

Somerville

Creates



23 November 2024

Welcome to Somerville Creates:

our new-format literary event to celebrate Somervillian writing.

Somerville Creates will:

- Let you know who's publishing what and introduce you to established and growing College talents so you can talk with them during the day.
- The relaxed format should enable you to share recommendations, and talk about your favourite books. Deliberately, there are LOTS of breaks between talks...
- You can browse through books written by Somervillians provided by a local indie bookshop (see below), and hopefully buy one or two, with a 15% discount.
- Finally, the day can help you in your own writing career if you aim to be published. Why not access the advice of alumni working in publishing, talk to published writers about their experiences, or try some creative writing in small workshops led by our MSt students?

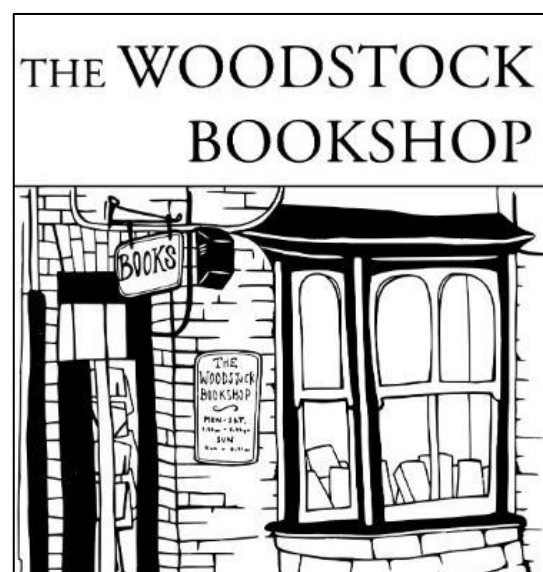
This programme is circulated in advance so you can browse before the day – and perhaps work out who you'd particularly like to talk to. (There are headshots in here to make finding people a bit easier...)

The Woodstock Bookshop

Founded by Somervillian Rachel Phipps (1977), The Woodstock Bookshop opened its doors in 2008. It has been on the regional shortlist for Independent Bookshop of the Year in 2009, 2013 and 2017, and listed in the Independent's Top 50 UK Bookshops. In 2012 the Bookshop started its annual Woodstock Poetry Festival.

Rachel has now passed on the mantle of running the shop, but we're grateful to her for coming in today with books by Somervillian authors that you can buy with a 15% discount.

She'll be located in the Brittain-Williams Room between talks.



Programme

- 10am arrive Tea/coffee and pastries in the Brittain-Williams Room
- 10.30-11.30 **Session 1: Recent books by Somervillians** – short talks in Flora Anderson Hall
- Jane Anstey** (1973) – *Priest Hole*
 Sarah Bax Horton (1987) – *Arm of Eve: Investigating the Thames Torso Murders*
 Rosie Oliver (1976) – *A Truth Beyond Full*
 Jane Robinson (1978) – *Trailblazer*
 Fiona Stafford – *Time and Tide: The Long. Long Life of Landscapes*
- 11.30-12.00 Tea/coffee and biscuits in the Brittain-Williams Room
- 12.00-1.00 **Session 2: Creative Journeys** – meet Somerville’s MSt Creative Writing students and hear (and watch) some of their work in Flora Anderson Hall
- Annabel Bird** (2023)
 Niamh Campbell (2023)
 Grace Copeland (2022)
 Harry Ledgerwood (2022)
- 1.00-2.00 Buffet Lunch in Hall
- 2.00-3.00 **Session 3: Writing the Past** – a panel discussion with **Francesca Kay** (1975) and **Michèle Roberts** (1967), chaired by **Annie Sutherland**, in Flora Anderson Hall
- 3.00-3.30 Cream tea in the Brittain-Williams Room
- 3.30-4.30 **Session 4: Creative Workshops**
- Writing workshop 1 – led by **Grace Copeland** and **Annabel Bird**, in the Margaret Thatcher Centre
 Writing workshop 2 – led by **Harry Ledgerwood** and **Niamh Campbell**, in Park 5
 Getting published – with **Clara Farmer** (1992), **Alysoun Owen** (1987) and **J. S. Watts** (1979) in Flora Anderson Hall
- Audience members are assumed to be in the Getting Published workshop unless registered for a small group writing workshop. Please see Jackie on the day to see if there’s space in one of these if you haven’t already let her know.

Session 1: Recent Books by Somervillians

Jane Anstey



Priest Hole (Wings Epress, 2024)

'It was on the third day that the eerie wailing was heard.'

Spring 2020 finds Rev. Jeremy Swanson and his four children house-sitting for a friend in Cornwall, leaving Jeremy's wife Liz behind in Oxford. As Lockdown restrictions ease, they get to know the inhabitants of an ancient manor house, Tresayne, where tragic and long-buried secrets are beginning to surface. A study of Tresayne family history sheds some light on these, but it is the coming of an abused teenager seeking help that acts as a catalyst for ensuing events.

This is the third in the series of Jeremy Swanson mysteries, a tale of a dysfunctional family thrust into close companionship during Lockdown, and forced to confront not only their own secrets, but those of their ancestors, as the diary of a clergyman living in the house during the First World War reveals. In doing so they must find the priest hole, sealed and long forgotten, and confront the horrors perpetrated there long ago.

Sarah Bax Horton



Arm of Eve (The History Press, 2024)

In a sequel to her debut non-fiction book *One-Armed Jack: Uncovering the real Jack the Ripper*, Sarah Bax Horton explores the contemporaneous police investigation into the Thames Torso Killer. In a case as difficult to crack as that of the Ripper, the author proposes a previously unknown prime suspect. He started to kill in Easter 1887, over a year before the Ripper, and his last murder was in September 1889, almost ten months after that of the Ripper's last victim, Mary Jane Kelly. The Torso killer murdered and dismembered at least four women, in addition to the unborn child of the only victim who was identified. Although unsolved, his crimes revealed distinctive patterns of behaviour and movement that can be attributed to a named individual.

Rosie Oliver



A Truth Beyond Full (Elsewhen Press, 2024)

Miranda, an ice and rock moon of Uranus, has been a thriving mining colony. But recently there has been a rise in fatal accidents. Kylone has an ability to extrapolate patterns behind a rock face to determine where and how to dig. When his fiancée died in another accident, he blamed himself and his ability; a wreck, no longer able to mine, he became a priest with limited duties in the locally developed Priesthood. Assigned to officiate at a hero miner's funeral, the widow asks Kylone to investigate the spate of accidents and, along with some help from an unexpected source, he starts to suspect that they may have a more sinister cause, a suspicion which puts his own life in danger.

Jane Robinson



Trailblazer (Transworld Publishers, 2024)

Name any 'modern' human rights movement, and Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon was a pioneer: feminism, equal opportunities, diversity, inclusion, mental health awareness, Black Lives Matter. While her name has been omitted from too many history books, it was Barbara that opened the doors for more famous names to walk through. And her influence owed as much to who she was as to what she did: people loved her for her robust sense of humour, cheerfulness and indiscriminate acts of kindness.

This is a celebration of the life of the founder of Britain's suffrage movement: campaigner for equal opportunity in the workplace, the law, at home and beyond. Co-founder of Girton, the first university college for women, a committed activist for human rights, fervently anti-slavery, she was also one of Victorian England's finest female painters.

Jane Robinson's brilliant new book shines a light on a remarkable woman who lived on her own terms and to whom we owe a huge debt.

Fiona Stafford



Time and Tide (John Murray, 2024)

A village waits at the bottom of a reservoir. A monkey puzzle tree bristles in a suburban garden. A skein of wild geese fly over a rusty rail viaduct. The vast inland sea that awed John Clare has become fields.

Chapter by fascinating chapter, alive with literary, local, and her own family history, Fiona Stafford reveals the forces, both natural and human, which transform places. Swooping along coastlines, through forests and across fens, following in the footsteps of Burns and Keats, Celia Fiennes and Charles Dickens, William and Dorothy Wordsworth, Noel Coward and Compton Mackenzie, join her, time-travelling deep into the stories of our Isles.

From red squirrels to brick vistas, from botanical gardens to hot springs, the landscapes of Britain are full of delights and surprises. Chance discoveries of rare species, shipwrecks and unlikely ruins, curious trees and startling towers, weird caves and disused airfields, or even just baffling placenames offer ways into unexpected histories and hidden lives. The clues to the past are all round us - *Time and Tide* will help you find them.

Session 2: Meeting Somerville's MSt Creative Writing Students

Annabel Bird



Annabel Bird writes short stories and novels exploring the psychological lives of women. Her particular focus is on mystery, crime and the supernatural and uncanny. She lives in London and is currently working on a novel.

Niamh Campbell



Niamh Campbell is a writer and filmmaker from Cheltenham. She is in her second year of the MSt in Creative Writing, specialising in TV comedy and drama. Recently, she wrote and directed the short film, 'Soror,' working with an all-female cast and crew to centralise the female gaze.

Grace Copeland



Grace Copeland, 24, is an emerging writer from Sunderland. She is working on her first collection, *Homescars*, which deals with the complexities of leaving home, exploring nostalgia, lost futures, and mythologies of the North East. Her work has been shortlisted for the Jon Stallworthy Poetry Prize, came second for poetry in the Hammond House International Literary Prize, appears in Written Off Publishing's two most recent editions of *Ey Up* and has been published by The Poetry Society. Alongside her writing, Grace works in prison education, delivering specialist support and creative writing interventions for incarcerated learners.

Harry Ledgerwood



Harry Ledgerwood is a fiction writer and poet from Ayr, Scotland. His work has been published in the Oxford Review Books, Gutter Magazine, and an anthology with the Hampden Collection. He was shortlisted for the Dart Prize and the Jon Stallworthy Prize. He is currently working on his first novel.

Go to https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A9FDt_Mv3E to see Grace and Harry perform their poetry in the final of the Jon Stallworthy poetry competition earlier this year.

Session 3: Writing the Past – a discussion with Francesca Kay and Michèle Roberts, chaired by Annie Sutherland

Francesca Kay



Francesca Kay grew up in Southeast Asia and India, and has subsequently lived in Jamaica, the United States, Germany and now lives in Oxford. Her first novel, *An Equal Stillness*, won the 2009 Orange Award for New Writers, and her second novel, *The Translation of the Bones*, was longlisted for the 2012 Women's Prize for Fiction. Her third novel, *The Long Room*, was published in 2016; *The Book of Days* is her fourth.

"The language is sumptuous ... Many years in the writing, the novel touches on themes of life and death, grief and mourning, and profound religious upheaval."

Michèle Roberts



Michèle Roberts is half French and half English. She has published fifteen novels, three collections of short stories, nine collections of poetry, two memoirs, and one cookery book. Her book on Colette, *Colette: My Literary Mother*, has just come out. She has written one TV film and has had two plays performed. Her novel *Daughters of the House* (1992) was shortlisted for the Booker Prize and won the W.H.Smith Literary Award. She is Professor Emeritus at UEA.

"Michèle Roberts is one of those writers descended perhaps as much from Monet and Debussy as Virginia Woolf or Keats ... To read a book by her is to savour colour, sound, taste, texture and touch as never before."

Annie Sutherland



English Fellow at Somerville, Annie's teaching at undergraduate level focuses mainly on medieval texts, and she most often supervises MSt and DPhil students whose research looks at religious and biblical literature, or devotional texts by and for women. This interest in texts for the use of female audiences informs her current research and she is, for instance, working on an edition of thirteenth-century prayers written for, and possibly by, women known as the 'Wooing Group'. She has also been commissioned by Cambridge University Press to edit a wide ranging, interdisciplinary collection of essays on the body in the global Middle Ages, *The Body in Medieval Literature and Culture, c. 1000-1500*.

Session 4: Workshops

- A. **Creative Workshop 1** – led by **Grace Copeland** and **Annabel Bird**, in the Margaret Thatcher Centre
- B. **Creative Workshop 2** – led by **Harry Ledgerwood** and **Niamh Campbell**, in Park 5

There will be limited numbers in these creative workshops to enable discussion and sharing of writing. They are planned as engaging, short exercises to try different kinds of writing.

If you would like to take part in one of these workshops, please check with Jackie on the day to see if there is space. You will have had an invitation to register for them ahead of the event.

C. Getting Published

Clara Farmer



Clara Farmer (English, 1992) is an editor and publisher at Chatto & Windus, an imprint of Penguin Random House UK. She commissions fiction and non-fiction, and her authors include Edmund de Waal, Mark Haddon, Nigella Lawson and Rose Tremain. Recently, she is particularly pleased to have published books in which Somerville College takes a starring role, most recently *Metaphysical Animals: How Four Women brought philosophy back to life* by Clare Mac Cumhaill and Rachael Wiseman (about Iris Murdoch, Mary Midgley, Philippa Foot and Elizabeth Anscombe) and Pip Williams' novels set in

Edwardian Oxford: *The Dictionary of Lost Words* and *The Bookbinder of Jericho*. With over 25 years' experience in publishing, Clara has also embarked on a part-time PhD focusing on the UK publishing history in the 1950s and 60s.

Alysoun Owen



Alysoun Owen (English, 1987) is an experienced publisher and project manager of print and digital products. Through her consultancy company, she advises publishers on their strategy and with her team of editors and project managers helps them implement change. She has worked on professional, academic, trade and education titles and with self-published authors. Publishers she works with include Bloomsbury, Class Publishing, Oxford University Press, Pearson, Faber & Faber, Cicerone Books, and Springer Nature. In her role as Editor of the bestselling annual guides to how to get published, the Writers' & Artists' Yearbook and the Children's Writers' & Artists' Yearbook, she speaks at conferences, literary events and on university courses. She is the author of the Writers' & Artists' Guide to Getting Published and commissions titles on creative writing for Bloomsbury Publishing.

J S Watts



J.S. Watts is a British poet, novelist and short story writer who has been described as weaving the fantastical and the literary with other vibrant strands to create glowing, multi-faceted writing. Originally from London, she read English at Somerville and now lives in Cambridgeshire.

Her poetry, short stories and non-fiction appear in a wide variety of publications in Britain and abroad and have been broadcast on BBC and Independent Radio. She has edited various magazines and anthologies and performed her poetry across England, Scotland and Wales, but not yet in Ireland. She has given talks and run workshops and writing groups for many

years and in many places.

To date she has had nine books published: five of poetry and four novels. The latest is *Elderlight*, the third and final novel in the Witchlight series. For further details see her website: www.jswatts.co.uk