

2026 HLF Competitions

Poetry Competition

Adjudicated by Luke Wright
Closing date: Monday 7th September 2026

All poems will be on display at HAC, during the festival. Winners will be announced and prizes presented at Poet's Corner Open Mic.

Prizes:

- 1st prize: £20 National Book Token & a copy of Luke Wright's Book - Later Life Letter: A Story of Family, Adoption and Love.
2nd prize: £10 National Book Token

Short Story Competition

Closing date: Monday 7th September 2026

All stories will be on display at HAC during the festival. Winners will be announced by Author Nicola Baker at midday on Saturday 19th September.

Prizes: Winners for each category will receive a £10 National Book Token and a treat from Paperwing!

Design Your Own Bookmark Competition

Age Categories: 5-7yrs & 8-11yrs
Closing date: Monday 7th September 2026

Are you a budding artist? Would you like to see your artwork turned into a bookmark? Then look no further! This Summer, Helmsley Arts Centre and Helmsley Literary Festival are running a competition to design a bookmark!



Prizes: The winning bookmarks will be printed to share with your friends, family and the whole community! Winners will also receive an A4 print by incredible artist Nicola Hutchinson of Hutch Cassidy!

Visit www.helmsleyarts.co.uk for info on how to enter!

Booking Info

Book Tickets:

Visit: www.helmsleyarts.co.uk (+£1.50 booking fee per ticket)
Call: Box Office 01439 771700
Pop in: Box Office - Wed-Fri 10am-2pm & Sat 10am-12noon in term time

Ticket offers!

Full Weekend Pass (Fri-Sun) £90
Saturday Pass £40
Sunday Pass £35
*excludes workshops & quiz



www.helmsleyarts.co.uk



15% OFF
your bill

Come and join us for a pre-event dinner or after show dinner with a booking. Present your ticket and receive 15% off your bill on the performance night stated on your ticket.
Tel 01439 771044 | www.fatchefcompany.co.uk

How to find Helmsley Arts Centre...

Helmsley Arts Centre,
Old Meeting House Court,
YO62 5DW

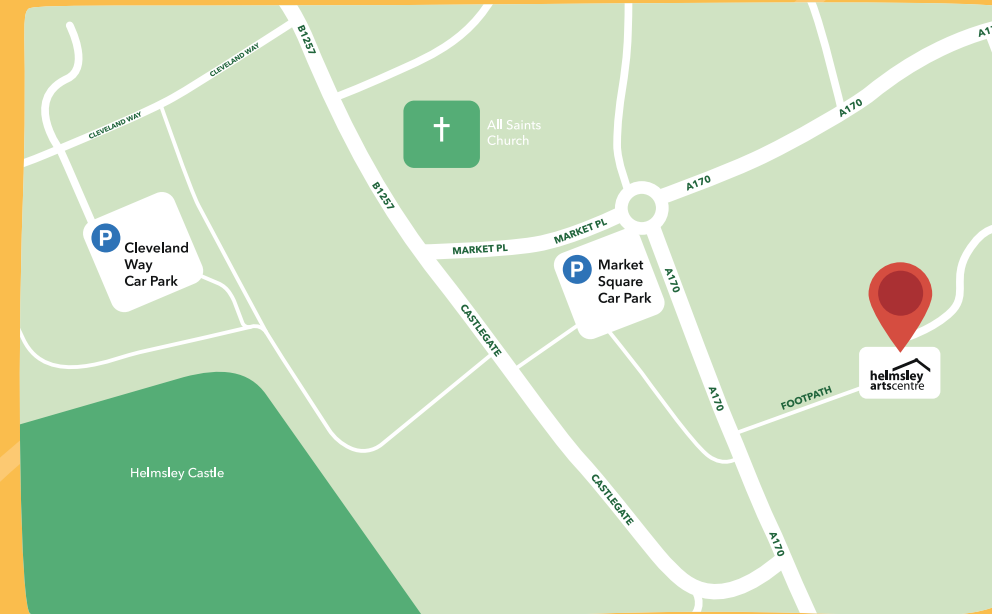
what3words: calculating.mammoths.thankful

Accessibility info:

@sociability App or www.helmsleyarts.co.uk | 01439 771 700

Parking:

Market Square, YO62 5BL / Cleveland Way Car Park, YO62 5AZ



T-shirts provided by
Foxstitch, Thirsk



**THE
HELMSLEY
BOOKSHOP**

The Helmsley Bookshop
11 Market Place, Helmsley
YO62 5BL | 01439 771130
info@helmsleybookshop.co.uk



Helmsley Literary Festival
logo by Panna Chauhan

Join us in our beautiful market town for...



Helmsley Literary Festival

at Helmsley Arts Centre

Friday 18 - Sunday 20 September 2026

Bringing readers and writers together in the North York Moors



**helmsley
artscentre**

www.helmsleyarts.co.uk

Friday 18th September

7.30pm | £18 / u18 £10

ANIMAL FARM

Performed by Sam Blythe | Adapted & Directed by Guy Masterson
(with original direction by Tony Boncza)
From the book by George Orwell

Over 80 years since the book's publication and 31 since its first performance, Guy Masterson's globally renowned solo adaptation of Orwell's barnyard masterpiece is now performed by the brilliant Sam Blythe. Bringing all of Orwell's multiple characters to vivid life, Blythe gives us Snowball, Napoleon, Squealer, Boxer, Clover, Mollie, Benjamin, Muriel, the Sheep, Dogs, Cows, Hens - and, of course, the cat - in a spellbinding performance that will shock, enchant, bewitch and bewilder.



TALK

Saturday 19th September

10am - 12noon | £15

HOW TO TELL STORIES: WRITING FOR SCREEN AND STAGE WITH TOM NEEDHAM

Tom Needham is a North Yorkshire based, BAFTA-nominated writer with over a hundred television and theatre credits. As well as writing his own series, Cold Blood and Retrace, he worked on The Bill for twenty-five years with stints on Silent Witness, Howards' Way, Casualty, Emmerdale, Wycliffe, Dalziel & Pascoe, Critical and EastEnders amongst others. His plays include The Wreckers, The Rape Queen, Frankenstein Live!, Impact, Blindfold, Switcheroo & The Room Upstairs. He is also a writer on The Citadel, BBC Radio 4.

This gentle, interactive workshop is a journey through the mind of a scriptwriter/playwright – learn where stories come from and how to tell them. No experience required, just bring a pen, paper and your own imagination.



WORKSHOP

11am - 12noon | £5 per child

ON WHISTLEDOWN FARM WITH NICOLA BAKER

Join Nicola Baker, star of Our Farm on the Dales, for a Whistledown Farm adventure! This is a warm and beautifully observed farm adventure series, perfect for readers 8+ and fans of Jacqueline Wilson, Michael Morpurgo, Dick King Smith and The Snow Foal.

Refreshments included. Accompanying adults free.

'Baker is a gifted writer, and her bucolic adventure harks back to classic farm stories such as those written by Dick King Smith and Michael Morpurgo' The Bookseller



TALK

www.helmsleyarts.co.uk

1 - 2pm | £12

RACHEL WATKYN & CLAIRE HORNBY

The Baronesses - A true story of sisterhood, survival and a secret that rewrote their past. Chair: Tom Needham

The Baronesses is the memoir of half-sisters Rachel and Claire, whose childhoods were spent in stately homes. Rachel's father, the Count De Lengham, claimed descent from a long line of aristocrats and had his own coat of arms. The offspring of two wealthy men and a free-spirited mother, the girls had a seemingly privileged, but in reality, difficult, upbringing.



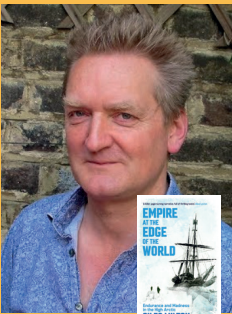
TALK

3 - 4pm | £12

GILES MILTON

Empire at the Edge of the World - Endurance and Madness in the High Arctic. Chair: Simon Turney

In 1913, William Stephenson, a Briton who changed his name to Vilhjalmur Stefansson to sound more like the Viking forefathers he idolised, organised an expedition to claim part of the arctic as a British colony, with disastrous consequences. In Empire at the Edge of the World: Endurance and Madness in the High Arctic, internationally bestselling historian, Giles Milton, recounts this incredible but true episode in the last year before the First World War.



TALK

5 - 6pm | £12

FRANCES WILSON

Electric Spark - The Enigma of Muriel Spark

In this talk, Francis Wilson follows the clues and riddles of the enigma that was Muriel Spark and leads us to a greater understanding of this innovative and brilliant writer.

'A brilliant, wonderfully shrewd biography' - William Boyd
'Joyously, brilliantly intelligent. In Wilson, Spark has met her true match' - Anne Enright



TALK

7 - 8pm | £15

LUKE WRIGHT

Later Life Letter

Later Life Letter tells the story of Luke Wright's adoption - the life he leads, and the one he might have done. What's it like to stumble across your birth mother on Facebook? How do you honour the parents who have raised you while satisfying a curiosity about where you came from? Wright navigates his audience through a warm and honest hour of poems and stand-up with the wit, pathos, and silliness that has made him one of the most popular live poets in England. "Made me laugh, cry, think and shudder." Peter Doherty



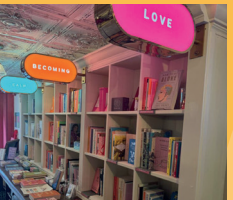
POETRY

8.30 - 10pm | Free

POET'S CORNER

Open Mic with guests from The Poetry Pharmacy

Join us in the Studio Bar at HAC for an evening of poetry, prose and song. Bring your own work, perform others', or come along and enjoy a drink while you listen.



OPEN MIC

Sunday 20th September

ILARIA PASSERI

12.30 - 1.50pm | £15

CREATIVE WRITING WORKSHOP FOR ADULTS

Fun, practical and creative session for adults. Learn how to turn your real-life experiences and memories into material for imaginative short stories, led by award winning writer and storyteller, Ilaria Passeri.

This workshop will focus on creative non fiction and structure. You will learn how your real life experiences can be shaped into short stories, essays and even shows. For page writers and writers for performance. Bring a pen, notepad and whatever you like to write with.

Ilaria will read some short stories from her book.



WORKSHOP

10 - 11.30am | £5 per child (refreshments included/adults free)

STORYTELLING AND CHARACTER WORKSHOP FOR FAMILIES

For Children 11yrs and under, with an adult. Storytelling session with Ilaria the Storyteller.

This workshop includes a storytelling performance. There's also a chance to create your own comic book story inspired by the characters that live in Honey Pot village. There will be puppets you can take inspiration from to create your own characters. What do they sound like? What do they do in the village? What's their favourite joke? We'll need bakers, teachers, doctors.



STORYTELLING

12.30 - 1.30pm | £12

RUKKY BRUME

It Comes in Waves. Chair: Marc Gonsalves

Rukky Brume grew up in Lagos, Nigeria. Her 'breathtaking' debut novel, It Comes in Waves, featured on BBC Radio 4's Woman's Hour on Wednesday 24th June 2026, follows Onome, a law student in London, whose father dies suddenly in Nigeria. Returning home for his funeral, she learns an aspect of his life she never knew.



TALK

2.30 - 3.30pm | £12

LUCY EASTHORPE

Come What May: Life-Changing Lessons for Coping with Crisis. Chair: Steve Harvey

When a disaster happens, who picks up the pieces? The answer is Lucy Easthope or one of her colleagues in the field of Disaster Management. Her books, When the Dust Settles: Stories of Love, Loss and Hope from an Expert in Disaster and The Recovery Myth: The Plans and Situated Realities of Post-Disaster Response, shook up people's perceptions of what is needed after a disaster happens. She was a guest on BBC Radio 4's Desert Island Discs in June 2025.



TALK

4.30 - 5.30pm | £12

DR MICHELLE HILLS

The Wrong Order of Things. Chair: Jocelyn Studdart

Dr Michelle Hills, Chief Medical Officer at Martin's House Children's Hospice in Yorkshire, describes in her book, The Wrong Order of Things, the realities of caring for children with complex, generally life-ending, medical conditions. She works together with families to try to find a way through illness and make their children's lives, however short, the best and happiest they can be.



TALK

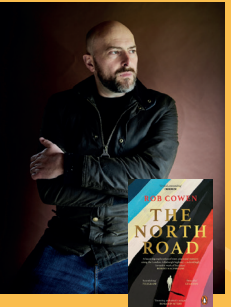
6.30 - 7.30pm | £12

ROB COWEN

The North Road. Chair: Martin Vander Weyer

Rob Cowen takes you on the long and winding road that leads from the English to the Scottish capital. Along the way, we share that highway's history and Rob's modern-day encounters and experiences.

'Haunted and haunting: Cowen tracks the London-Edinburgh highway in a mesmerising exploration of time, place, memory and identity. A dazzlingly inventive work of literature' - Robert Macfarlane.



TALK

8 - 10pm | £20 per team of 4

HELMSLEY LITERARY FESTIVAL QUIZ

Calling all book lovers! Think you know your Bronteës from your Shakespeares? Can you spot a fictional detective from a single clue? Prove it at the Helmsley Literary Quiz! Gather your most bookish friends for a brilliant night of trivia, laughs, and friendly competition right here in the Studio Bar at HAC. Whether you are a casual reader or a hardcore bibliophile, there are rounds for everyone. Plus, fantastic prizes are up for grabs!



QUIZ