



BARNSLEY
BOOK
FESTIVAL

14 February – 7 March 2026

— BARNSLEY —
LIBRARIES

Programme of events

February

Saturday 14	A Storytelling Adventure with Lydia Monks	Library @ the Lightbox
Monday 16	Family Bookmark Printmaking Workshop with LJayBee Illustrations	Roundhouse Library/ Thurnscoe Library
Monday 16	Join the Rescue Crew! Story and craft with author Suzy Senior	Barnsley Town Hall/ Worsbrough Library
Tuesday 17	Weird and Wondrous Tales from the North with author and storyteller Richard O'Neill MBE	Cudworth Library/ Hoyland Library
Tuesday 17	A Magical Nature Adventure with Katie Taylor	Darfield Library
Wednesday 18	Comic Drawing & Zine Making Workshop with Josephine Dellow	Library @ the Lightbox/ Royston Library
Thursday 19	The Usherette – Eek!	Dodworth Library/ Wombwell Library
Friday 20	Land Art Play with James Brunt	Goldthorpe Library
Monday 23	Barnsley Creative Writers Workshop	Library @ the Lightbox
Monday 23	Clubland: How the Working Men's Club Shaped Britain	Penistone Paramount
Wednesday 25	What Doesn't Kill Us. Ajay Close in conversation with Hannah Trevarthen	Library @ the Lightbox
Thursday 26	Fantasy Map Creation with Vashti Hardy	Base71 Barnsley Youth Zone
Thursday 26	The History of Penistone FC	Library @ the Lightbox
Friday 27	The Barnsley Book Sale	Library @ the Lightbox
Saturday 28	The Barnsley Book Sale	Library @ the Lightbox
Saturday 28	Barnsley Zine Fair	Barnsley Civic
Saturday 28	Miners and the Great War, with Brian Elliott	Library @ the Lightbox
Saturday 28	Step into History with Greg Jenner!	Barnsley Civic

March

Monday 2	LIVEWIRE POETRY SHOWCASE	Library @ the Lightbox
Tuesday 3	FORM EXTRAVAGANZA – a Poetry workshop with Ian McMillan	Mapplewell Library
Tuesday 3	Death in the Garden: Poisonous Plants and their use throughout History, with Michael Brown	Darfield Library
Wednesday 4	Telling Stories with the Barnsley Home Library Service	Library @ the Lightbox
Wednesday 4	An evening with Graeme Macrae Burnet in-conversation with Becki Pritchard	Library @ the Lightbox
Friday 6	Rowan McCabe presents Hard Knocks: A Show of Poetry and Comedy About Making Mischief	Barnsley Civic
Saturday 7	Once upon a time, there was a story before the fairy tale... with Abie Longstaff	Library @ the Lightbox
Saturday 7	A Cleopatra Conversation with Prof. Joann Fletcher	Library @ the Lightbox

WELCOME

Welcome to the **third edition** of the Barnsley Book Festival, where stories come alive and imagination takes centre stage! This February, we're lighting up Barnsley with a spectacular celebration of books, creativity, and community.

As part of the **National Year of Reading**, we're thrilled to welcome **international best-selling children's authors and illustrators**

Lydia Monks and Abie Longstaff for magical family workshops and book signings. Expect laughter, learning, and lots of inspiration – plus a packed programme of family-friendly fun with both new and familiar faces throughout the half-term holiday.

For grown-ups, don't miss a brilliant evening with **Greg Jenner** – acclaimed historian, author, and comedian behind *Horrible Histories* and *You're Dead to Me* – he'll be live at our partner venue **Barnsley Civic**. We're delighted to be hosting a stellar line-up of speakers including local authors **Brian Elliott**, Barnsley-born Egyptologist **Prof. Joann Fletcher**, and many more.

We're also bringing back the electrifying **LiveWire** spoken word night, hands-on creative workshops, and the ever-popular **Barnsley Book Sale** – perfect for discovering your next great read.

This festival is proudly brought to you by **Barnsley Libraries**, supported by **Arts Council England** as part of our National Portfolio Organisation programme.

Many events are free but have limited capacity – so **book early** to avoid missing out:

barnsley.gov.uk/libraryevents

Come celebrate the power of stories with us – see you there!



Family activities

Saturday 14 February

A Storytelling Adventure with Lydia Monks

Library @ the Lightbox 10:30am-11:30am

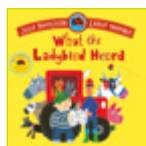
- Booking essential, £3 per ticket

Join bestselling and award-winning author and illustrator, Lydia Monks, for a sparkling storytelling adventure and live illustration featuring all your favourite characters from her bestselling books!

Lydia Monks is one of the most original picture book artists working today. Lydia illustrates several bestselling series including the What the Ladybird Heard adventures and Princess Mirror-Belle, written by Julia Donaldson. Her distinctive use of colour and collage has won her critical acclaim and several awards, including the Royal Mail Scottish Children's Book Award, the Stockport Children's Book Award and multiple nominations for the Kate Greenaway Medal. She is also the

author and illustrator of the preschool picture book series Twit Twoo School.

Suitable for ages 4+



Monday 16 February

Family Bookmark Printmaking Workshop with LjayBee Illustrations

Roundhouse Library 10:30am-12noon

Thurnscoe Library 2pm-3:30pm

- Free, booking required

In this workshop, you'll design and print your own bookmarks using oil pastel mono printing. We'll add colour and details with watercolours and then finish them off with tassels and charms. Each bookmark will be completely unique and made by you to use in your next big read.

Suitable for ages 8+

Monday 16 February

Join the Rescue Crew! Story and craft with author Suzy Senior

Barnsley Town Hall 10:30am-12:30pm

Worsbrough Library 2pm-3pm

● Free, drop in

Are you ready for a brand-new fun-filled Rescue Crew story? Join Octopants author, Suzy Senior, for stories and activities – including the new book, Rescue Crew: Flying High! Maybe spot some dinosaurs, go bananas, and choose your favourite undersea outfit too!

Suitable for ages 0-7



Tuesday 17 February

Weird and Wondrous Tales from the North with author and storyteller Richard O'Neill MBE

Cudworth Library 10:30am-11:30am

Hoyland Library 2pm-3pm

● Free, drop in

Step into a world of mystery, magic, and laughter as internationally acclaimed author Richard O'Neill brings his unique Northern tales to life. Join us at the library for a spellbinding storytelling session packed with fun, imagination, and surprises, perfect for all the family!

From rhyming frogs to talking dogs, from greedy kings to cats that sing. From pit ponies to hairy monsters from giant apples to riddling funsters.

Suitable for all ages



Tuesday 17 February

A Magical Nature Adventure with Katie Taylor

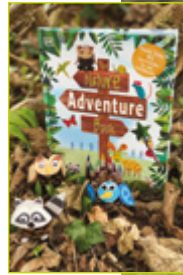
Darfield Library 2pm-3:30pm

● Free, booking essential

Calling all explorers! Come and join us for an outdoor nature adventure inspired by 'The Nature Adventure Book' by Katie Taylor. You'll wave your very own stick wand, bring pinecones to life as fun forest friends, and cook up delicious (and muddy!) recipes in the Darfield library mud kitchen.

Encourage your child's creativity, imagination, and love of the outdoors with our hands on activity session.

Suitable for ages 3-5



Wednesday 18 February

Comic Drawing & Zine Making Workshop with Josephine Dellow

Library @ the Lightbox 10:30am-11:30am

Royston Library 1:30pm-2:30pm

● Free, booking essential

Join local illustrator Josephine Dellow for a fun, hands-on workshop all about creating your own stories through comics and zines! Learn the basics of drawing facial expressions, coming up with simple stories and making zines - learning how to fold, cut, and assemble your own mini-books to share with friends and family.

This workshop encourages imagination, storytelling, and self-expression in a relaxed and creative setting. No experience needed-just bring your ideas and curiosity!

All materials are provided. Suitable for ages 8-11



Thursday 19 February

The Usherette – Eek!

Dodworth Library 10:30am–11:30am

Wombwell Library 2pm–3pm

● Free, booking essential

Join Fettle & Fable Theatre for a performance of The Usherette and the shadow show Eek!, featuring mice, mischief and mayhem as we follow our dreams and reach for the moon!

Joyous and charming, Eek! is a delightful spectacle for everyone, delivered through the magic of shadow puppetry... a fun, heart-warming tale of tenacity and team-work.

The show will be accompanied by a puppet making workshop and the opportunity to play with shadows and light.

Suitable for age 5+



Friday 20 February

Land Art Play with James Brunt

Goldthorpe Library 9am–1pm

● Free, drop in

Environmental artist James Brunt invites young people to create temporary arranged artworks out of a collection of random materials.

We'll be letting our playful creative intuition take over the library space, exploring patterns, textures and shapes to create solo and collaborative artworks.

Suitable for all ages

Events and workshops

Monday 23 February

Barnsley Creative Writers Workshop

Library @ the Lightbox 5pm-7pm

● Free, booking required

Local writing group, *Barnsley Creative Writers*, invites you to join their supportive and friendly group of authors and poets for one evening. Try your hand at creative writing, all abilities welcome whether you are a regular writer or simply curious about putting pen to paper. Join them for an inspiring and inclusive writing session where you will have the opportunity to develop fresh ideas, hear some of the writing group's own poetry and prose, and share your own work on the night.

Suitable for ages 18 +



Monday 23 February

Clubland: How the Working Men's Club Shaped Britain.

Penistone Paramount 6.30pm-7.30pm

● Free, booking required

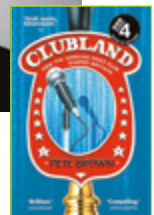
Join Barnsley-born author Pete Brown for a discussion about his recent book, *Clubland:*

How the Working Men's Club Shaped

Britain. Named as a BBC Radio 4 book of the week, Brown's enlightening, affectionate and intoxicating history of the

British institution of Working Men's Clubs traces a path from

its founding by a teetotal minister, to its heyday, when more than 7 million Brits were members. Join us for a warm-hearted and entertaining evening, where our lively guide will take you on a fascinating journey, exploring the untold story of an often-misunderstood cultural phenomenon.



Wednesday 25 February

What Doesn't Kill Us. Ajay Close in conversation with Hannah Trevarthen

Library @ the Lightbox 6pm-7:30pm

● Free, booking required

A killer stalks the streets of Leeds. Every man is a suspect. Every woman is at risk. But women are fighting back. It's the eve of the 1980s, and PC Liz Seeley joins the squad investigating the murders. With a violent boyfriend at home and male chauvinist pigs at work, she is drawn to a feminist collective led by the militant and uncompromising Rowena. There she meets Charmaine – young, Black, artistic, and fighting discrimination on two fronts. As the list of victims grows and bungling police fail to catch the killer, women are too terrified to go out after dark. Liz is torn between loyalty to them and her duty as a police officer.

Action-packed and darkly funny, prize-winning novel *What Doesn't Kill Us* reveals just how much the world has changed since the 1970s – and how much it hasn't.



Thursday 26 February

Fantasy Map Creation with Vashti Hardy

Base71 Barnsley Youth Zone 5pm-6pm

● Free, booking required

Embark on a magical journey with author Vashti Hardy, in this imaginative fantasy map-making workshop. Using the same techniques she uses in her own writing, Vashti will guide young people through the art of crafting their own fantasy worlds.

As they design their maps, young adventurers will chart epic quests, invent magical lands, and weave stories rooted in their own passions and ideas. This hands-on experience will empower them to become world-builders and storytellers, unlocking the magic of their imaginations!

Suitable for ages 8-12 years

Thursday 26 February

The History of Penistone FC

Library @ the Lightbox 6pm-7pm

- Free, booking required

Join author Kevin Neill for an engaging talk that goes beyond the history of Penistone Church Football Club. Based on over two decades of meticulous research, Kevin will uncover Penistone's remarkable role in the early development of football and how a small town helped shape the modern sport we know today.



Friday 27 and

Saturday 28 February

The Barnsley Book Sale

Library @ the Lightbox 10am-3pm

- Free, drop in

We're bringing back the Book Sale for two days only, on the ground floor of the Library @ the Lightbox – please bring a bag, but note there will be no cash, only card payments will be accepted.

Saturday 28 February

Barnsley Zine Fair

Barnsley Civic 10:30am-4pm

Drop in and explore 60 zinemakers, illustrators, designers, writers and poets. Free workshops and exhibitions.

Saturday 28 February

Miners and the Great War, with Brian Elliott

Library @ the Lightbox 11am-12:30pm

- Free, booking required

Join us for a fascinating morning hearing from acclaimed local author Brian Elliott on the making of his new book *Miners and the Great War*. Described as 'a masterpiece' due to its insights into the ordinary (and extraordinary) lives of people during 1914-18 and beyond, Brian's research extending over ten years, is based on the case studies of over 700 individuals, alongside their family backgrounds and the communities in which they lived and worked.

Saturday 28 February

Step into History with Greg Jenner!

Barnsley Civic 7:30pm–9pm

● Tickets £10 or £8 concessions,
from barnsleycivic.co.uk

Join us for an unforgettable evening with the brilliant and wildly entertaining historian **Greg Jenner**, in conversation with acclaimed author and journalist **Michelle Rowlin**.

Greg is not your average historian—he's a master of blending pop culture, comedy, and historical insight to make the past come alive. As the creator and host of BBC Radio 4's smash-hit podcast **You're Dead to Me**, Greg has captivated millions with his unique ability to pair expert historians with top comedians to explore the weird, wonderful,

and wildly unexpected corners of global history. With over **90 million downloads** and a loyal Saturday morning audience on BBC Radio 4, it's no wonder the show is a flagship for BBC Sounds.

You might also know Greg from his work as the historical consultant behind the hilarious and award-winning *Horrible Histories* TV series and its BAFTA-nominated film *Rotten Romans*. His knack for making history fun and accessible has earned him fans of all ages.

Greg is also the author and narrator of six fantastic books, including the bestselling *A Million Years In A Day*, *Dead Famous*, and *Ask A Historian*, plus his riotously fun children's series *Totally Chaotic History!*—where Ancient Egypt gets unruly, the Stone Age runs wild, and Roman Britain gets rowdy!

Whether you're a history buff, a podcast addict, or just love a good laugh, this evening promises to be **insightful, hilarious, and full of surprises**.

Age recommended 16+





Monday 2 March

LIVEWIRE POETRY
SHOWCASE Starring
Salena Godden and
Torja Garbutt, plus
open mic

Library @ the Lightbox 6pm-8pm

● Free, drop in

Salena Godden FRSL is an award-winning author, poet and broadcaster of Jamaican-mixed heritage based in London. Her debut novel *Mrs Death Misses Death* won the Indie Book Award for Fiction and the People's Book Prize, and was shortlisted for the British Book Awards and the Gordon Burn Prize. Salena has been shortlisted for the 4thWrite short story prize and the Ted Hughes Prize. Her work has been widely anthologised and broadcast on radio, TV and film. Her poem, *Pessimism is for Lightweights*, is on permanent display at the People's History Museum, Manchester. She was inducted as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature in 2022.

Torja Garbutt is a poet and spoken word performer from Knottingley, West Yorkshire. Her work, rooted in themes of class, identity and personal experience, has been



featured on BBC platforms and widely across national stages. She has published two collections with Wrecking Ball Press – *The Universe and Me* and *Another Time in Space*. Toria works within the criminal justice system, using poetry as a tool for connection, reflection and rehabilitation. She was writer-in-residence at the Brontë Parsonage Museum in 2020.

Matt Abbott is a poet and award-winning lyricist from Wakefield. His critically-acclaimed spoken word stage show *Two Little Ducks* explored working-class support for Brexit alongside his experiences volunteering at a Calais refugee camp. The show's poems were published by VERVE in 2018. Matt's debut kids' poetry collection, *A Hurricane in My Head*, was published by Bloomsbury in 2019. Throughout his poetry career, he's shared a stage with

names including Paul Weller, Shaparak Khorsandi, Jeremy Corbyn MP, Sara Pascoe, and Sleaford Mods. He's also known for fronting indie band Skint & Demoralised.

LIVEwire Poetry is a small poetry-focused organisation based in Leeds. Their live events aim to platform the most exciting poetry in the UK, and their writer development strand aims to champion underrepresented voices through poetry.

Suitable for 16+

OPEN MIC.

There will be a total of 8 open mic slots at this event. 5 of these slots are available to book in advance, with 3 available on the night on a first come, first served basis. We ask performers to stick to a maximum of 3 minutes.

To book a slot please email BarnsleyLibrariesNPO@barnsley.gov.uk



Tuesday 3 March

FORM EXTRAVAGANZA – a Poetry workshop with Ian McMillan

Mapplewell Library 10am–12pm

● Free, booking essential

We'll write poems in all kinds of different forms: Haiku, Limericks, Sonnets, Villanelles, Pantoums, Sestinas, Triolets and anything else we can fit into two hours! And we'll write a poem in a new form called 'The Mapplewell'.

Suitable for beginners and poets alike.

Tuesday 3 March

Death in the Garden: Poisonous Plants and their use throughout History, with Michael Brown

Darfield Library 5:30pm–7pm

● Free, booking required

Over the centuries poisonous plants have been used to remove an unwanted partner or rival, as aphrodisiacs, for pest control and the means to foretell the future or speak with the gods. Learn about the mysterious mandrake and how a pot of Basil helped to conceal a savage murder, until... Be warned, many of these plants may well be growing in your garden.

Michael has been interested in history and gardening for as long as he can remember.

Now known as the Historic Gardener, Michael researched and designed the medieval gardens at the Prebendal Manor, Nassington, experimenting with medieval gardening methods and the uses of plants. Michael lectures on early gardens, gardening and plants and has an MA in Garden History.



Wednesday 4 March

Telling Stories with the Barnsley Home Library Service

Library @ the Lightbox, 11am-2pm

● Free, drop in

Barnsley's Home Library Service have been collecting stories from local people and have turned them into an exhibition of audio stories and a new book of fascinating tales.

Drop in to speak to the friendly team, view the Telling Stories project and find out more about the Home Library Service which delivers books, large print and audio to house bound individuals across the borough.

Wednesday 4 March

An evening with Graeme Macrae Burnet in-conversation with Becki Pritchard

Library @ the Lightbox 6pm-7:30pm

● Free, booking required

Graeme Macrae Burnet's propulsive, Booker-shortlisted contemporary classic *His Bloody Project*, reissued to mark its tenth anniversary, is a mesmerising literary thriller set in 1869 in a remote Highland community.

His new novella, *Benbecula*, is a fictionalised account of a true crime that occurred in the Outer Hebrides just a few years prior.

The events are reimagined through Burnet's lens with a focus on sanity, madness and violence, suffocating communities, and how justice and punishment are meted out in unforgiving landscapes. Both are characterised by dark humour and Burnet's brilliant writing and highly original style of storytelling.



Friday 6 March

Rowan McCabe presents *Hard Knocks: A Show of Poetry and Comedy About Making Mischief*

Barnsley Civic 7:30pm-9pm

● Tickets £10 or £8 concession from barnsleycivic.co.uk

With his new book *The Door-to-Door Poet* (Eye Books) released in September 2025, as well as a programme on BBC Radio 4 following swiftly after, Rowan McCabe returns to the stage with *Hard Knocks*, a show of comedy and spoken word about community and connection.

Rowan likes making a nuisance of himself with poetry. Over the past 10 years he's been poet in residence in a pizza takeaway, in William Wordsworth's childhood home and, once, on a miniature steam train. He's also the world's first Door-to-Door Poet and in 2019 he travelled across England, knocking on strangers' doors and writing bespoke verses for them, for free, on any subject of their choosing. It's a project that's been featured in the Guardian and on BBC Breakfast.

Hard Knocks is a collection of all new material that lifts the lid on some of the most funny and challenging moments of this unconventional career path. Expect stories of mistaken identity, odes to rebellious snails, and ruminations on time travelling public officials, all delivered with Rowan's trademark warmth and wit.

Age guidance 14+, occasional swearing, moderate references to mental health issues.



Saturday 7 March

Once upon a time, there was a story before the fairy tale... with Abie Longstaff

Library @ the Lightbox

10.30am-11:30am

● Tickets, £3 per child

Join best-selling author Abie Longstaff for a magical journey into the origins of classic fairy tale characters. Discover how Dazzle became a Fairy Godmother, then explore your imagination to solve your own fairy tale mystery!

Every child will leave with an enchanting tale of their own!

Abie is an award-winning, best-selling author of children's fiction. Her picture books include the *Before the Fairy Tale* series and *The Fairytale Hairdresser*, which appeared on Nickelodeon as *Sunny Day*. For older children, she writes *The Magic Potions Shop* and *The Trapdoor Mysteries* series.

Suitable for ages 3-6



Saturday 7 March

A Cleopatra Conversation with Prof. Joann Fletcher

Library @ the Lightbox 5pm-6:30pm

● Free, booking essential

To celebrate her new exhibition 'Cleopatra & the Queens of Egypt' at Experience Barnsley Museum, the Barnsley-born BAFTA-winning Egyptologist talks to journalist Graham

Walker, discussing exhibition highlights, its surprising local links and her queen-related books *Cleopatra the Great*, *The Search for Nefertiti* and *The Story of Egypt* (all Hodder & Stoughton).

Professor Joann Fletcher, of the Department of Archaeology at the University of York, is patron of Barnsley Museums & Heritage Trust and Lead Local Ambassador for the Egypt Exploration Society. Her many television appearances include the BAFTA-winning 'Mummifying Alan: Egypt's Last Secret' and the BBC series 'Immortal Egypt with Joann Fletcher'.





How to join the library

It's quick and easy to join the library online or you can also join in branch. You'll need to bring proof of your ID and if you're under 16 you will need a guarantor.

It's free to borrow books from our libraries, adults can borrow up to 20 books and children can borrow up to 10 books at a time.

To join as a member, or find out more information please visit – www.barnsley.gov.uk/services/libraries/join-the-library/

Accessibility

Barnsley Book Festival takes place at a range of venues across the borough of Barnsley.

We are committed to making all events as accessible as possible. If you have specific access needs, please contact the venue directly to discuss your requirements. You can find detailed accessibility information for each venue on our website.

If you require a **BSL interpreter** at any of our events, please email us at barnsleylibrariesnpo@barnsley.gov.uk and we'll do our best to accommodate your request.

Concessions

We have a limited number of free **Golden Tickets** available for selected paid events. These tickets are for:

- People receiving unemployment or disability benefits
- Full-time students
- Senior citizens
- Young people aged 21 and under

If you'd like to request a Golden Ticket, please email us at barnsleylibrariesnpo@barnsley.gov.uk.

Tickets are limited and offered on a **first come, first served** basis.

THANK YOU

Barnsley Book Festival has been made possible with support from our contributors, and we'd like to say a huge thank you for their generous support. The programme is supported by using public funding by Arts Council England.

Contact us: BarnsleyLibrariesNPO@barnsley.gov.uk

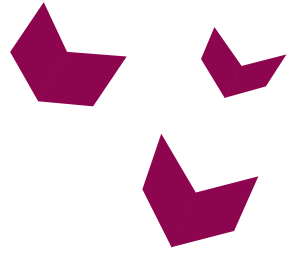
Book online: www.barnsley.gov.uk/libraryevents



BarnsleyBookFestival



@barnsleylibraries



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

BARNLEY
LIBRARIES



Funded by
UK Government

Designed by Black Bee Creative

This booklet has been printed on recyclable paper by Hot Metal Press – please recycle responsibly.