

Words by the Water

A Festival of Words and Ideas



12 – 16 March, 2025

Theatre by the Lake, Keswick
wordsbythewaterkeswick.com





Official festival
bookseller for
over 20 years

Bookends are delighted to be returning as both co-organisers and booksellers of the Words by the Water festival. We'd like to wish all festival goers an interesting and inspiring time at the Theatre by the Lake.

We look forward to seeing you at our festival bookshop and we hope you find time to visit our well-established independent bookshop in Keswick town centre. We stock a fantastic range of new books for all the family with a huge selection of Cumbrian books, maps, DVDs, cards and prints.

All books featured at the Words by the Water festival will be available at our festival bookshop and online at www.wordsbythewaterkeswick.com



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**LITERATURE,
LANDSCAPE.
BEING
ENRICHED.**

**MA LITERATURE, ROMANTICISM,
AND THE ENGLISH LAKE DISTRICT**

If you require further information about the course, please contact the Programme Leader, Dr Penny Bradshaw, or visit our website.

penelope.bradshaw@cumbria.ac.uk



cumbria.ac.uk/maliteratureromanticism



Words of Welcome



Leah Varnell
Festival Director

It is very exciting to be welcoming everyone back to Words by the Water at Theatre by the Lake in Keswick this March.

Gwenda and Lucy Matthews of Bookends and I are looking forward to a fantastic five day festival and this year we have expanded the programme to include more workshops, a writing competition for young and emerging Cumbrian writers and also more intimate events in the Circle Gallery.

We are going to be joined by major writers such as Will Hutton, Natalie Haynes, George Monbiot, James Rebanks, L.J. Ross, Mike Berners Lee, Rev Richard Coles, Polly Toynbee and David Walker - amongst many others - offering comedy, political views, poetry, history and fiction. There really is something for everyone. As ever we are flying the flag for Cumbria with themed days in the studio with 'Doorstep Day' and 'Bookcase Choices'. We can't wait to launch the festival and look forward to seeing you there.



Lucy Matthews Bookends Director

For over 20 years, selling books at the Words by the Water festival has been an annual highlight for Bookends and a new era dawned in 2024 as we adopted the mantle of festival co-organisers alongside Leah Varnell. The festival was a wonderful experience and the Keswick community responded so warmly and enthusiastically that we knew we wanted to do it all again! We do hope you all enjoy the mix of fascinating topics, high profile names and local talent in the 2025 programme.



Words by the Water and Bookends are delighted that Melvyn Bragg and Marie-Elsa Bragg continue in the role of festival co-presidents.

Their support for the festival, and championing the arts and cultural events in Cumbria and the surrounding area, is fantastic. Marie-Elsa will be chairing various events during the festival.



The festival continues to grow and flourish under their co-presidency and also, very importantly, with the support of our audiences and the writers programmed to appear. It is a strong and diverse programme and Words by the Water and Bookends are proud to present theatre, workshops, talks, and a writing competition for young talent. And this year they will host two Words by the Water events during the Summer, with beloved authors Joanne Harris and David Nicholls (see page 20 for details).

Sinclair McKay

Saint Petersburg

1	11.30am	Main House	£13
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The story of Saint Petersburg, stretching from its inception as a city built through slavery, from Peter the Great to Vladimir Putin. Using first-hand accounts from all walks of life, Sinclair McKay centres the history on the 900 days of the Leningrad Siege from 1941 – 1944, when over 1.5 million people were besieged by the Nazis, in what has been described as an attempted genocide and an effort to wipe St Petersburg off the map. He reveals the central importance of St Petersburg over the centuries. This is the story of the city told from the perspective of the people who lived there.


 **Saint Petersburg** (Allen Lane)

Luke Pepera

500,000 Years of African Culture and Identity

2	1.30pm	Main House	£13
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Luke Pepera’s book *Motherland* is a groundbreaking exploration of African culture and identity. It is told via Luke’s journey through 500,000 years of history to connect with his extraordinary heritage. He tackles the questions many people of African descent ask – Who are we? Where do we come from? What defines us? And how might knowledge of deep history affect our understanding of our identity?

 **Motherland** (Orion Publishing)

Will Hutton

How to Remake Britain

3	3.30pm	Main House	£13
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2024 was a challenging year of upheaval, with a General Election and a new government. Journalist and academic Will Hutton sets out a clear analysis of where both the left and the right have gone wrong over the last century and how we can now rebuild a new, better Britain. He discusses the consequences of past failures and a future based on change.

 **This Time No Mistakes** (Bloomsbury)



Luke Pepera



Natalie Haynes

Angus Winchester

A Journey up a Lakeland Valley

4	5.30pm	Main House	£13
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This presentation, introduced by Marion Bowman, explores how places accrue layers of meaning. Following the Crummock and Buttermere valley to its source, Angus Winchester’s readings, based on his book *The Language of the Landscape, A Journey into Lake District History*, guitarist David Ashworth’s evocative live music and Rupert Ashmore’s breathtaking photography create an immersive experience, reflecting how past and present generations have responded to the landscape.

 **The Language of the Landscape** (Handstand Press)

Natalie Haynes

Why Do Goddesses Matter?

5	7.30pm	Main House	£16
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Comedian and Radio 4 regular who ‘Stands Up for Classics’, Natalie Haynes, introduces us to Zeus’s long-suffering wife, whose jealousy of his infidelities lead her to wreak vicious revenge on those who have wronged her; Artemis, goddess of hunting and protector of young girls (apart from those she decides she wants as a sacrifice) and Aphrodite, goddess of sex and desire (no deity is more determined and able to make you miserable if you annoy her). Be prepared to learn and laugh at the same time.

Running time - 2 hours and 15 mins, including a 15-minute interval. Book signing follows event.


 **Divine Might** (Macmillan)

Andrew Ziminski

Church Going: A Stonemason's Guide to Churches

6	10.30am	Studio	£13
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Churches are many things to us - places of worship, community hubs and oases of calm reflection. To know a church is to hold a key to the past that unlocks an understanding of our shared history. Andrew Ziminski is a stonemason and church conservator with four decades of experience working on some of the greatest cathedrals and churches in Britain. He shares his love of churches, revealing their fascinating histories, features and furnishings.

 **Church Going** (Profile Books)



Andrew Ziminski




Dorothy Armstrong

Dorothy Armstrong

Beneath Our Feet

9	4.30pm	Studio	£13
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Dorothy Armstrong of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, tells the histories of some of the world's most fascinating carpets, exploring how they came into being, then were transformed as they moved through peoples, geography and time. Why were powerful people drawn to them? And what about the lives of the poor weavers who made them? From the carpets in the ancient tombs of Scythian chieftains, to those under the boots of Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill at the Yalta Peace Conference. Discover a hidden past beneath your feet.

 **Threads of Empire** (Weidenfeld and Nicholson)

Rebecca Wilson

Georgian Feminists

7	12.30pm	Studio	£13
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Rebecca Wilson introduces ten remarkable women who defied society norms during the Georgian period. There are political activists, social reformers, a literary luminary, a pioneer in palaeontology, and a mathematical prodigy. These trailblazers pursued careers, passions, and lifestyles deemed scandalous at the time, thereby challenging the status quo and carving out their own paths of empowerment.


 **Georgian Feminists** (Pen & Sword)

Sue Prideaux

Wild Thing: The Life of Paul Gauguin

8	2.30 pm	Studio	£13
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Award-winning biographer Sue Prideaux re-examines the complicated life of Paul Gauguin – known as the giant of post-Impressionist painting whose bold colours and compositions rocked the western art world. She illuminates the people, places and ideas that shaped his vision and conjures Gauguin's exuberance, creative epiphanies, fierce words and flaws with acuity and sensitivity. *Wild Thing* was shortlisted for the Baillie Gifford Prize for Non-Fiction 2024

 **Wild Thing** (Faber & Faber)

Christopher Harding

The Light of Asia

10	6.30pm	Studio	£13
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From the time of the ancient Greeks, the West's relationship with Asia consisted of outrageous tales of beasts and monsters and fabulous riches – gold, spices, and jewels shipped over vast distances. By the 20th century much of Asia might have come under Western rule but its intellectual, artistic and spiritual influence was fighting back. Cultural historian of Japan, India and East-West Connections, Christopher Harding explores ways in which Asia has influenced Europe and North America.


 **The Light of Asia** (Penguin)



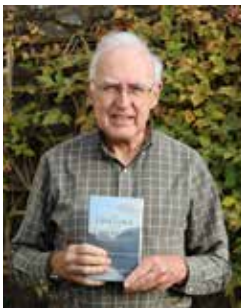
Photo credit Liam Bergen

Sinclair Mckay
Wednesday 12th March



Photo credit Eva Turrell

Will Hutton
Wednesday 12th March



Angus Winchester
Wednesday 12th March



Rebecca Wilson
Wednesday 12th March



Photo credit Douglas Fry

Sue Prideaux
Wednesday 12th March



Photo credit Felicity Millward

Christopher Harding
Wednesday 12th March



Mike Thornton
Thursday 13th March



Peter Conrad
Thursday 13th March

A special pre-festival event at The Keswick Museum

Saturday 8th March, 3pm

The Keswick Museum



Ian Tyler

Ian Tyler

The Drowning of Haweswater

£8

Few visitors realise that many Lakes have been enlarged and dammed and are in fact reservoirs in disguise. Thirlmere and Windermere are arguably the most well-known but Haweswater, which supplies Manchester, is often overlooked and even missed off maps. Mining historian Ian Tyler discusses the drowning under 100 feet of water of one of the Lake District's most remote and hidden valleys, including the entire village of Mardale, and asks at what cost this sacrifice was made?



The Drowning of Haweswater
(Bluerock Publications)

Booking Info

Tickets are £8 and can be purchased from Bookends (017687 75277) or The Keswick Museum (017687 73263).



Mike Thornton

Mr Cornish and Mr Lowry:
A Tale of Two Artists

11	11.30 am	Main House	£13
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An illustrated presentation from Mike Thornton, Norman Cornish's son-in-law, on the works of Norman Cornish and L.S. Lowry, as featured in the recent exhibition at The Bowes Museum (July '24 – January'25). The talk will place a selection of their work in the context of their lives and times, revealing interesting and unusual aspects and going beyond the popular understanding and misconceptions associated with their work.

 **The Test of Time**

Peter Conrad

Dickens the Enchanter

12	1.30 pm	Main House	£13
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Step inside the explosive imagination of Charles Dickens. Peter Conrad's investigation of Dickens' superhuman imagination ranges from his storytelling and characters to places and emotions conjured up across his work. He also looks at Dickens' relationship with writers such as the great Lakes poet William Wordsworth by whom Dickens was much inspired.

 **Dickens the Enchanter** (Bloomsbury)

Julian Baggini & Pen Vogler

Feast and Famine

13	3.30 pm	Main House	£13
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Philosopher Julian Baggini delves into the best and worst food practices in societies, past and present, exploring new farming methods, cultured meat, GM and astronaut food and the ethics and health consequences of ultra processing. Joining Julian is Pen Vogler who investigates the history of food and drink at the centre of social upheavals: medieval inns boosted by the plague; the Enclosures that finished off the celebratory roast goose; the Victorian chemist searching for unadulterated mustard and the post-war supermarkets luring customers with strawberries.

 **How the World Eats** (Granta)
Stuffed (Atlantic Books)



George Monbiot



Highly Suspect

George Monbiot

Understanding Neoliberalism

14	5.30 pm	Main House	£13
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We live under an ideology that preys on every aspect of our lives: our education and our jobs; our healthcare and our leisure; our relationships and our mental wellbeing; even the planet we inhabit. So pervasive has it become that, for most people, it has no name. George Monbiot traces neoliberalism back to its roots and discovers that it is not inevitable. It was conceived, propagated, and then concealed by the powerful few. It is time to bring it into the light - and find an alternative worth fighting for.

 **The Invisible Doctrine** (Penguin)

Highly Suspect

The Death of the Great Detective: A Murder Mystery

15	7.30 pm	Main House	£16
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Join Highly Suspect this evening for a hilarious interactive Sherlock Holmes themed murder mystery. Chief Inspector Scott Lanyard has been found shot, stabbed and strangled inside a locked room. Holmes has enlisted help from beyond the grave to crack the case, and working alongside Sherlock's allies you must deduce whodunnit! There's a fiendish plot, evidence to examine, and cryptic clues to crack.

But can you catch the killer?


This performance will finish at about 9.15 pm and will include an interval of 15 minutes.

Alan Cleaver

Postal Paths

16	10.30am	Studio	£13
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Alan Cleaver reveals the postal paths walked by rural postmen and women in Cumbria in the 19th and 20th centuries as they delivered mail to remote farms and homes. He shares the tough lives they endured as they walked the routes six days a week in all weathers.

 **Postal Paths** (Monoray)



Alan Cleaver



Photo credit Rachel Winter


Sharon Blackie

Jovan Nicholson

Winifred Nicholson and Cumbrian Rag Rugs

17	12.30pm	Studio	£13
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Cumbrian artist Winifred Nicholson first encountered rag rugs in the Cumberland of the 1920s, when, with her husband Ben Nicholson, she visited her neighbour Margaret Warwick, who was sat in her kitchen making a rug from scraps of old clothing. Winifred's nephew, Jovan Nicholson, tells the story of how she helped revive the tradition of rag rug making in the 1960s and 1970s. Through her efforts over 180 rugs were crafted by talented local makers. Together they form an eclectic group of vibrant images with some of the finest designed by Winifred Nicholson herself.

 **Winifred Nicholson: Cumberland Rag Rugs** (Paul Holberton Publishing Ltd)

Kathleen Jones

Reading my Mother

18	2.30pm	Studio	£13
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After her mother died, Kathleen Jones found notebooks listing every book she'd read over sixty years. Ella was conventional and religious; Kathleen a feminist rebel – reading was almost the only thing they shared. Through books, Kathleen became a writer, discovering a new world of travel and adventure and books enabled her mother to escape the harsh realities of fell farming. Ella's diaries helped her daughter to see her in a different light.

 **Reading my Mother** (The Book Mill)

Sharon Blackie

Wise Women

19	4.30pm	Studio	£13
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From early childhood, we learn about the world through myths and legends where heroines tend to be golden-haired princesses, and evil-doers are often older women. Women today are searching for positive versions of themselves. Sharon Blackie guides us through a beautiful collection of retold ancient stories from European folklore, celebrating the wisdom and power of women in midlife and beyond.

 **Wise Women** (Little Brown)

Tim Barker

Shakespeare in Cumbrian Dialect

20	6.30pm	Studio	£13
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Join Carlisle-born actor Tim Barker for a performance of some of the dialect verses he first presented in a one-man comedy show and later recorded as *Shakespeare for Shepherds* –Shakespeare's plots summed up in "Albert and the Lion" style monologues. He will also take a closer look at the Cumbrian dialect in general.

 **Shakespeare for Shepherds**

Max Adams

The Mercian Chronicles

21	11.30am	Main House	£13
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Writer, archaeologist, woodsman and author of *King of the North*, Max Adams turns his attention to a long-neglected backwater in British history – the eighth century. He recreates the golden age of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Mercia, which spread across a broad swathe of central England, through its landscapes, peoples, conflicts, power struggles and political geography. An enlightening talk on a fascinating century of change.

 **The Mercian Chronicles** (Apollo)

Lucy Mangan

How Reading Shapes Our Lives

22	1.30pm	Main House	£13
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As a child, Guardian TV critic Lucy Mangan was reading all the time, using books to navigate the challenges and complexities of this world and many others. As an adult, she uses her new relationship with literature to seize upon the most important question: (how) do books prepare us for life?

 **Bookish** (Square Peg)

Sarah Perry

In Conversation with Sarah Hall

23	3.30pm	Main House	£13
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Sarah Perry, international bestselling author of *The Essex Serpent* will discuss her latest novel, the 2024 Booker longlisted *Enlightenment*, a story of love and astronomy told over the course of twenty years, through the lives of two kindred spirits separated in age by three decades who are torn between their commitment to religion and their desire for greater understanding of the world. Sarah Perry will be in conversation with Cumbrian novelist Sarah Hall.

 **Enlightenment** (Vintage)



Lucy Mangan



Sarah Perry

Photo credit: Stylist Magazine

Photo credit: Sophie Davidson

Ann Cleeves

Vera, Jimmy and Matthew

24	5.30pm	Main House	£13
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We look forward to welcoming Ann Cleeves to Keswick once again, to celebrate the paperback publication of the 11th Vera novel, *The Dark Wives*. Join Ann, the author of 37 novels and creator of those much-loved detectives Vera Stanhope, Jimmy Perez and Matthew Venn as she talks about her writing life and times. Have your questions at the ready!


 **The Dark Wives** (Pan Macmillan)

Polly Toynbee & David Walker

Where Do We Go From Here?

25	7.30pm	Main House	£13
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What is the state of Britain after these years of political mayhem and austerity? Political commentators and journalists Polly Toynbee and David Walker explore the heavy burden taken on by ministers in the new government as they set out to repair the damage, rebuild trust and once again make social progress. Combining the latest data with expert interviews from the health, policing, children's services, housing, transport, criminal justice and education sectors, they have compiled an essential guide to the state of the nation.

 **The Only Way Is Up** (Atlantic Books)

Elsa Richardson

Rumbles: A Curious History of the Gut

26	10.30am	Studio	£13
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Ever had a *gut feeling*? Found something *hard to stomach*? Gone *belly up* under pressure or *showed some guts*? Join Elsa Richardson as she leads us on a lively tour through the vivid cultural history of this rowdy organ, travelling from Ancient Greece to Victorian England, 18th century France to modern America.

 **Rumbles** (Wellcome Collection)

Hilary Bradt

Adventures in Travel and Publishing

27	12.30pm	Studio	£13
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Join travel industry trail-blazer and co-founder of Bradt Guides, Hilary Bradt, as she looks back on 50 years of escapades, surprises, mishaps, disasters. (and success; from her first solo trip aged three (on a British beach) to discovering an ancient trail to Machu Picchu, which unexpectedly led to her launching and running a successful publishing house.

 **Taking the Risk** (Bradt Travel Guides)

Helen Mort

Ethel Haythornthwaite: A Countryside Revolutionary

28	2.30pm	Studio	£13
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Ethel Haythornthwaite was a pioneer, activist, environmentalist and poet whose tireless campaigning led to the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 and the creation of the Peak District National Park. Helen Mort, whose published work includes poetry, fiction and non-fiction, with a particular interest in women and mountaineering, gives a clear-eyed account of this overlooked countryside revolutionary.

 **Ethel** (Vertebrate Publishing)



Elsa Richardson

Helen Mort

Chloe Dalton

Raising Hare

29	4.30pm	Studio	£13
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During Lockdown foreign policy specialist Chloe Dalton swaps the city for the countryside of her childhood. Out walking one day she finds a newborn leveret and is compelled to give it a chance at survival. She discusses the challenges of caring for the creature, the preparations for its return to the wild and how this unexpected bond causes her to reevaluate how she lives her life.

 **Raising Hare** (Canongate)

Philip Marsden

A Journey through Rocks

30	6.30pm	Studio	£13
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Ochre, tin, peat, silver, radium, mercury, copper, gold and lithium... the ground beneath our feet is full of riches. Philip Marsden discusses his revelatory journey from the tin mines of Cornwall to the gold mountains of Georgia in search of the substances that have shaped our imagination and imperilled our very existence.

 **Under a Metal Sky** (Granta)

Cumbrian Young Writers Prize Giving with Tom Palmer

31	11.30 am	Main House	£6
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When he was young the children's writer, Tom Palmer, struggled at school so his mum encouraged him to read books and magazines about football. Gradually he came to love books and writing. Tom shares his journey and presents prizes for the first Cumbrian Young Writers' competition. Tom will talk about his journey as an author of 60 books including three historical novels set in Cumbria. He is also judging our Cumbrian Young Writers' competition.

We invite young people to submit a short story. For details see [page 23](#).

Booking for this event is essential. Winners and children are free, accompanying adults £6.


 **Angel of Grasmere** (Barrington Stoke)

L J Ross

A Sense of Place

32	1.30 pm	Main House	£13
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Multi-million bestselling author L J Ross, who was born in Ponteland, uses iconic Northumberland locations as settings for her work, creating atmospheric mystery and thriller novels, including the DCI Ryan series of Northumbrian murder mysteries which have now sold well over 10 million copies worldwide. Louise's most recent book, the 22nd DCI Ryan novel, is set in the Alnwick Poison Garden. Louise will be in conversation with BBC presenter Helen Millican.

 **Poison Garden** (Dark Skies Publishing)

Simon Armitage

An Afternoon with the Poet Laureate

33	3.30 pm	Main House	£15
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Join the Poet Laureate, Simon Armitage for an unmissable afternoon of readings to celebrate his Sunday Times bestseller *Blossomise*, which brings new perspectives and energy to a timeless poetic subject in a glorious collaboration with the acclaimed illustrator, Angela Harding. This special occasion will also feature Simon Armitage reading new unpublished work and an audience Q&A session.

 **Blossomise** (Faber)



Simon Armitage



James Rebanks

Photo credit: Sophie Davidson

Alan Johnson

Harold Wilson

34	5.30 pm	Main House	£13
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Born in Yorkshire in 1916, Harold Wilson was a Labour politician who first became an MP for Ormskirk in 1945. He was Prime Minister from 1964-1970 and 1974-1976 - times of huge political and social change in the UK. He enacted social reforms in education, health, housing, price controls, child poverty and more, changing the landscape of life in Britain. Join former politician and bestselling author Alan Johnson to take an in-depth, new look at the life and premierships of Harold Wilson.

 **Harold Wilson** (Swift Press)

James Rebanks

The Place of Tides

35	7.30 pm	Main House	£13
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James Rebanks tells an inspiring story of friendship with an elderly woman, Anna, who worked tirelessly to preserve the centuries-old way of life of the 'Duck Women,' who gathered the precious down of the Eider duck. He stayed on a remote Norwegian island in the UNESCO listed Vega archipelago, and helped with Anna's final season of collecting the down. James finds that as the seasons change, what starts as a voyage of escape, ends as a realisation that life is always shaped by the land we live on and the people we live with. This is a story of what it means to have roots, and what happens when you truly find them.

 **The Place of Tides** (Penguin Books)

Hetta Howes

Poet, Mystic, Widow, Wife

36	10.30am	Studio	£13
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Enter the extraordinary lives and minds of four medieval women - Christine de Pizan, widow and court writer; mystic, Julian of Norwich; poet, Marie de France and no-good wife Margery Kemp. Medieval historian Hetta Howes describes how these women pushed back against misogamy, broke ground in women’s writing and provided insights into medieval life and politics.

 **Poet, Mystic, Widow, Wife** (Bloomsbury)

Stuart Gillespie

Is Our Food System Broken?

37	12.30pm	Studio	£13
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How and why is our food system in crisis? Stuart Gillespie, who spent 40 years working in food policy and international nutrition, reveals how and why our food system leads to widespread hunger, ill-health, obesity and environmental harm. Drawing upon inspirational projects from across the world, the “food war veteran” proposes ways in which this broken system can be fixed.

 **Food Fight** (HarperCollins)

Lucia Osborne Crowley

Witnessing the Trial of Ghislaine Maxwell

38	2.30pm	Studio	£13
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In 2021 Ghislaine Maxwell was convicted of five counts of sex-trafficking of minors and sentenced to 20 years in prison for the role she played in Jeffrey Epstein’s abuse of four girls. Lucia Osborne Crowley, who was one of only four reporters allowed into the courtroom every day, gives her exclusive insight into the trial.

 **The Lasting Harm** (Fourth Estate)



Hetta Howes



Jack Ashby

Photo credit: Jo Hanley


Photo credit: Jason Bye

Andrew Seaton

The Surprising Survival of the NHS

39	4.30pm	Studio	£13
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Andrew Seaton pays tribute to a key pillar of the UK’s national identity, the NHS. He traces the resilience of a service—perpetually “in crisis” and yet perennially enduring—as well as the political values it embodies and the work of those who have tirelessly kept it afloat. Shortlisted for the Wolfson History Prize 2024, *Our NHS*, is described as “a superb case study of how an exploration of the past can inform contemporary debate.”

 **Our NHS** (Yale University Press)

Jack Ashby

Behind the Scenes at the Museum

40	6.30pm	Studio	£13
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Less than 1% of all collections are on display in the world’s natural history museums, but what is chosen for display and why? Zoologist Jack Ashby takes us behind the scenes of natural history collections and argues that the version of nature they present does not always reflect reality and asks what these collections tell us about our world and how crucial might they be to saving life on earth?

 **Nature’s Memory** (Allen Lane)



Julian Baggini
Thursday 13th March



Pen Vogler
Thursday 13th March



Jovan Nicholson
Thursday 13th March



Tim Barker
Thursday 13th March



Photo credit Kona Macphree

Max Adams
Friday 14th March



Photo credit Marie Fitzgerald

Ann Cleeves
Friday 14th March



Polly Toynbee & David Walker
Friday 14th March



Photo credit Lee Miller

Hilary Bradt
Friday 14th March



Photo credit Fisher Studios

Chloe Dalton
Friday 14th March



Photo credit Stephen Parker

Philip Marsden
Friday 14th March



Tom Palmer
Saturday 15th March



L J Ross
Saturday 15th March



Alan Johnson
Saturday 15th March



Stuart Gillespie
Saturday 15th March



Lucia Osborne Crowley
Saturday 15th March



Andrew Seaton
Saturday 15th March



Mike Berners-Lee



Anne Sebba



Diarmaid MacCulloch



Reverend Richard Coles

Mike Berners-Lee

Climate of Truth

41	10.30am	Main House	£13
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We have the technology we need for a clean and healthy future, so why are we still accelerating into a polycrisis of environmental and social strife? The acclaimed author of *There Is No Planet B* looks at the challenge from new angles. He gets right under the skin of our failures so far to try and uncover what it will take to do better at last.

 **Climate of Truth** (Cambridge University Press)

Anne Sebba

The Women's Orchestra of Auschwitz

42	12.30pm	Main House	£13
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In 1943, German SS officers in charge of Auschwitz-Birkenau ordered that an orchestra should be formed among the female prisoners. Using archival research and exclusive first-hand accounts, award-winning historian Anne Sebba examines how women and girls were drafted into a band which had to give weekly concerts to Nazi officers and play marching music to other inmates, as they returned to the camp, exhausted and often broken, at the end of the day.

 **The Women's Orchestra of Auschwitz** (Weidenfeld & Nicholson)

Diarmaid MacCulloch

Making Sense of Christianity and Sex

43	2.30pm	Main House	£13
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Emeritus Professor, Diarmaid MacCulloch, seeks to calm fears and encourage understanding through exploring the 3000-year-long tale of Christians encountering sex, gender and the family by paying attention to the complexity and contradictions in the history of Christianity and the Christian theology of sex. He unpacks the history of ordinary and extraordinary Christians trying to make sense of themselves and of humanity's deepest desires, fears and hopes.

 **Lower Than the Angels** (Allen Lane)

Reverend Richard Coles

Festival Finale

44	4.30pm	Main House	£13
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Join writer, broadcaster and Anglican priest, the Reverend Richard Coles in conversation to discuss his most recent Canon Clement storyline in *Murder at the Monastery*, amongst other topics. Richard was a member of the band The Communards until he became a priest. Since leaving the priesthood in 2022, he has continued writing and broadcasting, and taken part in *I'm a Celebrity, Get Me Out of Here!* in December 2024, when he reached the final three of the competition.

 **Murder at the Monastery** (Orion Publishing)



Stephen Matthews



Robert Farrah



David Felton



Chris Wadsworth

Stephen Matthews

A View of Delft: Sonnets after Vermeer

45	10am	Studio	£13
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Johannes Vermeer was one of the greatest painters of the Dutch Golden Age, yet his life and his work remains a mystery. Very few of his pictures survive. In a series of sonnets, Stephen Matthews takes us on a thoughtful journey through thirty of his beautiful, atmospheric, enigmatic canvasses.

 **A View of Delft** (Bookcase)

Robert Farrah

A Lighthouse Keeper's Memoir

46	12pm	Studio	£13
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Robert moved to Cumbria in 1984 from Souter Point Lighthouse on the north-east coast, having joined the service in 1970 at the age of 19. He retired from lighthouse keeping in 1997, after 27 years of service, just a year before the completion of automation. He saw the service progress from a 'traditional' one with keepers to the de-manning of the lighthouses. His journals recording the keepers' lives and the process of automation, have now been published in his book *From the Lighthouse*.

 **From the Lighthouse** (Hayloft Publishing)

David Felton

Cumbria: 1,000 Years of Maps

47	2pm	Studio	£13
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The name *Camri* first appears on maps in AD 1050. Since then the Lake District and historic counties of Cumberland, Westmorland and Lancashire have been mapped countless times. In this illustrated talk, David Felton, publisher of *Cumbria - 1,000 Years of Maps* by William Shannon, discusses the most important charts, surveys and maps from ten centuries of Cumbrian cartography.

 **Cumbria - 1000 years of Maps**
(Inspired by Lakeland)

Chris Wadsworth

Rediscovering Percy Kelly

48	4pm	Studio	£13
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Writer Chris Wadsworth recently received an email about the discovery of a film and letter, dated 1964, to a Paris gallery owner from artist Percy Kelly who died more than 30 years ago. The email was genuine and was the start of an incredible story. Chris discusses this discovery and shows the remarkable piece of film giving an insight into Kelly's life and way of thinking.

 **The Man Who Couldn't Stop Drawing** (Studio)

Festival Extras - Workshops, performances and more

Our festival extras offer a selection of events that give you an opportunity to explore your own creativity. You will find workshops on writing and bookbinding; story telling and poetry readings; philosophical discussion and intimate talks; and a celebration of Cumbria's creative community.

Events are one hour long unless otherwise stated. All workshops include a 15 minute break.



Wednesday 12th March

Katie Hale (workshop)

Mining for Stories

FE1	10.30am-1pm	Lamont Robinson Room	£20
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It's a great feeling when inspiration strikes – but where do we look for stories when it doesn't? Whether it's our own lives, local uncelebrated stories, or taking inspiration from other art forms, we'll be looking at where can we dig to excavate those glittering possibilities – and how we might tell those stories once we've found them. This workshop will introduce starting points for new stories and ways to develop existing work.

Katie Hale won a Northern Debut Award for her poetry collection, *White Ghosts*, and is the author of two novels: *The Edge of Solitude* and *My Name is Monster*. She is a MacDowell Fellow, and winner of the Gulliver Travel Grant, Palette Poetry Prize, and Northern Writers' Award - with a love of all things Polar!

Polly Atkin (workshop)

Conversations Through Birds

FE2	2.30pm-5pm	Lamont Robinson Room	£20
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In this workshop we will explore writing with, to and about birds, drawing on poetry and prose which addresses birds in different ways, from capturing their song in words to trying to make sense of our own lives through them.

Polly Atkin is a poet and nonfiction writer based in Cumbria. Her poetry collections include *Basic Nest Architecture* and *Much With Body* (both with Seren) Her non-fiction includes *Recovering Dorothy*; *Some Of Us Just Fall: On Nature and Not Getting Better* (winner Lakeland Book of the Year 2024), and *The Company of Owls*. Her work on nature and disability is also included in various anthologies. She works as a freelancer from her home in Grasmere, in the Lake District, where she is co-owner of Sam Read Booksellers.



Katy Hale



Polly Atkin

Festival Extras - Workshops, performances and more



Darren Harper
Thursday 13th March



Alwyn Marriage
Thursday 13th March



Bookbinding
Thursday 13th March



Kathleen Jones
Friday 14th March

Thursday 13th March

Poetry Breakfast

Free event - booking essential

FE3 10-11.30am	Circle Gallery	FREE
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Buy a coffee and a croissant, or tea and toast (or whatever may be on the menu) and join us for a free event in the Circle Gallery. Mingle with other poets and share your love of poetry. This is a relaxed and informal opportunity for you to read one of your own poems or to read a favourite poem by any other poet. There may be time to read more than one poem, so be prepared. Poetry Breakfast is always popular, so book your tickets early.

Darren Harper (Workshop)

A Philosophy of Simplicity

FE4 10.30am - 1pm	Lamont Robinson Room	£20
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Join us for thought-provoking discussions and engaging activities as we explore the power of simplicity in deepening our connections with ourselves, our communities, and nature. Discover how intentional living can lead to a more meaningful existence by prioritizing what truly matters. We delve into the wisdom of thinkers like Jerome Segal, Henry David Thoreau, Gandhi, and the Stoics, uncovering simplicity as a foundation for a richer life.

As a mature student, Darren Harper gained a 1st class honours degree in English & Creative Writing at the University of Cumbria. He now travels around the UK teaching Philosophy, Philosophy & Literature, Global Philosophy and Stoicism. He teaches several residential courses each year at Higham Hall.

Alan Cleaver & Lesley Park (Workshop)

Bookbinding

FE5 2.30pm - 5pm	Lamont Robinson Room	£25
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Discover the basics of bookbinding with this workshop in which you will stitch and glue your own blank notebook (7in x 5in) to take away with you. Tutors Alan Cleaver and Lesley Park will guide you through the different elements that go into making a book. The final notebook will have blank pages but you will also discover how to set up your home printer to print and publish your own books with text. All materials will be provided. Participants will also receive additional materials so they can practise their newly-acquired skills at home.

Alwyn Marriage

Difficult Topics through the Lens of Fiction

FE6 3pm	Circle Gallery	£8
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Alwyn Marriage will talk about the topical issues that are dealt with in her two novels, Rapeseed and The Elder Race. Most of her fiction and poetry books start with the question, What if?, which leads her to consider the victims of crime, the consequences of medical advances, the dangers and possible responses to over-population. In her two novels, these issues are treated lightly, with her usual delight in language, human emotion and flashes of humour.

Friday 14th March

Kathleen Jones (workshop)

The Landscape of Your Life

FE7	10.30am - 1pm	Lamont Robinson Room	£20
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Have you ever thought of your life as a journey through a particular country? There are familiar landmarks, strange places, hills and valleys to be negotiated. We live our lives in close relationship to the earth we live on; it's where we belong, the context of all our experiences. Explore the unique landscape of your own life and putting it on the page.

Kathleen Jones was born and brought up in Cumbria and now lives in Penrith. She has published 18 books – biography, fiction and poetry – and won several awards. Kathleen taught Creative Writing and Women's Studies for a number of universities and is a regular performer and workshop leader at literature festivals around Britain. Her most recent book is *Reading My Mother*, a family memoir.

Helen Farish

The Penny Dropping

FE8	3pm	Circle Gallery	£8
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Helen Farish reads from and discusses her new poetry collection, *The Penny Dropping*. Described as having 'the coherence of a novel', the poems in Farish's fourth collection tell a single compelling story which 'unfailingly detains the reader's attention.' Travelling across cultures and cities vividly evoked, the poems trace a love story via those moments of revelation when 'the penny drops.'

Helen Farish's award-winning first collection, *Intimates* (Cape), won the Forward Prize for a debut collection. She has now published three more collections, and *The Penny Dropping* has been shortlisted for the 2024 T.S.Eliot Prize. Her poems can also be found in numerous anthologies, including *The Poetry Pharmacy* and *The Poetry Pharmacy Forever*.

The Penny Dropping is also a Poetry Society Book of the Year 2024.

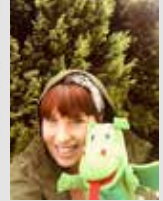
Saturday 15th March



Kerry Darbshire



Kelly Davis



Becky Cole



Elizabeth Stott



Ilse Pedler



Helen Farish

Photo credit: Rhylife, Christopher

Becky Cole

Becky's Storytime

FE9	10am	Circle Gallery	FREE
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Storyteller Becky Cole and her friend Digby share a selection of their stories for under 6s to enjoy. A magical, mischievous and free event for your little ones!

Four Cumbrian Poets

Kelly Davis, Kerry Darbshire, Ilse Pedler & Elizabeth Stott

FE10	5pm	Circle Gallery	£8
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Moving, witty, thought-provoking poems from four very different women...

Kerry Darbshire has been widely praised for her evocative nature poetry. In 2023, she was Poet in Residence at Rydal Mount, home of William Wordsworth.

Elizabeth Stott studied physics. Her fiction and poetry has been published and anthologised. In 2023, her collection *The Undoing* was released by Maytree Press.

Ilse Pedler who works as a veterinary surgeon won the 2015 Mslexia Poetry Pamphlet competition and her collection *Auscultation* was published by Seren in 2021.

Kelly Davis is a freelance editor who won the Magma Subscribers' Competition in 2018. Her debut solo collection is *The Lost Art of Ironing* published by Hedgehog Poetry Press in 2024

Sunday 16th March

Kelly Davis (workshop)

Poetry is a House of Many Rooms

FE11	10.30am - 1pm	Lamont Robinson Room	£20
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Houses are linked to family history and they evoke strong memories and emotions and offer rich material for poetry. This workshop, suitable for beginners and experienced poets alike, will inspire you to look back at different dwelling places, consider them as backdrops for human interaction, and build new poems from the ground up.

Kelly Davis lives in West Cumbria, works as an editor, and leads the North Cumbria Stanza group. Her poems have been widely published in magazines and anthologies. She collaborated with Kerry Darbishire on their joint pamphlet *Glory Days* and her solo collection *The Lost Art of Ironing* was published in 2024.



The Lost Art of Ironing (Hedgehog Press)



Kelly Davis



Allan Todd

Photo credit: Claire Park

Allan Todd

For the Earth to Live

FE12	11am	Circle Gallery	£8
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Keswick resident Allan Todd, always concerned by the worsening climate and ecological crises, the erosion of democracy and the political drift to the right, looks for realistic hope that we can still create a better and fairer world. Those thoughts are now presented in book form – so plenty of scope for a good discussion!



For The Earth To Live




Words by the Water Presents...

There's no need to wait a whole year for your next hit of Words by the Water! We will host two special summer events with Joanne Harris and David Nicholls. Book online with Theatre by the Lake.

Tuesday 3rd June, 7.30 pm

TBTL, Main House



 **Vianne** (Orion Publishing)

This event will be 90 minutes, including a 15 minute interval.

Joanne Harris

An Evening with Joanne Harris and Vianne

£20

Twenty five years after it was first published, author Joanne Harris returns to the world of *Chocolat*, her million-copy bestselling novel from 1999. Vianne is her long-awaited prequel to the story of Vianne Rocher, and begins six years before she opens her scandalous chocolaterie in the small French village of Lansquenet. Just twenty-one years old, Vianne arrives in Marseille to start a new life and escape her mother's influence.


Joanne Harris will be in conversation about her writing life and career and will be signing books after her event.

Sunday 6th July, 7.30 pm

TBTL, Main House



Photo credit: Sophia Spring

 **You Are Here** (Hodder)

This event will be 90 minutes, including a 15 minute interval.

David Nicholls

An evening with David Nicholls

£20

Join us for an evening in conversation with the celebrated author David Nicholls, whose bestselling novel *One Day* captivated readers worldwide and was recently adapted into a hit Netflix series. His poignant storytelling and remarkable insights are to be seen in his latest novel, *You Are Here*, a story that delves into themes of love and loss; first encounters and second chances on a journey by a midlife lonely couple who meet up on a walk across the north of England – ten days through the Lakes and Dales. David Nicholls is unable to make the March festival dates but looks forward to this July date at the heart of the Lakes where his novel is set. David will be signing books after his event.

Booking your tickets & other information

Ticket Purchase

Ticket options available for Words by the Water 2025 include

- Individual event or workshop tickets, as priced in the programme
- Studio Day Tickets which grant access to all Studio events on specific themed days at either £50 (5 events) per day or £40 (4 events on Sunday)
- Festival Passes grant access to all Main House events and are £240 (for all Wednesday to Sunday Main House events) or £90 (Saturday and Sunday only Main House events)

Please note: Festival Passes do not include the additional Words By The Water Presents events which will take place in June and July.

How to Book

Priority booking for **Best Friends** of Theatre by the Lake opens at 12pm on Thursday, January 9th.

Priority booking for **Friends** of Theatre by the Lake opens at noon on Monday, January 13th.

Public Booking opens at noon on Thursday, January 16th.

- Book online at theatrebythelake.com. You will also be directed to the theatre's website if you click on 'Buy Tickets' on wordsbythewaterkeswick.com
- Book by phone on 01768 774411.
- Book in person at the Theatre by the Lake during box office hours- Monday to Saturday, noon - 7.30pm (or 5pm when there is no evening show).

We encourage audiences to use e-tickets and download them to their phones before they arrive as this helps avoid queues at the box office. Tickets booked up to seven days in advance can be posted out for a charge of £1.50. Tickets booked within seven days of the performance date will be held for collection from the Box Office.

Payment methods

Cash, credit or debit cards (Mastercard/ Visa/ Switch/Delta/Electron/Maestro) are accepted or cheques made payable to Theatre by the Lake.

Refund and exchange policy

If you inform the Theatre by the Lake box office at least 48 hours before an event, we will exchange your tickets for another Words by the Water 2025 event (subject to availability). There is a £1.50 fee per ticket for this service.

If an event is cancelled you can exchange your ticket for another event at this year's festival – subject to availability. There will be no charge for this. If you don't wish to exchange you are entitled to a refund of the ticket's value. (NB for day tickets or a Festival Pass, this will be a proportion of the ticket value)

Getting to Theatre by the Lake

To locate the theatre and find out about car parking and transport links please go to the theatre's website:

theatrebythelake.com/location

The address of the theatre is:

**Theatre by the Lake
Lakeside
Keswick
Cumbria
CA12 5DJ**

Parking charges apply.

Terms & Conditions

The right is reserved to substitute speakers and vary the advertised programme if necessary. All information is correct at the time of going to press. Please refer to our website (wordsbythewaterkeswick.com) for full details of our policy on cancellations, ticket refunds and exchanges, and on lost tickets.

Thank you to...

Festival Curators: Leah Varnell, Jane Fitzgerald, Lucy, Gwenda and Stephen Matthews.

Technical Support: Chris Edwards

Programme Production: Bryony Tilsley

Our venue host Theatre by the Lake and all their fantastic team.

Catherine Fairfield at Appletrees Guest House
appletreeskeswick.com

George at Merienda
merienda.co.uk

Darren Kierman
kierweb.co.uk

Thankyou to all our volunteers, drivers, advisors and chairpersons and of course authors and performers without whom the festival would not be possible.

Your festival planner

Wednesday 12th March

Main House		
1	Sinclair McKay	11.30am
2	Luke Pepera	1.30pm
3	Will Hutton	3.30pm
4	Angus Winchester	5.30pm
5	Natalie Haynes	7.30pm

Studio		
6	Andrew Ziminski	10.30am
7	Rebecca Wilson	12.30pm
8	Sue Prideaux	2.30pm
9	Dorothy Armstrong	4.30pm
10	Christopher Harding	6.30pm

Festival Extras		
FE1	Katie Hale (workshop)	10.30am
FE2	Polly Atkin (workshop)	2.30pm

Thursday 13th March

Main House		
11	Mike Thornton	11.30am
12	Peter Conrad	1.30pm
13	Julian Baggini & Pen Vogler	3.30pm
14	George Monbiot	5.30pm
15	Highly Suspect	7.30pm

Studio		
16	Alan Cleaver	10.30am
17	Jovan Nicholson	12.30pm
18	Kathleen Jones	2.30pm
19	Sharon Blackie	4.30pm
20	Tim Barker	6.30pm

Festival Extras		
FE3	Poetry Breakfast	10am
FE4	Darren Harper (Workshop)	10.30am
FE5	Cleaver & Park (Workshop)	2.30pm
FE6	Alwyn Marriage	3pm

Friday 14th March

Main House		
21	Max Adams	11.30am
22	Lucy Mangan	1.30pm
23	Sarah Perry	3.30pm
24	Ann Cleeves	5.30pm
25	Polly Toynbee & David Walker	7.30pm

Studio		
26	Elsa Richardson	10.30am
27	Hilary Bradt	12.30pm
28	Helen Mort	2.30pm
29	Chloe Dalton	4.30pm
30	Philip Marsden	6.30pm

Festival Extras		
FE7	Kathleen Jones (workshop)	10.30am
FE8	Helen Farish	3pm

Saturday 15th March

Main House		
31	Tom Palmer and CYW comp	11.30am
32	L J Ross	1.30pm
33	Simon Armitage	3.30pm
34	Alan Johnson	5.30pm
35	James Rebanks	7.30pm

Studio		
36	Hetta Howes	10.30am
37	Stuart Gillespie	12.30pm
38	Lucia Osborne Crowley	2.30pm
39	Andrew Seaton	4.30pm
40	Jack Ashby	6.30pm

Festival Extras		
FE9	Becky's Storytime	10am
FE10	Four Cumbrian Poets	5pm

Your festival planner

Sunday 16th March

Main House

41	Mike Berners-Lee	10.30am	<input type="checkbox"/>
42	Anne Sebba	12.30pm	<input type="checkbox"/>
43	Diarmaid MacCulloch	2.30pm	<input type="checkbox"/>
44	Reverend Richard Coles	4.30pm	<input type="checkbox"/>

Studio

45	Stephen Matthews	10am	<input type="checkbox"/>
46	Robert Farrah	12pm	<input type="checkbox"/>
47	David Felton	2pm	<input type="checkbox"/>
48	Chris Wadsworth	4pm	<input type="checkbox"/>

Festival Extras

FE11	Kelly Davis (workshop)	10.30am	<input type="checkbox"/>
FE12	Allan Todd	11am	<input type="checkbox"/>

Words by the Water's Young Writers Competition, 2025

Short Story Competition, Theme - On Our Doorstep



We're inviting young writers in Cumbria to take part in our short story competition. There are two age categories for this competition: 11 and under, and 12-16 year olds.

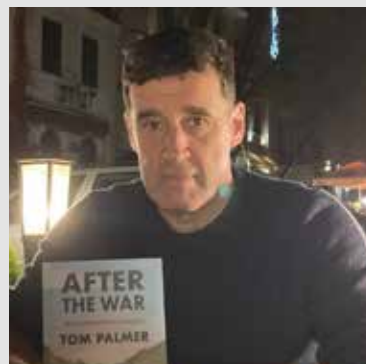
Your story should be no longer than 300 words.

Closing Date - Friday 14th February at 4.00pm

Entries to be emailed to wordsbythewaterkeswick@gmail.com in PDF format, with the name & age of writer within the email only.

One winner and two highly commended writers will be chosen in each age category by our judge, the acclaimed author of young peoples' fiction, **Tom Palmer**. Entries will remain anonymous.

PRIZES - Winners in each age group will receive a £50 book token and a £50 token for their school; Highly commended entrants will receive a £15 book token and a £15 token for their school. All prize-winners will also be given a choice of books signed by Tom Palmer and complimentary tickets for Festival events.



Tom Palmer

Prize-giving ceremony - Saturday 15th March at 11.30am at Theatre by the Lake in the Main House. Tom Palmer will talk about how he became a writer and will announce the winners and read their work. This event is free for all children, and £6 for accompanying adults. School groups are welcome. Booking is essential.

For more information please visit www.wordsbythewaterkeswick.com.

Max Adams
Simon Armitage
Julian Baggini
Mike Berners-Lee
Ann Cleeves
Reverend Richard Coles
Peter Conrad
Natalie Haynes
Alan Johnson
Highly Suspect
Will Hutton
Lucy Mangan
Diarmaid MacCulloch

Sinclair McKay
George Monbiot
Tom Palmer
Luke Pepera
Sarah Perry
James Rebanks
L J Ross
Anne Sebba
Mike Thornton
Polly Toynbee
Pen Vogler
David Walker
Angus Winchester



12 – 16 March, 2025
Theatre by the Lake, Keswick
wordsbythewaterkeswick.com

