abell, will be reflecting on how his love for classic crime and the detective novels of Dorothy L Sayers, Arthur Conan Doyle and Agatha Christie, to name but a few, have influenced his own crime writing including his latest evocative book in the Jake Jackson crime series, *The Burial Place*.

'This series is irresistible' – Lee Child



SUN 08 JUN, 11.00AM – 1.30PM FAMILY WORKSHOP YOUNG ESSEX FREE

Wildlife Detectives at The Wild Space, Maldon

As part of our Criminally Good Day the team at the Wild Space are opening this hidden green oasis for families to gently explore the wildlife and nature that can live happily in an urban environment.

There will be activities and a trail to follow that will test everyone's detective skills and no matter what your age you will come away feeling more connected and knowledgeable!

Venue: Our Wild Local Space, Washington Close, Maldon, CM9 6JD
 Tickets: Free, donation to OWLS (Our Wild Local Space) welcome
 Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk



ESSEX WRITERS HOUSE

02 – 30 June 2025

Metal, Chalkwell Hall, Chalkwell Park, Southend-on-Sea, SS0 8NB

Throughout June, Metal Southend will become a home for Essex writers to share, forge ideas, make connections, gossip, read and write.

You can book a wild outdoor writing desk, grab a spot overlooking the Thames Estuary, get advice on your writing and find your writing community.

For full event listings, visit essexbookfestival.org.uk/event/essex-writers-house-2025

Writers' Hot Desks

Atmospheric attic room desks with spectacular views across the estuary to Kent never cease to provide inspiration for writers needing space to shape their ideas. Book a desk to carve out time for yourself away from the distractions of everyday life.

Wild Writing Desk

A special writer's desk will be outdoors in a secluded area of Chalkwell Park. This is the perfect environment for those who love to write immersed in nature. Southend weather permitting.

Co-Working & Shared Spaces

Essex Writers House is a place for writers to come together. This year, we're offering two drop-in spaces (Monday – Friday 10.00 - 16.30 throughout June). These spaces invite you to connect, create, and strengthen your local writing community.

Our Quiet Work Room will be a peaceful, self-directed space for writing, reading or studying in silence, gathered around a beautiful co-working table.

The Main Hall will be an informal space for discussion, reading aloud, and sharing work with others.



© Metal



© Mark Massey

Metal



Open Advice Sessions

Book a time with the Metal team and our associate writers to gain valuable feedback, guidance, and signposting to further support. These sessions welcome writers at any stage of their journey, whether you're just starting out, or refining a manuscript. The space is yours to discuss what you need for your writing development.

Meet Our Resident Writers

Opportunities to connect with resident writers from near and far.

Find Your Writing Community

A discussion in partnership with the National Centre for Writing, inspired by their Escalator programme, which celebrates East of England writers whose voices are under-represented on UK bookshelves.

More special events will be announced.



© Metal

Wild Swimming Dip and Workshop

Love to dip your toes in the water... Then join us for an intrepid wild swim at Chalkwell Beach, followed by a pen-dipping writing workshop at Chalkwell Hall. 'Warm Up' complimentary coffee and cakes will be at the ready! This is a partnership event with Essex Federation of Women's Institutes, and the Blue Tits. All welcome.

'When women support each other incredible things happen'

More information via www.essexbookfestival.org.uk



© Metal



For booking details and full event listings, visit essexbookfestival.org.uk/event/essex-writers-house-2025

TUE 10 JUN, 7.00PM HISTORICAL FICTION

Alison Weir *The Cardinal*

Bestselling historical novelist, and the UK's leading female historian, Alison Weir, joins us at the beautiful Chelmsford Cathedral to talk about her latest book, *The Cardinal*. Step into the thrill and danger of Tudor England and witness the incredible rise and tragic fall of Thomas Wolsey.

Venue: Chelmsford Cathedral, New Street, Chelmsford, CM1 1TY
 Tickets: £15 / £12
 Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk or Mercury Theatre 01206 573948



WED 11 JUN, 7.00PM BIOGRAPHY

Julia Jones *Stars to Steer By*

Celebrating the 20th century women who went to sea, Julia Jones will be diving into the stories of an array of incredible, unconventional and extraordinary women who set their sights on the sea in an all-male world, and paved the way for the female sailing superstars of today.

Venue: Frinton Library, 59 Old Road, Frinton-on-Sea, CO13 9DA
 Tickets: £10 / £8
 Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk or Mercury Theatre 01206 573948



THU 12 JUN, 7.00PM HISTORICAL BIOGRAPHY

Lucy Hughes-Hallett *The Scapegoat*

A stunning biography of one of the most flamboyant and enigmatic seventeenth-century Englishmen at the heart of political and royal life. Lucy Hughes-Hallett will transport us into a courtly world of masques and dancing, exquisite clothes, the art of Rubens and Van Dyck, gender-fluidity, same-sex desire, and appallingly rudimentary medicine.

Venue: Anglia Ruskin University, Bishop Hall Lane, Chelmsford, CM1 1SQ
 Tickets: £12 / £10
 Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk or Mercury Theatre 01206 573948



THU 12 JUN, 7.00PM CRIME THRILLER

Jane Casey *DLS Lecture – The Secret Room*

Sunday Times bestselling author, Jane Casey, will introduce her latest gripping new thriller featuring DS Maeve Kerrigan and DI Josh Derwent, *The Secret Room*. Delving into how to create a main character, Casey will reflect on the different approaches of Dorothy L Sayers and other classic crime authors in developing compelling detective characters.

Venue: Witham Library, 18 Newland Street, Witham, CM8 2AQ
 Tickets: £10 / £8
 Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk or Mercury Theatre 01206 573948



EA FESTIVAL

Saturday 14 and Sunday 15 June

Hedingham Castle

EA Festival is back on the beautiful grounds of Hedingham Castle, located on the border of Essex and Suffolk in the charming village of Castle Hedingham. With a star-studded line-up, it will be a dazzling smorgasbord of subjects - from AI and longevity to Christianity and art fraud. We are delighted to be partnering with EA Festival on these fabulous events.



SAT 14 JUN, 10.00AM NATURE WRITING

Renaturing: Chloe Dalton and James Canton in conversation with William Sieghart

James Canton and fellow author, Chloe Dalton, will explore their different approaches to nature writing. Dalton's *Raising Hare* is a charming account of unexpectedly raising a leveret during lockdown and a feel-good, life-affirming treat. Canton's *Renaturing* shows how the concept of rewilding can be adopted by us all. We can all make positive change, however large or small. We can all be involved in caring for and restoring the natural world. In this session, we will discover how their experiences – of nature and writing - have intersected.

Venue: Hedingham Castle, Bayley Street, Castle Hedingham, Halstead, CO9 3DJ
 Tickets: £20
 Box Office: eafestival.com



© Lawrence Cawley



© Andrew Parsons

SUN 15 JUN, 4.30PM LIVE PODCAST SCIENCE HISTORY WRITING

Always Take Notes (live podcast taping) featuring Frank Close

As the capstone of EA Festival 2025, we are taping an episode of the UK's #1 podcast about writing, *Always Take Notes*, co-hosted by Simon Akam and Rachel Lloyd. Besides interviewing authors about their latest work, in this case, *Destroyer of Worlds* by physicist and multi-award-winning science writer Frank Close, the podcast delves into the creative process, research, habits and quirks of each guest, the better to understand what makes their books so good. Considering that *Destroyer of Worlds* is a new and seminal history of the atomic bomb authored by one of the world's top science writers, strap yourself in for a fascinating look under the hood of what makes Frank Close tick.

Venue: Hedingham Castle, Bayley Street, Castle Hedingham, Halstead, CO9 3DJ
 Tickets: £20
 Box Office: eafestival.com



TUE 17 JUN, 7.00PM HISTORICAL FICTION

Blessin Adams *Thou Savage Woman*

Former police officer and historian Blessin Adams will introduce us to her bold, page-turning new history of traitorous wives, greedy mistresses, cunning female poisoners and spiteful witches. Sharing the stories of women whose violent crimes shattered the narrow confines of their gender – and whose notoriety revealed a society that was at once repulsed by and attracted to murderous female rebellion.

Venue: Essex Record Office, Wharf Road, Chelmsford, CM2 6YT
 Tickets: £12 / £10
 Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk or Mercury Theatre 01206 573948



© Lee Dixon



WED 18 JUN, 7.00PM FICTION

Nicolas Padamsee *England is Mine*

Named one of the Observer's best new novelists for 2024, Nicolas Padamsee will be heading to Hot Box to talk about his brilliant coming-of-age thriller. *England is Mine* is an urgent debut which takes the reader on a frightening journey into online radicalisation and extremism.

Venue: Hot Box, 28, 29 Viaduct Road, Chelmsford, CM1 1TS
 Tickets: £11 (includes £1 booking fee)
 Box Office: hotboxlive.co.uk



© Peter Arkley Bloxham



WED 18 JUN, 7.00PM CRIME THRILLER

Kimberley Chambers *Essex Wives*

The No.1 bestselling Queen of Gangland Crime, Kimberley Chambers, will be discussing her epic, pulse-pounding, *The Family Man* series. The latest thriller, *Essex Wives* (July 2025) sees the return of Sharon, Jolene and Evie and they're out for revenge. Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned.

Venue: Billericay Library, 143 High Street, Billericay, CM12 9AB
 Tickets: £10 / £8
 Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk or Mercury Theatre 01206 573948



© Philippa Gedge



THU 19 JUN, 7.00PM CRIME THRILLER

Asia Mackay *A Serial Killer's Guide to Marriage*

We are delighted that one of the UK's finest thriller and crime writers, Asia Mackay will be joining us to talk about *A Serial Killer's Guide to Marriage*. Sassy, stylish, dark, and fun and a BBC Radio 2 Book Club Pick – discover the addictive thriller readers can't stop talking about.

Venue: Belhus Library, South Ockendon Centre, 57 Derry Avenue, South Ockendon, RM15 5DX
 Tickets: £10 / £8
 Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk or Mercury Theatre 01206 573948



thurrock.gov.uk

FRI 20 JUN, 7.00PM BIOGRAPHY

Edward Wilson-Lee *The Grammar of Angels*

The Grammar of Angels tells how Renaissance prodigy and polymath Giovanni Pico della Mirandola dedicated his short, brilliant life to a quest to find the sublime; to reconcile all existing thought into a philosophy that would settle the most important questions about human existence. This philosophy would, he believed, provide tools by which man could transcend his mortal limitations and join the ranks of angels.

Venue: Chelmsford Cathedral, New Street, Chelmsford, CM1 1TY
 Tickets: £15 / £12
 Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk or Mercury Theatre 01206 573948



© Jeff Wilson



FRI 20 JUN, 7.00PM TRAVEL HUMOUR

Ben Aitken *Sh*tty Breaks*

Over the course of a year, the author of *A Chip Shop in Poznan* and *The Gran Tour*, visited twelve of the least popular spots in the UK and Ireland (including eating jellied eels in Chelmsford). The motivation wasn't to take the mickey, but to uncover the gems and have a nice time. He soon discovered that anywhere – like anyone – can be interesting and enjoyable if approached in the right fashion.

Venue: Basildon Library, The Basildon Centre, St. Martin's Square, Basildon, SS14 1EE
 Tickets: £10 / £8
 Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk or Mercury Theatre 01206 573948



Essex County Council Libraries

SAT 21 JUN, 11.00AM – 4.00PM YOUNG ESSEX PARTNER EVENT

Batty About Bats

Are you batty about bats? A rare chance to find out more about our bat-tastic friends who live at Rainham! From bat detectives, bat story writing, and bat masks, we will discover more about the species living in our local area and how we can help ensure their survival. All welcome.

Venue: National Trust Rainham Hall, The Broadway, Rainham RM13 9YN
 Tickets: Small charge applies for some activities
 Box Office: nationaltrust.org.uk/rainham-hall or contact 01708 525579 for details



SPIRITS, SALONS & SANCTUARY

Saturday 21 June

St Leonard-at-the-Hythe Church, Colchester

An afternoon exploring Spirits, Salons and Sanctuary in the church of St Leonards, through new books by poet and translator Philip Terry, poet and novelist Clare Pollard and cultural historian, mythographer and writer Marina Warner. These events are kindly supported by The Bean Trust.



 **Make a day of it! All three author talks for £30**

SAT 21 JUN, 1.00PM POETRY

Philip Terry in conversation with Marina Warner
 Dante's Purgatorio

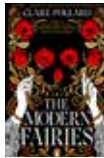
A sequel to *Dante's Inferno*, which set Dante at the University of Essex, *Dante's Purgatorio* relocates to Mersea Island, where a mountain is constructed out of Flexible Rock Substitute (FRS). "This new reworking of Dante's masterpiece is remarkable: for boldness, resourceful inventiveness, and...for its emotional and moral heft." Ralph Pite



SAT 21 JUN, 2.30PM HISTORICAL FICTION

Clare Pollard in conversation with Holly Pester
 The Modern Fairies

Award-winning poet and playwright Clare Pollard will discuss her brilliant and bawdy, romantic and provocative, dazzling novel, *The Modern Fairies* which is inspired by real events, about the delights and dangers of storytelling in dark times.



© Sophie Davidson



SAT 21 JUN, 4.30PM FOLKLORE, MYTHS & LEGENDS

Marina Warner in conversation with Ros Green
 Sanctuary

English historian, mythographer, and author of *Inventory of A Life Mislaid*, Marina Warner will discuss her latest book about sanctuary: what it means for people in desperate situations today, and what refuge and displacement has meant for people throughout history, and the canons of literature and myth.



© Dan Welldon



Venue: St Leonard-at-the-Hythe Church, Hythe Hill, Colchester, CO1 2NP

Tickets: £12/£10 per event. All 3 events for £30 (£26)

Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk or Mercury Theatre 01206 573948

A DAY ON THE WILD SIDE

Sunday 22 June

The Minories, Colchester



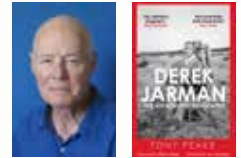
SUN 22 JUN, 2.00PM BIOGRAPHY

Tony Peake in conversation with James Cahill
 Derek Jarman: The Authorised Biography

We are thrilled to welcome Tony Peake in celebration of this new edition of *Derek Jarman: The Authorised Biography* covering Jarman's story from childhood to student life and his work as a designer, painter, and filmmaker. New contributions look at Jarman's impact and legacy over the past five decades and his position as one of the late twentieth century's most celebrated cultural figures.

Venue: The Minories, 74 High Street, Colchester, CO1 1UE

Tickets: £12 / £10

Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk or Mercury Theatre 01206 573948

© Katherine Lees



SUN 22 JUN, 4.00PM FICTION

Maggi Hambling and James Cahill The Violet Hour

Don't miss this opportunity to hear one of Britain's most significant and controversial artists, Maggi Hambling, in conversation with art historian, James Cahill about his new book. A story of deception, power play and longing, *The Violet Hour* exposes the unsettling underbelly of the art world, asking: who is granted admission to a world that only seems to glitter and who is left outside, their faces pressed to the glass? Join us for what is sure to be an honest, sharp and raucous discussion.

Venue: The Minories, 74 High Street, Colchester, CO1 1UE

Tickets: £12 / £10

Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk or Mercury Theatre 01206 573948

© Douglas Atfield



SUN 22 JUN, 6.00PM FOOD

Radhika Howarth and Marley Karazimba Flavours Without Borders

A celebration of the power of food to connect people and cultures. Embark on a culinary odyssey across the globe with *Radikal Kitchen: Flavours without Borders*. Radhika Howarth will take participants on an eye-opening journey of history, fusion, and flavour. Explore different cultures and traditions and experiment with exciting ingredients.

Venue: The Commons Community Kitchen & Café at The Minories, 74 High Street, Colchester, CO1 1UE

Tickets: £15 / £14 includes taster bowls

Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk

SUN 22 JUN, 12.00PM – 3.00PM **STORYTELLING** **YOUNG ESSEX** **FREE**

Family Activities and storytelling in The Minories Garden

Join us for some midsummer family magic in The Minories Garden. Take your seat for our Twinkle, Twinkle Storytelling Armchair featuring BBC Essex’s Rob Jelly and local children’s authors. Explore the fascinating stories of spices from around the world with writer, cook and storyteller Radhika Howarth. Get creative and messy in our very own Earth Kitchen. Learn how to weave your own star...



© Nick Ilott



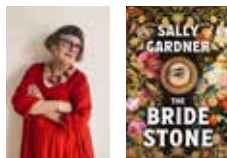
Venue: The Minories, 74 High Street, Colchester, CO1 1UE
 Tickets: Free, no booking required

TUE 24 JUN, 7.00PM **HISTORICAL FICTION**

Sally Gardner The Bride Stone

In partnership with Federation of Essex Women’s Institutes.

1796. An estate on the line. A marriage of convenience. A bride with a hidden past. *The Bride Stone* is a spell-binding new historical novel from multi-award-winning author Sally Gardner that opens with a ‘wife sale’ in Thetford and ends with a delicious twist.



© Peter Arkley



Venue: WI Centre, Whitelands, Terling Road, Hatfield Peverel, CM3 2AG
 Tickets: £10 / £8 WI members and concessions
 Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk

TUE 24 JUN, 7.00PM **SPOKEN WORD** **POETRY** **OPEN MIC** **PARTNER EVENT** **FREE**

Hot Box Waxes Lyrical

Words are weapons and the stage is set for poetic prowess. So, get ready to unleash your inner bard or simply savour the lyrical symphony at the best-spoken word and poetry night in the City.



Venue: Hot Box, 28, 29 Viaduct Road, Chelmsford, CM1 1TS
 Tickets: Free, booking required
 Box Office: hotboxlive.co.uk

THU 26 JUN, 11.00AM **FICTION**

Keiran Goddard I See Buildings Fall Like Lightning

A special book club event in collaboration with Appetite Book Club and Red Lion Books. Bold, ambitious and stylistically striking, *I See Buildings Fall Like Lightning* explores the redeeming and transforming beauty of friendship and examines the true limits of hope and forgiveness.



© Tom Goddard



Venue: Colchester Arts Centre, Church Street, Colchester, CO1 1NF
 Tickets: In person: £16 includes paperback copy of book
 Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk or redlionbooks.co.uk

FRI 27 JUN, 7.00PM **HISTORICAL FICTION**

Ambrose Parry The Death of Shame

Internationally bestselling and multi-award-winning author, Chris Brookmyre, and consultant anaesthetist, Dr Marisa Haetzman are husband and wife creative duo – Ambrose Parry. Joining us to discuss the fifth and final instalment in their thrilling *Raven and Fisher* series, *The Death of Shame* is inspired by the fascinating historical facts Haetzman uncovered through her master’s degree in the History of Medicine.



© Bob McDevitt



Venue: Chelmsford Library, County Hall, Market Road, Chelmsford, CM1 1QH
 Tickets: £10 / £8
 Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk or Mercury Theatre 01206 573948

Felixstowe Book Festival, 27 – 29 June 2025 A celebration of “Books by the Sea”

Join our friends across the water for a weekend packed with author events in the charming and beautiful seaside town of Felixstowe.



For details visit felixstowebookfestival.co.uk

SAT 28 JUN, 9.30AM – 12.30PM **FREE**

Thurrock Local Authors Fair

Discover the rich wealth of local writing as Thurrock Libraries celebrates authors and poets from across the borough. Discuss writing, hear author stories, learn creative writing tips, and browse their books to buy and take home.



thurrock.gov.uk

Venue: Grays Library, Thameside Complex, Orsett Road, Grays, RM17 5DX
 Tickets: Free, no booking required
 Box Office: 01375 413976 for further details

SAT 28 JUN, 4.00PM **AUTHOR TALK** **LOCAL HISTORY** **PARTNER EVENT**

Dr Janet Dyson Artists of Great Bardfield

Dr Janet Dyson will provide an introduction to the group of artists who gathered in the Essex village of Great Bardfield from the 1930s onwards.



Venue: Between the Lines Bookshop, The Old Post Office, High Street, Great Bardfield, Braintree, CM7 4SP
 Tickets: £5 includes one drink on arrival
 Box Office: Email booksbetweenthelines@gmail.com or call 01371 810087 or 07971 255502 (10am to 4pm every day)

THE HISTORY BOOKS

Sunday 29 June

Layer Marney Tower

Built as a statement house by Henry, 1st Lord Marney, Henry VIII's Lord Privy Seal, in the 1520s, **Layer Marney Tower** is one of the jewels in the Essex 'crown'. And, as such, the perfect venue for THE HISTORY BOOKS. Make a day of it. Explore the UK's tallest Tudor Gatehouse and stunning gardens for free with your Essex Book Festival ticket.



Make a day of it! Ticket Deal: All three events for £36

SUN 29 JUN, 12.00PM BIOGRAPHY

Paul French Her Lotus Year

China, The Roaring Twenties and the Making of Wallis Simpson.

New York Times bestselling author, Paul French who specialises in the history of 20th century China, joins us to examine a controversial and revealing period in the early life of the legendary Wallis Simpson. French will reveal the untold story of what really happened to Wallis during that year in China, dispelling many of the myths and gossip surrounding it.



© Sue Anne Tay



Venue: Layer Marney Tower, Near Colchester, CO5 9US
Tickets: £14 (includes entrance to Layer Marney Tower and gardens)
Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk or Mercury Theatre 01206 573948

SUN 29 JUN, 2.00PM HISTORICAL FICTION

S.J. Parris Traitor's Legacy

The start of an incredible new series from No.1 Sunday Times bestselling S.J. Parris.

Bestselling author of the Giordano Bruno books, S. J. Parris will be joining us to discuss her latest book, *Traitor's Legacy*. England, 1598. Queen Elizabeth's successor remains unnamed. The country teeters on a knife edge. A young heiress is found murdered at the theatre. A page-turning new historical series that pitches Tudor secret agent Sophia de Wolfe into a dangerous game with the royal court.

Venue: Layer Marney Tower, Near Colchester, CO5 9US
Tickets: £14 (includes entrance to Layer Marney Tower and gardens)
Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk or Mercury Theatre 01206 573948



SUN 29 JUN, 4.00PM BIOGRAPHY

Gareth Russell Queen James

Historian and broadcaster, Gareth Russell, will explore the life and loves of Britain's first King. James Stuart did not always love wisely, but he never failed to do so boldly. This groundbreaking book puts James – genius, liar, spendthrift, idealist, witch-hunter – and the men he loved at the centre of one of the most dramatic stories in British royal history.

'A warts and all story told with compassion' – Philippa Gregory

Venue: Layer Marney Tower, Near Colchester, CO5 9US
Tickets: £14 (includes entrance to Layer Marney Tower and gardens)
Box Office: essexbookfestival.org.uk or Mercury Theatre 01206 573948



© Jake Douglas



All this would not be possible without the support of these partners:

Key partners



Principal Media Partner



Sponsors, Supporters and Funders



Brochure Designed by creative.coop.



Contact Essex Book Festival

Essex Book Festival
Centre for Creative Writing
University of Essex,
Colchester, CO4 3SQ

hello@essexbookfestival.org.uk
www.essexbookfestival.org.uk
07913 061948

Essex Book Festival gratefully acknowledges the use of photographic resources supplied by authors, publishers and photographers. The programme is subject to change. Please check www.essexbookfestival.org.uk for the latest event listings.

Essex Book Festival Limited

Charity number 1143727
Company number 7538636
Quantic Accountancy
Ellisons Solicitors