

PRESS RELEASE

26 May 2021

Derby Book Festival opens tomorrow

The sixth Derby Book Festival opens tomorrow, Thursday 27 May, and runs for ten days until Saturday 5 June. For the first time in its history, the Festival will provide a hybrid Festival with in-person, live streamed, recorded and outdoor events taking place across the city for all ages and interests with something for everyone.

This year's Festival, funded by the University of Derby and Arts Council England, as well as sponsorship from local businesses, has an exciting programme over the May half-term holiday making use of vibrant spaces across the city including Derby Theatre, Derby College, Deda, Derby Cathedral, Derby Museum & Art Gallery and the newly opened Museum of Making as well as five of the city's parks.

The Festival is one of the first in the UK to hold in-person events since lockdown ended.

The programme features writers, poets, illustrators, historians, musicians, and more, to discuss everything from crime to cookery, romance to railways, and walking to Wallis Simpson.

Liz Fothergill, Chair of the Festival, said: "We look forward to welcoming our audiences back and are delighted that we have been able to go ahead with our ambitious plans and it is clear there is an appetite for returning to the city's wonderful arts venues.

"We are grateful to the University of Derby film course for their support with the filming of so many events which we are able to live stream this year, giving us the potential to reach a wider audience than in previous years. We realise not everyone is ready to return to indoor events and we want to ensure as many people as possible can enjoy the Festival in whatever way they prefer."

Some events, including BBC North America Editor, Jon Sopel, and historian Alison Weir, have already sold out for their in-person events, but live streamed tickets are still available. Other events include poets Hollie McNish and Brian Bilston, official biographer of Victoria Wood, Jasper Rees, leading

political commentator Iain Dale on *The Prime Ministers*, BBC Special Correspondent James Naughtie on his coverage of US presidential elections from Nixon to Biden and Costa Book of the Year winner, Monique Roffey (*The Mermaid of Black Conch*).

Professor Kathryn Mitchell DL, Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive of the University of Derby, said: “I am delighted that the University of Derby continues to support Derby Book Festival in 2021.

“The Festival plays a significant part in the cultural vibrancy of the city and we are pleased that our students and staff have the opportunity to take an active role in the event by the filming of events and interviewing authors.”

This year’s programme includes:

- the annual Festival Lunch with Anna Pasternak on Wallis Simpson (sponsored by Darwin Escapes) and two Afternoon Teas with Francesca Wade (Square Haunting) and Pen Vogler (Scoff: The History of Food and Drink) (sponsored by Smith Partnership), all of them at the Museum of Making
- for history lovers: Alison Weir on Katheryn Howard (sponsored by Freeths) and Patricia Fara on Erasmus Darwin
- for trains and planes enthusiasts, railway expert Christian Wolmar on *Cathedrals of Steam* and Duncan Campbell-Smith on Sir Frank Whittle
- if you like something a bit darker, there’s a Gothic Novel Panel with Stuart Turton, Catriona Ward & Sarah Ward and Kate Summerscale on *The Haunting of Alma Fielding* plus Peter Ross on *A Tomb with a View*
- Local historians can look forward to *Florence Nightingale at Home*, which was released to celebrate the bicentenary of her birth in 2020
- Debut authors include home-grown talent Jane Bettany and Helen Cooper
- Nature lovers can enjoy the outdoors on a Bird Watching walk with Mark Cocker.

As the Festival falls across the schools’ half term holiday, there will be a strong programme for children and families, sponsored by Smith Partnership, including five Family Days in the Park with activities each day in a different park - Darley, Markeaton, Sinfin Moor, Alvaston and the Arboretum. Families and children can also look forward to author and illustrator Jane Porter running three Collage Workshops at Deda featuring *The Boy Who Loved Everyone*, which is shortlisted for the Derby Children’s Picture Book Award and Lucy McRobert encouraging families to engage more with nature and talking about her book, *365 Days Wild*.

There will also be Virtual events featuring Val McDermid, Mary Lawson and Polly Samson.

In addition to the tickets for in-person and live streamed events, this year the Festival offers a Digital Pass for £25 giving unlimited access to the events that will be filmed and recorded, which includes all the events at Derby Theatre, Derby College and the Museum of Making.

Festival events will be organised following government guidance and the venues' strict health and safety measures, including socially distanced seating, one-way systems, hand sanitiser and mask wearing.

The Festival is organised with a range of arts and cultural partners across the city. All events can be booked via the website <https://www.derbybookfestival.co.uk>, which also features information about the special arrangements to ensure Covid safety at all venues and events.

- ENDS

For further information contact:

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Social media: [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Facebook](#)

NOTES TO EDITORS

If you require any images of this year's authors, please email: hello@derbybookfestival.co.uk and we will send by We Transfer.

The sixth Derby Book Festival will offer a hybrid programme for the first time. It is hoped this will mitigate any challenges presented by the pandemic while also enabling the team to reach as many Derbyshire residents as possible and further afield for a celebration of books and literature.

Over ten days, the festival programme will include a broad range of events aimed at children, families, and individuals. There will be online events with award-winning authors, performances from local talent, and family activities outdoors.

The Festival is organised in partnership with all the major arts, cultural and educational partners in the city: Déda, Derby Cathedral, Derby College, Derby Museums, Derby Theatre, Darley Abbey Village Hall, Derby LIVE.