



**Brendon
Books**



Taunton Literary Festival 2026

An autumn festival of talks



Ian Dale, Sophie Hannah, Caroline Quentin, Stephen Moss, Robin Ince, Bruce Thompson, Anthea Lawson, Christian Wolmar, Rachel Morley, Robin Lustig, Louisa Treger, Marc Burrows ... and many more

Book your tickets/full programme:

www.brendonbooks.org

or visit/phone

Brendon Books, Bath Place, Taunton TA1 4ER

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Taunton Literary Festival 2026

Tickets: Brendon Books, Bath Place, Taunton TA1 4ER
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Please note, the ticket and book option is available for some but not all talks and, where this is the case, it is for advance bookings and does not apply to tickets purchased on the date of the event



Tue 15 Sep 2026, 7:00 pm. Venue: Brendon Books, Bath Place, Taunton TA1 4ER

Michelle Diaz - Raising Ghosts

Raising Ghosts is a powerful, courageous gathering of poems, charting a childhood shaped by poverty and the gravitational pull of a mercurial mother – “A fathomless black hole / The planet of love we orbited”

In poems marked by subtle but destabilising shifts in tone, Michelle Diaz excavates the long afterlife of loss: the child in the isolation ward, the abandoned house with “three toddlers [who] opened empty cupboards”, the adult woman still searching the rubble of herself for the mother, and for the child who once lived there.

Tickets: £5



Thu 17 Sep 2026, 6:30 pm. Venue: Brendon Books, Bath Place, Taunton TA1 4ER

Festival Event: Home and Abroad, A Poetry Life. Graham Fawcett in conversation

Graham Fawcett has been talking and writing about poetry all his life. At Cambridge he came under the spell of several very remarkable lecturers. His love of how languages work on the page in conversation, on the stage in theatre and opera and the public reading of poetry, and in translation, was given a new shot in the arm by living in Italy and France, working for the Arvon Foundation in Devon, and during his years interviewing and travelling for the BBC. In 2008 he started lecturing on individual poets to audiences in London and beyond, and in 2014 began an annual series of poetry on location in Britain, Europe and America. The conversation will be illustrated by poems now and then. **Tickets: £12.50**



Tue 22 Sep 2026 7 pm. Venue: Temple Methodist Church, Taunton, Taunton, TA1 3PY

Festival Event: Caroline Quentin - Drawn to Nature

Join Caroline Quentin as she celebrates Drawn to Nature — an uplifting journey into the restorative power of the outdoors. Blending heartfelt reflections with stories from her life as an actor, Caroline introduces the people, places and gardens that have shaped her lifelong love of nature, from the landscapes of Devon and Somerset to the many corners of the world her career has taken her. Featuring her own charming illustrations throughout, this is a joyful reminder that beauty can be found in every space. Aside from her career as an actress, she has been a passionate gardener for many ears. She grew up in Reigate, Surrey, but now lives in a country farmhouse in Devon, where she grows her own vegetables, and has a large orchard **Tickets: £9 Book and Ticket: £20**



Thu 24 Sep 2026, 7 pm Venue: Brendon Books, Bath Place, Taunton TA1 4ER

Festival Event: Oliver Randall - Writers in Whites

PG Wodehouse used his cricket-playing to launch his writing career. JM Barrie modelled the pirates in Peter Pan after his cricket teammates. Arthur Conan Doyle named Sherlock Holmes after a cricketer he'd played against. They all belonged to a network of cricket-playing writers, who collectively left a permanent legacy on English culture. Based on a wealth of new research, Writers in Whites tells the story of this group, from Jerome K Jerome via Evelyn Waugh to Michael Morpurgo. In doing so, it reveals cricket's influential – and sometimes controversial – role in London's literary world, from the 1880s to the 1960s.

Tickets: £9 Book and Ticket: £23



Thu 1 Oct 2026, 7 pm. Venue: Brendon Books, Bath Place, Taunton TA1 4ER

Festival Event: Sophie Hannah - The Opposite of Murder/Work Experience

Sophie Hannah's two latest books, Work Experience and The Opposite of Murder, have puzzling murder mystery plots in common, and, between them, include her internationally bestselling series detectives, Simon Waterhouse and Charlie Zailer, her witty, satirical poems and the two librettos (complete with all lyrics) of her two murder mystery musicals. These books mark a new direction in Sophie's writing journey, which she will be discussing (as well as how her Poirot novels have influenced this development) at this event - so come along with all your questions! Sophie Hannah is a Sunday Times, New York Times and Amazon Kindle UK No. 1 bestselling writer of crime fiction, published in forty-nine languages. Her books have sold millions of copies worldwide. **Tickets: £8**

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Tue 6 Oct 2026, 2:30 pm Venue: Taunton Library, Paul St, Taunton, TA1 3XZ

Ellie Barker - What Really Happened to Me

Grace Leven has the job, the title, and the polished public image to match. But behind the magazine covers and boardroom doors, her world is quietly falling apart. Her marriage is over. Her best friend has vanished. And one damning piece of footage could unravel the career she's spent decades building. So, she runs - no plan, no suitcase, just instinct - and finds herself somewhere no one knows her name. She tells herself it's temporary. Just time to breathe. But the stillness leaves room for everything she's tried to outrun: the panic, the guilt, and the ache of a life that just doesn't fit. And then there's Harvey...

Tickets: £5



Wed 7 Oct 2026, 7:00 pm. Venue: Brendon Books, Bath Place, Taunton TA1 4ER

Rachel Morley - Church Crawling: The Secret Lives & Hidden Histories Event

Rachel Morley's book captures the magical experience of poking around a dusty village church, only to have it transform - through her expert eyes - into a portal to the past, one that brings England's people and history to life in the most colourful, moving and unexpected ways. Too many of England's fifteen thousand parish churches are now neglected and crumbling. Church Crawling helps us to see them for what they really are: places that thrum with the drama of life, and an incomparable treasure trove that offers as close an encounter with our past as it is possible to get.

Tickets: £9 Book and Ticket: £23



Thu 8 Oct 2026, 7:00 pm. Venue: Brendon Books, Bath Place, Taunton TA1 4ER

Anthea Lawson - How Not to Save the World (In association with Climate Action Taunton)

Do you want to change the world but wonder if there's any point trying? Are you unsure what you can offer, or don't feel that you fit the activist mould? Do you think activists can be self-righteous, even oblivious to the very people they're trying to help? How Not To Save the World is a book about doing good, for anyone who has looked at politics or public discourse and thought. Realistic, candid and hopeful, How Not To Save the World is a sympathetic exploration of alternatives to righteousness, purity traps and other unhelpful habits. **Tickets £8**



Fri 9 Oct 2026, 7:00 pm. Venue: Brendon Books, Bath Place, Taunton TA1 4ER

Luke Knight - Knight Tales: Tales for Old Somerset

Luke Knight is a storyteller and content creator behind the ever-growing Knight Tales channel, which has grown to more than 90,000 followers across all platforms. Luke has spent the last few years bringing stories of Somerset history to life - through the power of social media - as well as delving into the folklore and legends of the county, and putting the chill into one or two of you with his tales of the paranormal. Now, Luke is bringing those stories closer to home, to spread the good word about Somerset and its fascinating stories. In his talk in association with Brendon Books Luke will also suggest books that he has used as some of his sources.

Tickets: £10



Tue 13 Oct 2026, 6:30 pm. Venue: Brendon Books, Bath Place, Taunton TA1 4ER

Helen Tompson. The Book Was Better-What Adaptations Can Teach Us About Storytelling

In this illustrated talk, screenwriter Helen Tompson explores what happens when stories move from page to screen, examining why adaptations change, what gets lost or gained in the process, and how a different way of watching can reveal new layers within familiar stories. Drawing on examples from film and television, Helen will explore the art of adaptation and invite audiences to look beyond questions of fidelity to consider what adaptations can tell us about storytelling, interpretation and why certain stories continue to resonate across generations. Perfect for those considering making their own adaptations for theatre or film Helen Tompson is a screenwriter, script reader, educator and mentor whose work spans film, television and adaptation. **Tickets: £12**

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Thu 15 Oct 2026, 6:30 pm Venue: Brendon Books, Bath Place, Taunton TA1 4ER

Thomas Rutter - Ethical Gardener (In association with Climate Action, Taunton)

With success stories and inspiration from across the globe, you'll discover: Seasonal planting tips from the mastermind behind the High Line garden in New York How to grow your own food forest from a gardener in Devon, England. How to nurture delicious micro-greens on your balcony or windowsill. How to make conscious choices when selecting gardening supplies or deciding what plants to grow, no matter what climate soil you're working with In this beautifully curated and illustrated companion, discover not only a wealth of sustainable gardening wisdom, but also an inspiring sense of peace, solidarity, and hope for the future. **Tickets: £8**



or



Sun 18 Oct 2026, 2:00 pm Venue: Brendon Books, Bath Place, Taunton TA1 4ER

Fire River Poets with special guest Katie Griffiths

Join us for an inspiring afternoon of poetry featuring prize-winning poet Katie Griffiths launching her new collection Mindset, Mindrise alongside Somerset's long-established poetry group Fire River Poets. A perfect way to spend a Sunday afternoon... Katie Griffiths grew up in Canada in a family originally from Northern Ireland. She is author of The Attitudes (Nine Arches Press) and the prize-winning My Shrink is Pregnant (Live Canon). A second collection from Nine Arches, Mindset Mindrise, is out this autumn. She won the Gregory O'Donoghue International Poetry Prize in 2024, and came second in 2018's National Poetry Competition. She regularly mentors and runs workshops, and is also a serious dabbler in music. **Tickets: £5**



Mon 19 Oct 2026, 7.30 pm. Venue: Tacchi-Morris Arts Ctr, School Rd, Monkton Heathfield, Taunton

Robin Ince - The Future of Jokes

Join Robin Ince for an evening of non-stop entertainment and comment and interaction with the audience. We are not quite sure what to expect (and nor does Robin until he mounts the stage), but it will definitely include something about his new book, The Future of Jokes and there will be definitely be some poetry reading from his recent book Let the Quite Ones Rise and his new poetry book due in October, and there will no doubt be references to his recent book on neurodiversity, Normally Weird and Weirdly Normal that came out in its paperback edition this year, as well as numerous references to all sorts of other books which are his enduring passion. Whatever happens, it is guaranteed to be an unforgettable evening and there will be an opportunity to have books signed. **Tickets: £12**



Tue 20 Oct 2026, 8 pm. Venue: Tacchi-Morris Arts Ctr, School Rd, Monkton Heathfield, Taunton

Love and Friendship - Performed by Imogen Smith

An older Jane Austen returns to reflect on the exuberant novella she wrote aged fourteen. Looking back across two hundred years of social change, she discovers that while fashions, language and technology have transformed, human beings remain delightfully susceptible to vanity, romance, impulsive decisions and spectacularly poor judgement. Written long before Pride and Prejudice and Emma, Love and Friendship reveals Austen at her most outrageous: a whirlwind of friendship, romance, fainting fits and dramatic excess. Performed by Imogen Smith, this fast-paced one-woman production brings sixteen unforgettable characters to life. After the play Imogen will be joined on stage by renowned British biographer and literary scholar, Paula Byrne, to discuss the play. **Tickets: £12**



Tue 27 Oct 2026, 2.30PM PM Venue: Taunton Library, Paul St, Taunton, TA1 3XZ

Kate Lord Brown & Sarah Easter Collins

Join authors Kate Lord Brown and Sarah Easter Collins who will talk about their latest books and their respective publishing journeys. **Silver Thread by Kate Lord Brown:** A sweeping story of a patient and everlasting love – and the moments that tie people together forever. **Things Don't Break On Their Own by Sarah Easter Collins:** She could be you. Nobody ever found out what happened to Laika Martenwood, the girl who vanished without a trace on her way to school one morning. But for her sister Willa, life shattered into tiny pieces that day, and she has never been able to put them back together again. **Tickets: £5**

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Wed 28 Oct 2026, 7 pm Venue: Brendon Books, Bath Place, Taunton TA1 4ER

The Puffin: A biography

A beautifully illustrated celebration of one of Britain's most beloved birds: the charming, comical yet mysterious puffin - the perfect gift for nature lovers. The puffin's bright orange bill and striking black-and-white plumage have made it one of our most iconic seabirds. It has charmed nature lovers and inspired countless fables and stories, as well as becoming an emblem for children's literature.

Stephen is one of Britain's leading nature writers, broadcasters and wildlife television producers, specialising in birds and British wildlife. A lifelong naturalist, he is passionate about communicating the wonders of the natural world to the widest possible audience. He has written over 30 books. **Tickets: £9**



Fri 30 Oct 2026, 7 pm Venue: Brendon Books, Bath Place, Taunton TA1 4ER

Bruce Thompson - No Ordinary Neighbour

No Ordinary Neighbour is the record of a growing relationship that led to an astonishing admission. Through conversations over the last decades of his life, Erwin Stahlberg slowly disclosed his true identity in a protracted confession to the writer. He was, it transpires, one of the last surviving members of the Leibstandarte-SS Adolf Hitler. Eventually, a photograph would reveal just how close Stahlberg was to senior commanders in his unit. This is a story of guilt, regret, shame, anger, confusion, and a deep desire for others to hear of the ease with which evil can take hold of the human psyche and society.

Tickets: £9



Wed 4 Nov 2026, 6:30 Venue: Brendon Books, Bath Place, Taunton TA1 4ER

Robin Lustig - And the Cello Came Too

And the Cello Came Too is both a personal memoir and a family chronicle, spanning centuries of Jewish life in Europe, its near-destruction under the Nazis and its slow rebirth in the years after the Second World War. At its heart is the award-winning journalist and broadcaster's father, Fritz Lustig, a refugee from Berlin whose cello accompanied him through upheaval, war and a new life in Britain. This is a history not just of persecution but also of resilience and continuity -- of lives rebuilt, music played, and stories reclaimed. Moving, intimate, and meticulously researched, And the Cello Came Too shows how one family's journey can illuminate the universal struggle to survive, remember, and belong. **Tickets: £9 Book and Ticket: £20**



Thu 12 Nov 2026, 7 pm., Venue: Brendon Books, Bath Place, Taunton TA1 4ER

Festival Event: Jean Sprackland - Night Visions/Goyle, Chert, Mire

Jean Sprackland will talk about her recent non-fiction book Night Visions and her read from her new poetry collection, Goyle, Chert and Mire. **Night Visions:** We humans have a complicated relationship with the dark. We fear it, and make great efforts to blot it out. But we also long for it, especially if we live in cities, or remember the starry skies of our childhoods. Darkness opens us up to risk, delight and transformation. Each of the three sections in **Goyle, Chert, Mire** focuses on one of the distinctive elements characteristic of the Blackdown Hills – and in particular the remote spring-line valley where the author lives.

Tickets: £5



Fri 13 Nov 2026, 7 pm., Venue: Brendon Books, Bath Place, Taunton TA1 4ER

Ian Dale - Have I Said Too Much: My Life in Politics & The Media

Award-winning broadcaster Ian Dale has led a life full of incident and success but also some very public failures. In this refreshingly honest account of his life and careers in business, politics and media, he tells all for the first time. With the same raw candour that earns him 750,000 weekly listeners, he recounts his journey from driving a combine harvester at age eight to driving the national conversation on LBC, taking in his encounters with a host of household names including HM Queen Elizabeth II, Sir Cliff Richard, Kylie Minogue, Joan Rivers, Jennifer Saunders, the Duchess of York, Olivia Newton-John, Terry Pratchett and 12 of our 58 Prime Ministers.

Tickets: £9. Book & Ticket: £25.

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Mon 16 Nov 2026, 7 pm. Venue: Brendon Books, Bath Place, Taunton TA1 4ER

Marc Burrows - The Story of the Christmas No. 1: Mistletoe and Vinyl

This is the story of a national obsession: the annual race for the festive chart crown, and what it reveals about British culture, identity, and the ever-changing music industry. From The Beatles to glam rock, from Do They Know It's Christmas? to reality-TV winners, novelty records, charity campaigns and viral streaming sensations, Marc Burrows uncovers the fascinating, funny and occasionally absurd stories behind the songs we love—and love to argue about. Marc Burrows is an award-winning author, comedian and musician.. He writes regularly for The Independent, Big Issue, The New Statesmen and many more and is working on a new stand-up show.

Tickets: £8



Tue 17 Nov 2026, 2:30 pm. Venue: Taunton Library, Paul St, Taunton, TA1 3XZ

Dennis Coath - The Band That Time Forgot & The Band that Time Forgave

THE BEATLES WEREN'T SUPPOSED TO BE!

Former ITV and BBC journalist Dennis Coath has published his second in a trilogy about an aged rock band. When The Beatles were launched, there was another band in the background expected to be bigger, there is more than a grain of truth in this. But The Dogs from Derby miss out on stardom. Fifty years later an impromptu reunion leads to a sensational success story and the fading four are propelled into the spotlight as septuagenarians and octogenarians, facing up to the rigours of sex, drugs and rock and roll.

Tickets: £5



Tue 17 Nov 2026, 7:00 pm. Venue: Brendon Books, Bath Place, Taunton TA1 4ER

Elizabeth Delo - Writing Workshop: Captivating Characters

A compelling protagonist is the beating heart of a good story. Creating a character that your readers believe in and care about means they will want to follow them to the very last page. In this workshop you will be guided through a series of exercises to help you create memorable, three-dimensional characters and begin to identify their motivations, desires and fears. You will learn about the shape of stories, giving you the tools to build a convincing character and develop their narrative.

This workshop is suitable for all levels, from beginners to more experienced writers.

Elizabeth Delo is an award-winning writer with an MA in Creative Writing from Bath Spa University.

Tickets: £10



Wed 18 Nov 2026, 7PM Venue: Brendon Books, Bath Place, Taunton TA1 4ER

Festival Event: Louisa Treger - Fatal Love

The universe was supposed to be all there was - the whole of existence. For centuries the size of the universe and whether or not it is finite, fascinated scientists and philosophers. But however big the universe may be, there being only one gave astronomers and cosmologists a headache. Existence as we know it is contingent on so many constants in nature which, if altered only slightly, would make life impossible.

This seems so unlikely to happen by chance. What if, instead, there is in fact a vast range of different universes, with many variants of the universal contents, making ours just one of many that happens to be viable for life? **Tickets: £8. Book and Ticket: £18.99**



Thu 19 Nov 2026, Venue: 7 pm Brendon Books, Bath Place, Taunton TA1 4ER

Sara Hudson - A Life Outside: Hope Bourne on Exmoor

Hope Bourne (1918-2010) was one of the twentieth century's most extraordinary nature writers. Forgotten for many years, Bourne's life and work is now being rediscovered by a new generation of readers, who are increasingly enthralled by her writing and ideas. Her remarkable ecological awareness, rejection of materialism, and close relationship with the natural world were decades ahead of their time. A Life Outside is the first biography of her life and work. Sympathetic, critical and honest, it draws on detailed original research in The Exmoor Society's archive and interviews with people who knew her well. "A masterpiece of detective work. The story is beautifully told and relentlessly fascinating." Charles Foster. **Tickets: £8**

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Tue 24 Nov 2026, 7:00 pm. Venue: Temple Methodist Church, Taunton, Taunton, TA1 3PY

Michael Smith - Towards the Coldest Place: The Long March to the South Pole

Best-selling author Michael Smith chronicles the 2,000 year quest to stand at the South Pole, starting with the ancient Greek scholars and reaching a dramatic climax with the triumph and tragedy of the race between Captain Scott and the Norwegian Amundsen. Smith recounts the epic struggles and appalling hardship, generations of colourful characters and the soaring ambition of explorers who battled the frozen wastes to be first to stand at the end of the earth. MICHAEL SMITH is a best-selling author whose books about Antarctic and Arctic exploration have sold over 300,000 copies across the world, have been translated into German, Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Italian and Irish and assisted with the development of film dramas and documentaries. **Tickets: £10**



Fri 27 Nov 2026, 7 pm. Venue: Brendon Books, Bath Place, Taunton TA1 4ER

Christian Wolmar - Fast Track: The Extraordinary Story of High Speed Rail

Sleek, comfortable, accessible, and sustainable, high-speed rail is the future. Since Japan's Bullet Train first sped down the track in the sixties, it has become a global icon, as famous for its punctuality as for its speed. The French TGV, or Train à Grande Vitesse, established a template that was soon followed across Europe, in Italy, Germany and Spain. But with a remarkable 30,000 miles of track built in fewer than twenty years China has become the world leader. How can this be? In Fast Track, Christian Wolmar, our leading railway writer, tells the story of the irresistible rise of high-speed rail around the world. This is a story of big personalities, bold decisions, cutting edge technology, and soaring ambition. All aboard! **Tickets: £9 Book and Ticket: £30**



Mon 30 Nov 2026, 6.30 pm. Venue: Brendon Books, Bath Place, Taunton TA1 4ER

Murky Waters: The Fourth Elliot Todd Mystery

A period of snow and the arrangement of a visit by his friend Cameron to launch his new book helps lift Elliot Todd's New Year blues. Life at the bookshop seems to be going along on an even keel. Then one of the traders disappears from the quaint street in which Elliot Todd's bookshop is located. Elliot and Esther, his bookshop assistant (and the subject of his unrequited love) just cannot help getting involved...

The fourth in the Elliot Todd Mystery series featuring an accidental bookseller sleuth and his sidekick Esther.

Tickets: £5. Book and Ticket: £10.99

Sign up to our newsletter of talks throughout the year and for regular information on a selection of new and forthcoming titles including the Booktime Magazine and our Summer and Christmas catalogues

Email your details to: brendonbooks@gmail.com A contact phone number is useful in case we have to contact you at short notice, for example, for an event change.

We are particularly grateful for the help and support of Taunton Town Council, Climate Action Taunton and Tacchi-Morris Arts Centre Taunton in the promotion and delivery of this festival

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