

Literary

From Budleigh Salterton to Dorchester and Bridport, autumn literary events offer a feast of ideas.

If you see Dorset as the beating heart of Thomas Hardy's Wessex and can't look at the Cobb in Lyme Regis without thinking of John Fowles, or feel the spirit of Dame Hilary Mantel when you walk along the seafront in Budleigh Salterton, you may be suffering from Westcountry Literary Giddiness.

It's a common affliction as the summer ends and the autumn literary festivals roll out their programmes. This is the time of year when book lovers pore over the options to see speakers at the Budleigh Salterton, Dorchester and Bridport Literary Festivals.

Over the past few decades, this corner of England has quietly cultivated a rich and welcoming literary festival circuit that draws both readers and writers to the area. It's a long way from the velvet-rope corporate-melee of high-profile urban book fairs. Westcountry events still have an unhurried, somewhat gentle scale. The boundary between reader and writer may be invisible. You might well find a Booker-shortlisted novelist queueing with a local dentist for a crab sandwich in Bucky Doo Square in Bridport.

Running from the 23rd to the 27th of September the Budleigh Salterton festival has a rich mix of authors from Paul de Zulueta talking about his *Personal History Of The du Mauriers* and Patrick Gale in conversation with Tim Hubbard to Damien Lewis discussing his latest *SAS Great Escapes Five* and the recent *SAS: The Great Train Raid*, bringing to life extraordinary true stories of daring, endurance and ingenuity from the world's most famous fighting force.

Founded in 2009 by the late Susan Ward, whose

aim was to attract critically acclaimed authors, poets and playwrights to Budleigh Salterton, the festival has more than doubled in size over the past ten years and now features more than 65 to 70 talks, workshops and events across five days.

For more information visit: <https://budlitfest.org.uk>.

In October, the Dorchester Literary Festival rolls out the well-read carpet for authors such as Julian Fellowes, actress Alison Steadman, *Wild Swans* author Jung Chang and former Chancellor Jeremy Hunt. Running from 17th to the 24th of October, the Festival will welcome 35 speakers to Dorset, with a programme that ranges from world history and politics to fiction, memoir, nature, food, adventure and current affairs.

Former Chancellor Jeremy Hunt will explore Britain's economic future in a timely discussion inspired by his new book *Can We Be Rich Again?* while leading educator Sir Anthony Seldon appears in two thought-provoking events, examining political leadership and a compelling walk to Auschwitz.

History lovers are particularly well served this year. Andrew Lownie lifts the lid on Britain's most controversial royal dynasty in *Entitled*, while Damien Lewis, Jonathan Fennell and David Lascelles reveal remarkable untold stories from the Second World War.

Current affairs remain firmly on the agenda. Journalist Martin Sixsmith investigates Vladimir Putin's hidden wealth in *Suing the Kremlin*, while broadcaster and journalist Samira Ahmed, commentator Simon Jenkins and psychologist Frank

Autumn



Tallis offer fresh perspectives on politics, society and aging well.

The festival celebrates the natural world with environmentalist Tony Juniper, explorer Charlie Walker, meteorologist Laura Tobin, travel writer Brian Jackman and geologist Anjana Khatwa. Fiction-lovers will enjoy bestselling novelist Victoria Hislop discussing her latest novel inspired by Greece, *The Wine Dark Sea* and Kathy Lette talking about her hilarious new novel *Sisterhood Rules*.

For more information visit: <https://dorchesterliteraryfestival.com>.

A highlight of the autumn since its growth under the directorship of the late Tanya Bruce Lockhart, Bridport Literary Festival is a favourite with both locals and visitors alike. Running from the 6th to the 14th of November, this year's Festival is the first under the creative hand of Adrian Turpin OBE who has taken the reins after running the Wigtown Book Festival in south-west Scotland.

This year, the festival brings a varied and exciting programme of events to brighten the dark days of winter. Authors include Oliver Bullough, Mathew Sweet, Mary Berry, Sarah Raven and Jonathan Freedland. At the time of writing, the full programme has not yet been released. Look out for Lib Dem leader Ed Davey talking about *Why I Care And Why Care Matters*, as well as Steve Crawshaw discussing *Prosecuting the Powerful: War Crimes and the Battle for Justice*, and Beth Gardiner on *Plastic Inc.* (see page 34) and Tom Cox on *Everything will Swallow You* (see page 38).

For full information visit: <https://www.bridlit.com>.