Books on Tyne The Newcastle Book Festival Programme

19 November to 28 November 2026

City Library events

Thursday 19 November, 6.30pm

Michael Bracewell on The Smiths in conversation with Author and Journalist Daniel James

£5

Wildly inventive and magnificently surreal, *The Smiths: A Novella* recounts the impact of an unconventional pop group from Manchester on one man's life. Taking the form of a flâneuring journey through the landscape of memory, our anonymous protagonist is accompanied by the iconic French actress Carole Bouquet, who becomes his guide and interlocutor, asking about his life during the years The Smiths were together and the profound effect of their music upon him.

Michael Bracewell's novella-cum-fairy tale is at once deeply romantic and laced with comedy – not unlike the band themselves – and perhaps (in fictional form) the most astute and celebratory portrait of The Smiths to date.

Michael Bracewell is a writer and novelist whose books include *Perfect Tense*, *Unfinished Business* and *Re-make/Re-model: Becoming Roxy Music.*

Friday 20 November, 1pm

Steph McGovern on Deadline in Conversation with Vic Watson

£5

Award-winning journalist and broadcaster Steph McGovern co-hosts the The Rest Is Money podcast with Robert Peston, exploring the economic issues that affect our everyday lives. Steph is also a regular face on the BBC fronting shows such as Have I Got News for You, and Crimewatch. She is an avid crime reader and has interviewed countless authors including Val McDermid, Harlan Coben, Ann Cleeves, Hilary Clinton, Lee Child and Don Winslow, as well as judging the Theakston Old Peculier Crime Novel of the Year award at the Harrogate Crime Festival since 2019. *Deadline* is her first novel.

Saturday 21 November, 11am

Tahmima Anam on Uprising in conversation with James Routledge from Opt Indie Books

£7

On a desolate, sinking island, a group of children witness their mothers living lives of cruelty and servitude. Bought and sold by Amma, the sadistic madam who was once herself sold into slavery, the women have learned to accept their fate. Yet their children weave fantastic tales of escape, imagining that someday they will leave the island and enjoy a life of freedom.

An earth-shattering drama of resistance and female power, *Uprising* gives voice to the silenced through the story of a revolution no one saw coming. The book was nominated for the Orwell Prize 2026. Tahmima is also the author of *The Good Muslim* and *The Startup Wife*.

Saturday 21 November, 1.30pm, Andrew Michael Hurley on Saltwash

£5

In conversation with Author and Journalist Daniel James

The dilapidated seaside town of Saltwash isn’t a place that Tom Shift would have chosen to come to at all, let alone on such a bleak November afternoon. But his new friend, Oliver Keele, has insisted on meeting for dinner at the Castle Hotel, where the owners, the Paleys, try their best to cling on to the glory days.

Both terminally ill, Tom and Oliver have been bound by the saddest of circumstances, though they have found some solace in writing to one another via a pen-pal scheme set up by their respective cancer clinics. So far, their friendship has been conducted solely through letters, with Oliver proving himself to be a treasury of literary quips and quotes. Yet, for all his flamboyance and verbosity, he is guarded, and Tom suspects that he is lonely and nomadic. And Oliver sees Tom for what he is too: a man haunted by guilt and desperate to try and atone in some way before it’s too late.

Andrew Michael Hurley is the author of the Costa Book award winning *The Loney* and *Starve Acre*, which was made into a film in 2023.

Wednesday 25 November, 1pm – 4pm, free

Writers Unite: Free business support for writers in their local libraries

They say everyone has a book in them but writing that book is only half the battle. How can you promote, sell, and protect your written work? The Business & IP Centre, your local in-library business support service, is on hand to help!

At this event, BIPC officers (and writers) Elaine Cusack and Hannah Hoare will talk about their own writing journeys, the lessons they learnt along the way, and how free library support can help at every stage. We will also hear from the BIPC's intellectual property specialist John Cunningham on some of the key issues facing creatives today, including artificial intelligence and copyright.

Plus, for anyone who would like to test their writing on an audience - we will close with an open microphone opportunity!

The event will have guest speakers:

Ann English

Ann English is a Visual Communications expert and solution focused business coach. She is the founder of Create Intrigue and The Visual Marketing Academy, creator of the VisionMapping™ process, renowned for her VisualDoodle™ style and TED x Speaker. Ann equips business owners, creatives, consultants, coaches with a range of visual communication tools and techniques to transform their ideas into reality.

Danielle Barbereau

The UK's first divorce coach Danielle spent 17 years supporting 1,750+ clients through separation/divorce - all referred by their lawyers.

She's the author of:

'*After the Split'* (non-fiction) – a practical and compassionate guide which helps readers navigate the emotional challenges of relationship breakdown.

'*Grey Matters'* (fiction) – Through an emotionally rich and authentic story Danielle challenges stereotypes, celebrates

resilience and honours women whose voices are often forgotten or overlooked.

Sci-Fi Day at Newcastle Book Festival

Save money with a day ticket pass for Sci-Fi day, £20

Thursday 26 November

2pm – 3pm

Small, Strange and Perfectly Formed

£5

Small press and North East publishing roundtable
The Braag publishes poetry and speculative fiction, as well as the quarterly micro-journal Carmen et Error; Carnyx Press is a new independent publisher sounding the horn for strange and lyrical fantasy, horror, and science fiction. Come and hear representatives from each discuss publishing in the North East.

3.30pm – 4.30pm
Grace Curtis on Heaven's Graveyard

£5
Sunday Times bestselling author Grace Curtis is the author of four novels, including future-climate-Western *Frontier*, workplace-mystery-in-space *The Floating Hotel*, and her new academia-science-fantasy, *Heaven's Graveyard*. Imaginative, smart, and moving, filled with adventure and queer romances, her stories look to both past and future. This discussion will explore Curtis' approach to character, worldbuilding and genre, including how her North East background influences her

writing, with an opportunity to get books signed at the end of the event.

5pm – 6pm

Frances Hardinge on Traitors' Nest

£6

Join Frances Hardinge, winner of the Costa Book Award for *The Lie Tree*, for a discussion of her dazzling new novel for readers of all ages, *Traitor's Nest*, set in a fantasy realm where grandstanding Players deploy castles as though they were chess pieces, and ordinary folk are caught in the gears of their Great Game. The discussion and Q&A will explore Hardinge's historical and mythological inspirations, with the opportunity to get books signed at the end of the event.

6.30pm – 7.30pm

Adrian Tchaikovsky in conversation with Emma Newman
£8

Emma Newman (*Planetfall*) and Adrian Tchaikovsky (*The City of Last Chances*) are award-winning authors and podcast co-hosts. Newman is a Hugo Award winner for her podcast Tea and Jeopardy, while Tchaikovsky's *Children of Time* won the Arthur C. Clarke Award. In their podcast, Starship Alexandria, they take it in turns to recommend each other works for potential inclusion in a library of the future. They will discuss their recent books – *The Vengeance* and *Green City Wars* – and there will be a chance to get books signed at the end of the event.

Friday 27 November, 3pm

Chris Bowlby on No Complacency in conversation with James Routledge from Opt Indie Books

£3

An original football memoir on grief and belonging, glorious joy, of sharing memory, hope, anxiety and humour in the most unexpected ways.

When Chris Bowlby's son Ewan was diagnosed with a brain tumour aged 17, you might have thought football would be the last thing on their minds. But in the following decade in which Ewan faced growing threats to his health, the love of football they shared seemed to grow in importance. It was a kind of thread, defiantly holding some kind of normal life together, and a passion that prompted fascinating discussion about why a sport could matter so much.

After Ewan's death from cancer in 2022 Chris faced a choice. He wondered whether his lifelong love of football might fade. But gradually he found a way of including grief in a return to life, all of life. He understood as never before how much football had meant to him, how it had shaped the world he had lived through, and how it could now help him cope. Yet there was tension too. Was he now more aware of how the modern game might be leaving its humanity behind?

This book explores that experience, ranging from top-level football to community clubs, the intensely local to the global, the women's game as well as the men's. It has football at its heart but is about much more than sport.

Northumberland-based Chris is a Freelance writer and broadcaster, who worked for the BBC for many years.

Saturday 28 November, 11am

Routes to the Page: Outsiders and Underdogs

£5

Building on the success of our previous Routes to the Page event, this panel brings together writers living and working in the North to explore how place, class, and identity shape the stories we tell – and the paths we take into publishing.

The discussion will consider the idea of the “outsider” in contemporary literature, from characters and world building to the realities of being a writer outside traditional literary centres. Alongside conversations about craft, the panel will reflect on the opportunities and challenges of publishing today, drawing on a range of experiences across both traditional and independent routes.

With panellists from a variety of backgrounds and genres, this event will examine how regional voices continue to reshape publishing, challenge expectations, and broaden the stories reaching readers. Audience members can expect an engaging conversation about creativity, representation, and the many routes to becoming a published author.

The Panel will feature Novelists Caroline Hardaker and Louise Powell

Caroline Hardaker is an award-shortlisted novelist, poet, librettist, and occasional puppeteer. Her work has featured in The Washington Post, The Guardian and BBC radio.

She lives in the north east of England and writes dark and brooding tales exploring everything speculative, from folklore to future worlds. Her most recent novel, *Mothtown*, was published in 2023 and was illustrated by Chris Riddell.

Louise Powell's debut novel Underdogs is set in the world of independent greyhound racing, or ‘flapping’, it’s inspired by her childhood involvement in the sport’s lively, working-class community. ‘Telt’ in the County Durham dialect of the flapping community, it’s a tale of family, community, and what it means to be a child in a very adult world.

Lucy Rose’s fiction and non-fiction have been published by Dread Central, Mslexia, The Observer, The Nerd Daily and more, and her films have visited BAFTA- and Oscar-qualifying film festivals internationally. She is also a Forbes Under 30, a Books Are My Bag Fiction Award Shortlistee, Shirley Jackson Award Nominee and a Nota Bene Award and Somerset Maugham Prize Winner.

Lucy’s Sunday Times Bestselling debut novel, The Lamb, is published by W&N Books in the UK and Harper in the US. It was selected for Foyles Book of the Month, named best debut novel of 2025 by Cosmopolitan and Spotify, chosen for Dakota Johnson’s Tea Time Book Club, became a Goodreads Choice Award Finalist and Netgalley’s Literary Fiction Novel of the Year 2025. Lucy lives on the north-east coast of England with her black cat, Figgy, and is currently working on her next story.

Saturday 28 November, 1.30pm

Sam Parker on Good Anger in conversation with Author and Journalist Daniel James

£5

We are used to complaining there is too much anger in the world. But what about the cost of having too little? And what if, instead of fearing anger, we learned to use it wisely?

In *Good Anger,* journalist Sam Parker investigates how one of our most complex emotions became a taboo and the cost that suppressing it has on our mental and physical health, relationships and society. He argues that, rather than trip us up or fill us with shame, anger can be turned into a life-enhancing source of bravery, purpose and self-respect.

Drawing on insights from psychology, ancient philosophy and emotional science, Parker looks at the gendered expectations around anger, how repressed rage shows up in our bodies, and the crucial role processing anger plays in treating depression and anxiety.
This provocative and seemingly counterintuitive book is for people-pleasers, conflict avoiders and self-improvers. It reminds us that embracing our emotions – even the ones that scare or confuse us – can help us become stronger, happier people.

Sam Parker is GQ's Site Director. He has worked in culture and lifestyle journalism for over 15 years, including as Digital Editor at *Esquire* magazine, Features Editor at *BuzzFeed* and Culture Editor of *The Huffington Post*. As a freelance writer he contributes regularly to newspapers including the *Observer*, *Guardian* and *Telegraph*.

Lit & Phil Events

Thursday 19 November, 7.30pm, free

Helen Farish & Katherine Bowers Poetry Reading Two poets with a shared interest in the nature of creativity come together to read from their new collections at the Lit & Phil, with Helen

Farish reading from Monet’s Broom (Bloodaxe Books) and Katharine Towers from The Worrying Rose (Picador).

Helen Farish’s poems in Monet’s Broom emerge from a deep absorption in the work of Claude Monet who revered that most fragile and fleeting of things: the present moment. This is her fifth collection, published in Monet’s centenary year. Two of her previous books were shortlisted for the T.S. Eliot Prize, Intimates (Cape, 2005) and The Penny Dropping (Bloodaxe Books, 2024).

Katharine Towers has long been widely acclaimed for the intricate musicality of her poems and for their almost spiritual attentiveness to the natural world. In The Worrying Rose, her fourth collection, Towers invokes the radical act of being still in a world that seems to be dizzyingly out of control. Unfolding from Samuel Barber’s Hermit Songs cycle influenced in turn by the anonymous writings of early Irish scribes and anchorites – The Worrying Rose distils Towers’ thinking about women, creativity and solitude. Katharine Towers has published four collections with Picador, most recently The Worrying Rose (2026).

This event is sponsored by Bloodaxe Books.

Monday 23 November, 7pm, Lit & Phil, free.

A Red Squirrel Press Book Launch Sean O’ Brien Back of Beyond: English Mysteries

Red Squirrel Press invites you to join us for the launch of Sean O’ Brien’s poetry pamphlet, Back of Beyond: English Mysteries. Back of Beyond follows Sean O’Brien’s acclaimed twelfth poetry collection The Bonfire Party (Picador, 2026). The new poems explore taken-for granted rituals in the back of an

English beyond, including sheds, cricket, rural auctions, Guy Fawkes Night, and slow trains heading even further beyond. O’Brien is Emeritus Professor or Creative Writing at Newcastle University and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature.

Tuesday 24 November, 6pm, Lit & Phil

£7

An Evening with Trevor Wood In conversation with David Whetstone Killer or Saint?

Death is stalking the streets of Newcastle in the form of a mercy-killer who is running an assisted-dying service for those who want a dignified end to their suffering. DCI Jack Parker is on the case but does he really want to catch the killer? The truth is that the Angel of Death may be exactly the kind of man Jack’s been looking for.

Want to know more? Newcastle based crime-writer Trevor Wood will be talking to David Whetstone about his work and, in particular, his latest crime novel, The Angel of Death, the third in his new series featuring DCI Jack Parker, who’s confronting the one killer he can’t stop: early onset dementia. Trevor is an award-winning writer of gritty crime novels set in the North East. His highly-acclaimed debut novel, The Man on the Street, set in Newcastle’s homeless community, picked up the Crime Writers’ Association’s John Creasey New Blood Dagger and the Crimefest Specsavers Debut Novel of the Year. It was also shortlisted for the Theakston’s Old Peculier Crime Novel of the Year.

Wednesday 25 November, 6pm, Lit & Phil

£5

Sniff: A History of Smells William Tullett In this groundbreaking history, Will Tullett takes your nose on a journey through the past and across the globe. Along the way we sniff the foul, the fragrant, and everything in between. Ranging from ancient aromas to modern malodours, this book shows how much richer our understanding of the past can be if we follow our noses rather than accepting that only seeing is believing. The scent of burning incense filled medieval churches, theatres in nineteenth century Paris were thick with smoke: smells have been central to our sense of place and belonging, and, perhaps less positively, to mark those deemed unwelcome. Our sense of smell brings us the pleasure of good food, wine and perfume, but it also warns us of dangers like fire, gas and rot. From the enchanting scent of books and libraries to the disgusting stench of whale fat in candles and soap, what emerges is not just a history of smells, but a sense of the lived experiences of all those who sniffed them. We often think that the past smelled bad, but really – as Tullett shows us – it just smelled different. Will Tullett is a senior lecturer in early modern history at the University of York. He is the author of Smell in Eighteenth-Century England: A Social Sense and Smell and the Past: Noses, Archives, Narratives.

Thursday 26 November, 6pm, Lit & Phil

£5

The Jack Common Archive at Newcastle University Join rare book dealer and actor, Neil Pearson and freelance historical researcher Peter Mitchell for a conversation exploring a remarkable new addition to Newcastle University Special Collections & Archives: a newly acquired accrual to the Jack

Common Archive. The collection comprises reader reports written by the Newcastle-born author Jack Common for the Associated British Picture Corporation based at Elstree Studios between 1955 and 1968.

As one of the Reading Department's most prolific contributors, Common assessed novels, works of non-fiction and screenplays, producing reports that helped determine their potential for adaptation to the screen. The Reading Department played a key role in identifying projects for development, offering a unique insight into the creative and commercial processes of the British film industry. Neil Pearson and Peter Mitchell will discuss the significance of these newly acquired papers, what they reveal about Common's career beyond his published work, and how this archive enriches our understanding of post war British cinema and literary culture.

Friday 27 November, 7pm, Lit & Phil

£15 or £12 concession (THIS EVENT IS SOLD OUT)

A Christmas Carol performed by Gerald Dickens No stranger to the Lit & Phil, or Books on Tyne, Gerald Dickens returns with his acclaimed one man show. The great great grandson of Charles Dickens brings to life the enduring Christmas tale, playing more than 30 characters. Don't miss this early Yuletide treat which has received standing ovations all over the world.

Saturday 28 November, 11am, Lit & Phil.

11am £5 under 18 go free

Sue Reed Molly McFlynn Goes Rogue There were two trees in Molly’s life - one she could no longer bear to be around and another that was calling her back. Haunted by grief and unable to live the life she once knew, Molly is drawn to Sycamore Gap. It’s the only place that makes sense to her – where the legendary tree stood alone beside Hadrian’s Wall for generations, a symbol of strength, memory, and belonging. On the night before the beloved tree is brutally felled in an act that shocks and devastates the nation, Molly finds herself standing beneath its branches. And something shifts.

Pulled into a world far older and wilder than her own, Molly is swept back to ancient Britain, into a world of Iron Age tribes, druids, and old magic, at the time when Hadrian’s Wall is being constructed.

As the line between past and present blurs, Molly rediscovers her spark and creativity and uncovers a fierce power buried deep within herself - one fuelled by grief, rebellion, and hope.

Sue Reed lives in rural Northumberland, where a love of nature and the wild inspires her writing. She went to Newcastle University to do an MA in Creative Writing as a mature student in 2019, and it was during the Writing for Children and Young Adults module that the Molly McFlynn series was first fledged. Sue writes non-fiction essays on her Substack RIPE and freelances for various publications.

If you would like to book on any of the events please speak to a member of staff at any Newcastle Library or The Lit & Phil.

Tickets can also be booked online at www.booksontyne.co.uk or by calling 0191 2320192.