



Winchester
Books Festival

17 – 19 April 2026

SIR TONY ROBINSON
shares his debut novel and perhaps a cunning plan

MARY PORTAS
shares how she transformed Harvey Nichols

LYNDA LA PLANTE
shares how she got away with murder

ROB BIDDULPH
shares from his new book encouraging children to follow their dreams

KATHY LETTE
shares some truths about age, sexism and female friendship

TRISTAN GOOLEY
shares the secrets of the changing seasons

TOM GILBEY
shares his wine wisdom

Stories worth sharing

Welcome to Winchester Books Festival

17 – 19 April 2026

We are thrilled to bring you an extraordinary lineup of authors, each ready to share their stories, spark your imagination, and celebrate the joy of reading.



We are going all in to support the 2026 National Year of Reading.

Book tickets online from **6 February** and sign up for our newsletter at: winchesterbooksfestival.com

Winchester Books Festival is possible because of our wonderful sponsors:



Our supporters and Festival Bookseller:



FRIDAY 17 APRIL



Author: Sarah Vaughan with Rebecca Fletcher
Sarah Vaughan is a bestselling novelist (*Anatomy of A Scandal* was made into a major Netflix series) with a background as a political journalist. Her new novel, *Based on a True Story*, explores power, wealth, and family lies. At its heart is Dame Eleanor Kingman, whose celebrated life hides dark secrets—and someone knows the truth. Sarah will be discussing her life as a writer and her new book.

Sponsored by Savills.



Author: Dame Vikki Heywood
Dame Vikki Heywood comes to Winchester to discuss her journey into fiction after a distinguished career at the heart of British cultural life. Former Executive Director of the Royal Shakespeare Company and a leader at the Royal Court Theatre, she explores creativity, reinvention, and storytelling in a new form. In *Miss Veal* and *Miss Ham* she explores the forgotten history of women who were portrayed as spinsters and companions but were in fact lovers behind closed doors.

Sponsored by Savills.



Author: Lynda La Plante with Rebecca Fletcher
Crime-writing legend Lynda La Plante will be discussing her new novel, *Sacrifice* and her memoir, *Getting Away with Murder*. She'll share candid stories from her Liverpool childhood to creating iconic TV dramas, offering insight, humour and behind-the-scenes revelations from her groundbreaking career in crime fiction and television and how she writes and gets inspiration for her stories.

Sponsored by Savills.



Author: Patrick Gale with Judith Heneghan
Patrick Gale is a bestselling novelist known for his compassionate, character-driven stories. His new book, *Love Lane*, tracks three generations of a family as a Canadian farmer, Harry Cane, returns to post-war England. The novel weaves themes of reconciliation, secrecy and the quest for belonging. Patrick grew up and went to school in Winchester.

Sponsored by Savills.

Fiction Friday

10.30am – 11.30am
The Arc
Performance Hall
£18

Book: *Based On A True Story*

12.00pm – 1.00pm
The Arc
Performance Hall
£18

Book:
Miss Veal and
Miss Ham

2.00pm – 3.00pm
The Arc
Performance Hall
£18

Book:
Sacrifice

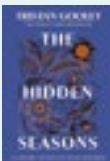
4.00pm – 5.00pm
The Arc
Performance Hall
£18

Book:
Love Lane

Events

Events

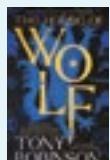
FRIDAY 17 APRIL



Author: Tristan Gooley

Join renowned "natural navigator" Tristan Gooley as he introduces his new book, *The Hidden Seasons*. Discover how subtle clues in weather, plants, water and wildlife reveal nature's shifting calendar. This inspiring talk will change how you see the outdoors—perfect for explorers, walkers, and curious minds of all ages.

6.00pm – 7.00pm
Middle Brook Centre
£22
Book:
The Hidden Seasons



Author: Sir Tony Robinson with Rebecca Fletcher

Sir Tony Robinson, a national treasure who is best known as the face of *Time Team* and *Blackadder's Baldrick*, debuts as a novelist with *The House of Wolf*. The book reimagines Anglo-Saxon England in an epic, witty tale of power, betrayal, greed, and faith, centred on Alfred the Great.

Sponsored by Rathbones.

8.00pm – 9.00pm
Middle Brook Centre
£22
Book:
The House of Wolf

SATURDAY 18 APRIL



Author: Dr Eleanor Houghton with Gillian Dow

Dr Eleanor Houghton explores the life and times of Charlotte Brontë – not through letters or diaries, but through her clothes – her gowns, bonnets, corsets and boots. Houghton's vivid illustrations and scholarly insight will create a fresh, intimate portrait of the literary icon and her sisters. She will be in conversation with Dr Gillian Dow, Professor of English at the University of Southampton.

9.00am – 10.00am
The Guildhall
Room: The Bapsy
£18
Book:
Charlotte Bronte's Life Through Clothes

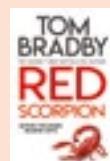


Author: Rosalind Freeborn

Winner of this year's Winchester Book Festival's Open Call, Ros Freeborn will discuss her debut novel *Prince George & Master Frederick*. A historical blending of fact and fiction tells the fascinating story of King George III's alleged secret, illegitimate son Frederick Blomberg who was adopted as a playmate for young Prince George (future George IV) and raised in the royal household.

10.00am – 10.45am
The Guildhall
Room: The Walton
£10
Book:
Prince George and Master Frederick

SATURDAY 18 APRIL



Author: Tom Bradby

Tom Bradby is an acclaimed journalist and the presenter of ITV's *News at Ten*. He is also the bestselling author of a series of thrillers. His latest novel, *Red Scorpion*, is a gritty thriller set in Colombia's drug war underworld. The novel weaves together the lives of Dr Laura Strong, struggling with debt and family, and Rafa Fernandez, a reluctant crime heir, as betrayals and dark legacies collide. Tom will talk about his career, his writing process and how he finds inspirations for his novels.



Author: Annie Garthwaite

Annie Garthwaite's new novel *The King's Mother* reimagines the turbulent era of the Wars of the Roses through the eyes of powerful women fighting for their sons' crowns. Expect a passionate discussion on ambition, maternal loyalty and political intrigue.

11.00am – 12.00pm
The Guildhall
Room: King Charles
£18
Book:
Red Scorpion



Author: Mary Portas with Gaby Huddart

Mary Portas, Britain's "Queen of Shops" and retail expert, reflects on her life and career in her new memoir. She will describe how she forged a successful career in retail at Harvey Nichols and on television through bold creativity and entrepreneurial drive. Blending business wisdom with entertaining stories and insights that are relevant to both life and the workplace – this is a talk not to be missed.

11.30am – 12.30pm
The Guildhall
Room: The Walton
£18
Book:
The King's Mother



Authors: Dr. Victoria Bateman and Dr. Elizabeth Norton

Join Victoria Bateman, historian, feminist economist and author of *Economica* (Financial Times Best Book of the Year), as she challenges conventional narratives and restores women to their rightful place at the heart of global economic history in conversation with Elizabeth Norton (author of *Women Who Ruled the World*).

Sponsored by Rothmans.

12.00pm – 1.00pm
The Guildhall
Room: The Bapsy
£18
Book:
I Shop, Therefore I Am

1.00pm – 2.00pm
The Guildhall
Room: The Walton
£18
Books:
Economica and
Women Who Ruled the World

Events

SATURDAY 18 APRIL



Authors: Marina Gibson and Jeremy Wade

Marina Gibson is a conservation-minded flyfishing guide whose book *Cast, Catch, Release* explores how rivers healed her life. Jeremy Wade is a TV star, biologist and adventurer, who writes of thrilling angling tales in *River Monsters* and *How to Think Like a Fish*. Their event is a must for anyone who is interested in fishing, the environment and natural world, and the state of the world's water.

Sponsored by Bombay Sapphire.

1.30pm – 2.30pm

The Guildhall

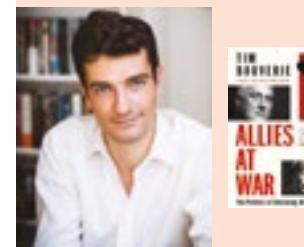
Room: The Bapsy

£18

Books:

Cast, Catch, Release
and *How to Think
Like a Fish*

SATURDAY 18 APRIL



Author: Tim Bouverie with Matt Frei

Tim Bouverie is the bestselling author of *Allies at War: The Politics of Defeating Hitler*, a revelatory account of the high-politics of World War II, described as 'a masterpiece' by Richard J. Evans and 'brilliant' by Antony Beevor. Tim will be in conversation with award winning journalist and Channel 4 News' anchor, Matt Frei. As well as covering the history of the East-West alliance during the Second World War, the discussion will draw important parallels with today.

4.00pm – 5.00pm

The Guildhall

Room: The Walton

£18

Book:

*Allies at War:
The Politics of
Defeating Hitler*



Author: Kit Kemp with Giles Kime

Kit Kemp, acclaimed British designer and co-founder of Firmdale Hotels, brings warmth and creativity to her book *Design Stories*. She will give a joyful masterclass in blending bold colour, pattern and storytelling in the home with practical advice on creating personal, handcrafted spaces. She will be in conversation with Giles Kime, Executive Editor of Country Life.

Sponsored by Strutt & Parker.

2.00pm – 3.00pm

The Guildhall

Room: King Charles

£18

Book:

Design Stories



Author: Tom Gilbey

Tom Gilbey, aka the hugely popular YouTube "The Wine Guy," shares his passion and wit as he discusses his new book *Thirsty*. He will discuss his family history - Gilbey's winemaking roots, 100 favourite bottles, and approachable wine wisdom — how to read labels, chat about wine, and enjoy it without pretension. There will be an opportunity to purchase wines after the event.

Sponsored by Phillips Law.

5.30pm – 6.30pm

The Guildhall

Room: The Bapsy

£22

Book:

*Thirsty: 100 Great
Wines and Stories*



Author: Mark Urban with Sir Nick Borton

Mark Urban is a former Royal Tank Regiment officer, respected military historian, and Sunday Times journalist. He draws on his frontline experience and journalistic rigor in his new book *Tank*. Charting the evolution of armoured vehicles—from World War I's Mark IV to today's M1 Abrams—through ten iconic tanks and the people behind them, he shows how these machines have shaped both warfare and human stories. Mark will be in conversation with Lieutenant General (Retd) Sir Nick Borton.

2.30pm – 3.30pm

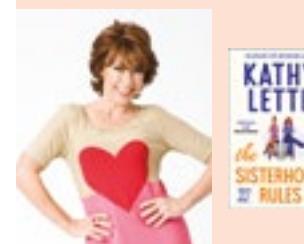
The Guildhall

Room: The Walton

£18

Book:

Tank



Author: Kathy Lette with Jo Elvin

Join Kathy Lette to hear about her brilliant new novel, *The Sisterhood Rules*, which takes us on a roller-coaster ride which proves that from pain comes healing, from honesty comes forgiveness, and that nothing is more important than your sisters. Expect razor-sharp humour, bruising truths about age and sexism, and the power of female friendship. Bring some friends and be sure not to miss this bold, laugh-out-loud celebration of reinvention and defiance. Kathy will be in conversation with journalist, broadcaster and podcaster, Jo Elvin.

Sponsored by Bombay Sapphire.



Author: Jo Thompson with Natasha Poliszczuk

Jo Thompson is a celebrated British garden designer and gold medal winner at the Chelsea Flower Show. Her new book showcases 30 beautiful gardens, blending traditional formality with ecological sensibility. She will discuss her romantic, atmospheric designs, encouraging experienced and beginner gardeners to create soulful, sustainable outdoor spaces for themselves, all illustrated with images from the book.

Sponsored by ADAM Architecture.

3.30pm – 4.30pm

The Guildhall

Room: King Charles

£18

**Book: New
Romantic Garden**

7.00pm – 8.00pm

The Guildhall

Room: King Charles

£22

Book:

The Sisterhood Rules

Events

SUNDAY 19 APRIL



Authors: Dolly Jones and Sarah Turner

Journalist Dolly Jones and Instagram sensation and bestselling author Sarah Turner (The Unmumsy Mum) for an entertaining, practical discussion about parenting, ambition, feminism and success - how to manage the life-changing prospect of returning to work after having children. Helpful advice for mothers and fathers, and those who support them.



11.00am – 12.00pm

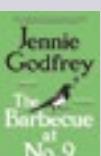
The Arc
Performance Hall
£18

Books:
Leaving the Ladder Down and
On The Edge



Author: John Suchet with Rebecca Fletcher

John Suchet is a celebrated broadcaster, classical music presenter, and author. His new book is the definitive book about Beethoven, and he delves into the composer's fraught personal life, struggles with deafness, and enduring creative genius. A short recital of Beethoven's music will accompany the event. Music by the Kelllett Quartet. Special thanks to Sharon Mann.



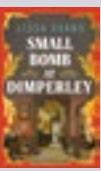
Author: Jennie Godfrey with Natasha Poliszczuk

Join us for a fascinating conversation with Jennie Godfrey, bestselling author of *The List of Suspicious Things*, about her new book. Discover the inspirations behind her storytelling that make her one of the most exciting authors writing today. A perfect event for book lovers seeking inspiration, insight and lively discussion.

12.30pm – 1.30pm

The Arc
Performance Hall
£18

Book:
Beethoven



Authors: Lissa Evans with Claire Fuller

Why not hold your next book club event with us? Read Lissa Evans's book, *Small Bomb at Dimperley*, and then come as a group and participate in a discussion with the author, facilitated by best-selling local writer, Claire Fuller. This is our 2026 Big Book Club event. With special thanks to Winchester Royal Hotel.

2.00pm – 3.00pm

The Arc
Performance Hall
£18

Book:
The Barbecue at No. 9

4.30pm – 5.30pm

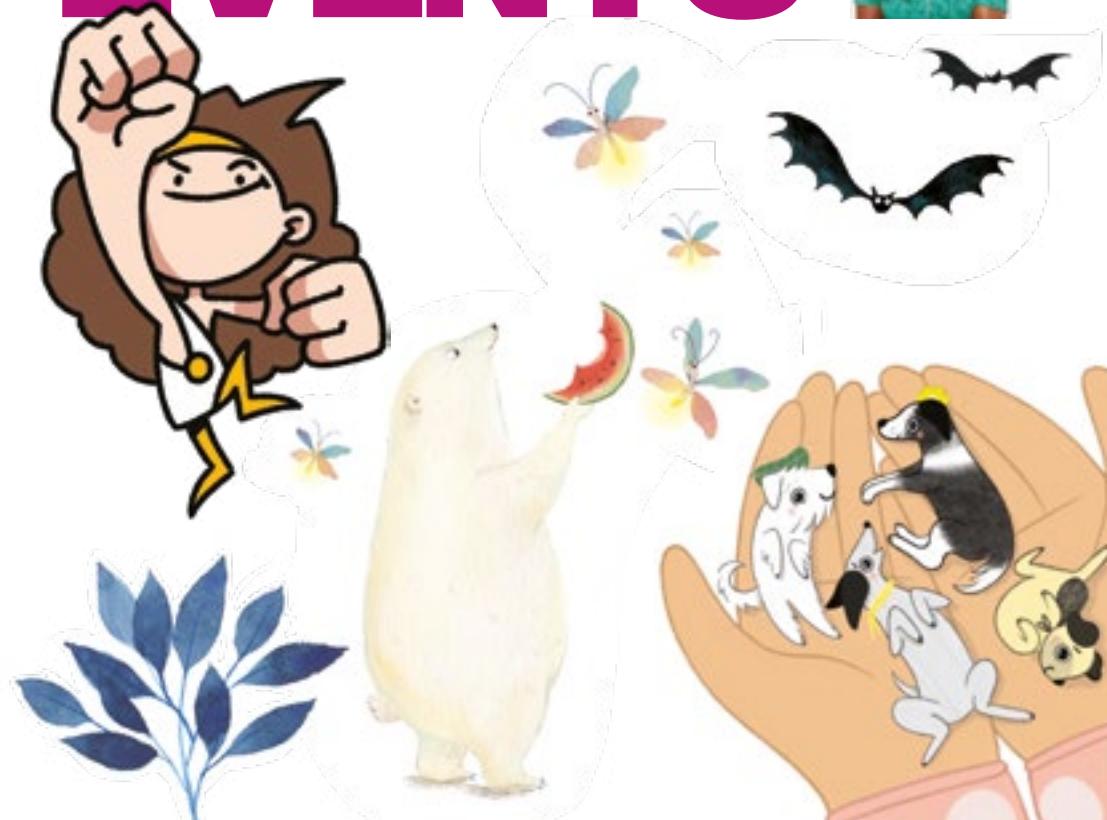
The Arc
Performance Hall
£18

Book:
Small Bomb at Dimperley

FAMILY FRIENDLY EVENTS

A weekend of entertainment for all the family

Hosted by the BBC Radio 1Xtra presenter Fee Mak



Tiny Hercules: Text & illustrations © Jon Lock & Nich Angell 2026
The Moon Keeper: Text & illustrations © Zosienka 2026
Tiny Dogs: Text & illustrations © Rose Lihou 2026

For tickets, go to:
winchesterbooksfestival.com





Winchester Books Festival Family Events

Friday 17 April, our pre-school story time will take place at Winchester Library. These relaxed, welcoming events are a chance for little ones to hear delightful stories read aloud by the authors themselves.

Saturday 18 April, the Guildhall basement will be transformed into the Family Zone, a welcoming space where young readers can drop in and celebrate their love of books. With creative activities including writing, drawing, and crafts, families are invited to explore stories together and leave their own imprint on the festival.

Thank you to Winchester BID for sponsorship of our Family Events.

Go to winchesterbooksfestival.com for tickets!



FRIDAY 17 APRIL



Author: Zosienka

Zosienka will be reading her magical book about a sweet polar bear, the moon and the special connection they share.

10.00am
Winchester Library, Children's section
Age: 2+
Free*

Book:
The Moon Keeper



Author: Emma Challis

Come meet Emma who will be reading her colourful new book about Alfie a fun-loving red tractor who lives on a farm and is full of clever ideas.

11.00am
Winchester Library, Children's section
Age: 2+
Free*

Book:
Alfie Saves the Day

SATURDAY 18 APRIL



Author: Rose Lihou

Rose Lihou is a children's author illustrator based in Winchester. Her debut series, *Tiny Dogs*, follows a young girl named Bea and four magical, mouse-sized dogs who live secretly in her garden. The stories are warm, gently imaginative, and full of friendship and nature. During the event, children can make their own *Tiny Dogs* puppets whilst they listen to Rose talking about her books.

10.30am – 11.30am
The Guildhall
Room: **The Lecture Chamber**
Age: 6+
£5

Book:
Tiny Dogs

SATURDAY 18 APRIL

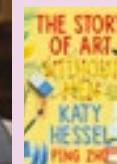


Author: Jon Lock and Nich Angell

WORKSHOP EVENT! Join Jon and Nich, creators of the brilliant comic book *Tiny Hercules*, for an interactive workshop of legendary proportions! They'll share lots of tips on how to make larger-than-life comics and characters of your own, as well as lead a live draw-a-long of some of their jam-jar-sized characters!

12.00pm – 1.00pm
The Guildhall
Room: **The Lecture Chamber**
Age: **7+**
£5

Book:
Tiny Hercules: The World's Tiniest, Mightiest Hero!



Author: Katy Hessel

Join Katy Hessel for an interactive journey to celebrate her new, beautifully-illustrated book for younger readers. Journey through history and across the globe to discover the stories of women who changed the world with their incredible art. Don't miss this chance to step into the lives of these amazing women artists – and to discover how to bring art into your every day. Suitable for ages 8 - 108.

2.00pm – 3.00pm
The Guildhall
Room: **The Lecture Chamber**
Age: **8 - 108**
£5

Book:
The Story of Art Without Men



Author: Rob Biddulph

Rob Biddulph is a bestselling, award-winning children's author, illustrator and YouTube sensation via his 'Draw with Rob' channel. He will be talking about his latest picture book, *When I Grow Up I'd Like to Be...*, a joyful, beautifully illustrated celebration of jobs, imagination and dreaming big, perfect for young readers. He may be doing some drawing too...

3.30pm – 4.30pm
The Guildhall
Room: **The Bapsy**
Age: **3+**
£5

Book:
When I Grow Up I'd Like to Be...



Author: Nathanael Lessore

Join multi-award-winning comedy author Nathanael Lessore for a fun, interactive masterclass packed with insider tricks to make your stories shine. Learn the formulas behind creativity and explore narrative structure. You'll leave confident, inspired, and ready to turn everyday moments into bold, brilliant creative pieces that truly stand out!

4.30pm – 5.30pm
The Guildhall
Room: **The Lecture Chamber**
Age: **11+**
£5

Book:
What Happens Online

One-Off Events

Our vision for Winchester Books Festival is to bring exciting and thought-provoking authors to Winchester.

We have hosted authors from **David Nicholls** to **Jeremy Bowen**, **Tracy Chevalier** to **Dame Mary Berry**, fashion designer **Patrick Grant**, popular children's author **Maz Evans**, and best-selling historian **Tom Holland**, amongst many others.

We are thrilled to share 'hot off the press' details of two one-off events booked for May. Save the dates and follow our social media and newsletters for further details.

FRIDAY 1 MAY



Author: Martin Clunes with Gaby Huddart
Martin Clunes has been a familiar and much-loved face on our television screens since the 1990s. Alongside appearing in hit shows like Men Behaving Badly and Doc Martin, he has presented numerous documentaries from around the world including Lemurs of Madagascar, Islands of the Pacific and A Dog Called Laura. He was awarded an OBE in 2015 for his contribution to drama, charity and the community in Dorset where he lives with his family and lots of animals.

Middle Brook Centre

Book:
Training John and Murray

FRIDAY 8 MAY



Author: Claire Fuller with Rebecca Fletcher
Come and celebrate the launch of *Hunger and Thirst*, Claire Fuller's new novel, and the first to be set in Winchester. As well as a free drink, cake, and a fantastic prize to be won, Claire will be interviewed and there will be a chance to ask her your own questions.

The Arc Performance Hall

Book:
Hunger and Thirst

STORIES WORTH SHARING

BECOME PART OF THE STORY

winchesterbooksfestival.com



Event Timetable

FRIDAY	9.00am	10.00am	11.00am	12.00pm	1.00pm	2.00pm	3.00pm	4.00pm	5.00pm	6.00pm	7.00pm	8.00pm	9.00pm	
The Arc			Sarah Vaughan Book: <i>Based On A True Story</i>	Dame Vikki Heywood Book: <i>Miss Veal and Miss Ham</i>		Lynda La Plante Book: <i>Sacrifice</i>		Patrick Gale Book: <i>Love Lane</i>						
Winchester Library		Zosienka Book: <i>The Moonkeeper</i>	Emma Challis Book: <i>Alfie Saves the Day</i>											
Middle Brook Centre											Tristan Gooley Book: <i>The Hidden Seasons</i>		Sir Tony Robinson Book: <i>The House of Wolf</i>	
SATURDAY	9.00am	10.00am	11.00am	12.00pm	1.00pm	2.00pm	3.00pm	4.00pm	5.00pm	6.00pm	7.00pm	8.00pm	9.00pm	
Guildhall Room: The Walton		Rosalind Freeborn Book: <i>Prince George and Master Frederick</i>	Annie Garthwaite Book: <i>The King's Mother</i>	Dr Victoria Bateman and Dr Elizabeth Norton Book: <i>Economica and Women Who Ruled the World</i>	Mark Urban Book: <i>Tank</i>		Tim Bouvierie Book: <i>Allies at War: The Politics of Defeating Hitler</i>							
Guildhall Room: King Charles			Tom Bradby Book: <i>Red Scorpion</i>			Kit Kemp Book: <i>Design Stories</i>		Jo Thompson Book: <i>New Romantic Garden</i>				Kathy Lette Book: <i>The Sisterhood Stories</i>		
Guildhall Room: Bapsy	Dr Eleanor Houghton Book: <i>Charlotte Bronte's Life Through Clothes</i>			Mary Portas Book: <i>I Shop, Therefore I am</i>	Marina Gibson and Jeremy Wade Book: <i>Cast, Catch, Release and How to Think Like a Fish</i>		Rob Biddulph Book: <i>When I grow Up I'd Like to Be...</i>		Tom Gilbey Book: <i>Thirsty: 100 Great Wines and Stories</i>					
Guildhall Room: Lecture Chamber			Rose Lihou Book: <i>Tiny Dogs</i>	Jon Lock and Nich Angell Book: <i>Tiny Hercules: The World's Tiniest, Mightiest Hero</i>		Katy Hessel Book: <i>The Story of Art Without Men</i>			Nathanael Lessore Book: <i>What Happens Online</i>					
SUNDAY	9.00am	10.00am	11.00am	12.00pm	1.00pm	2.00pm	3.00pm	4.00pm	5.00pm	6.00pm	7.00pm	8.00pm	9.00pm	
The Arc			Dolly Jones and Sarah Turner Book: <i>Leaving the Ladder Down and On The Edge</i>	John Suchet Book: <i>Beethoven</i>		Jennie Godfrey Book: <i>Barbecue at No.9</i>			Lissa Evans and Claire Fuller Book: <i>Small Bomb at Dimperley</i>					

Family Events

VIKKI HEYWOOD
JOHN SUCHET
LISSA EVANS ELEANOR HOUGHTON
JO THOMPSON
KIT KEMP
ROSE LIHOU VICTORIA BATEMAN
SARAH VAUGHAN
JENNIE GODFREY
PATRICK GALE
MARINA GIBSON JEREMY WADE
TOM BRADBURY
ANNIE GARTHWAITE TIM BOUVERIE
KATY HESSEL
MARK URBAN
ROSALIND FREEBORN DOLLY JONES
NATHANAEL LESSORE

