



## Knighthood for Literature

 OXFORD author Philip Pullman was recognised in the 2019 New Year's Honours list for his services to literature.

Philip's response to the award was, "...very surprised and honoured to be offered a knighthood. I believe the profession of letters should be recognised as having a proper place in the life of the nation, along with science, and sport, and music, and scholarship, and many other human activities.

"Many people I admire, such as Quentin Blake, Ellen MacArthur, Chris Hoy, Jacqueline Wilson, Nicholas Hytner, Jocelyn Bell Burnell, Bryn Terfel, Ray Davies, Mary Beard – far too many to list – have been happy to accept a knighthood or damehood, and I am proud to be in their company.

"I'm immensely grateful to those who have worked so hard over many years to edit, publish, illustrate and sell my books... I'm most grateful of all to those who continue to read my books, and I hope they don't have to work as hard as those who edit them."

Visit Philip online here: [www.philip-pullman.com](http://www.philip-pullman.com)

## "Oxford Tourist"

 SALLY CRADDOCK contributes a visitor's tale to our ongoing WiO poetry focus.

All along Longwall and Holywell,  
High on the High and hungry for 'heritage',  
Giggling at gargoyles, maudlin with Magdalen  
She's passed, past postcard familiar New College  
With new knowledge learned from guide book:  
"Look – the oldest public music room in Europe."

A campus-seeking, cobble-gambolling Turl girl,  
This Catte Street cat erupts, equipped  
With camera posed for Radcliffe Camera take,  
Exclaiming at iron wrought so lacily,  
Lazily gazing – then recalling last week's tour:  
"Why, Honey, it's the Bridge of Sighs again."

In vain wise eyes avert, hurt for emplinthed  
philosophers  
Doomed to gaze forever at the famous bookstore  
With remaindered reminders of a leisured age  
when sage  
(Not then mere culinary aid) was held in proper awe.  
But right now there's a broad abroad in the Broad,  
Bored by the Bod – and bothered by her feet.

## Booming books spark lit fests

Books and reading are hot news in Britain, with sales well up in 2018. And this year, there's a feast of literary festivals, including this trio of special events.

● FT Weekend Oxford Literary Festival: 30 March-7 April. ● Chip Lit Fest: 25-28 April 2019. ● Across the county border, there's the Stratford-upon-Avon Literary Festival, which should be worth a look: 28 April-5 May.

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*Dreaming High Street, Oxford, photographed in the 1890s.*

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**Editor:** David Jefferis [dmjefferis@me.com](mailto:dmjefferis@me.com)

**Email me:** With information on your new projects or titles, with publishing details, and a hi-res photo. Article suggestions are welcome. 400-500 words fills a column.

**Note:** Views in this newsletter are those of the writers concerned, not of Writers in Oxford.



WiO members are welcome to join our Facebook group. You can visit the WiO page, which is open to anyone, and is a good way to promote your work.

**Group:** [www.facebook.com/groups/writersinxford](http://www.facebook.com/groups/writersinxford)  
**Page:** [www.facebook.com/writersinxford](http://www.facebook.com/writersinxford)

## Events diary

### BOOK LAUNCH: THE ROUGH BEAST

Thursday 28 March, 6-8 pm  
Oxford Waterstones, OX1 3AF  
Political economist and journalist Will Hutton hosts a Q&A event with Denise Cullington, author of *The Rough Beast: Psychoanalysis in Everyday Life*.

### AUTHOR TALK: VAN GOGH

Thursday 4 April, 7 pm  
Oxford County Library, Queen Street, OX1 1DJ  
This talk introduces Juliet Heslewood's new book *Van Gogh: A Life in Places*, which examines his travels and the development of his unique artistic achievements.  
Juliet's talk coincides with the major Van Gogh exhibition at Tate Britain, which begins on 27 March.

*Free to all*

**Just turn up, or reserve your spot on the Oxford Library Eventbrite site.**

### BLUEBELL WALK: WYTHAM WOODS

Saturday 20 April, 11 am  
Start from the White Hart of Wytham, OX2 8QA.  
We hope that the bluebells in Wytham Woods will be ready by then. Meet in the car park of the White Hart of Wytham, and we'll take a circular walk, followed by pub refreshments for those who wish them.

*Free to all*

**Email RSVP [brendastones40@hotmail.com](mailto:brendastones40@hotmail.com)**

### SOCIAL EVENING

Saturday 27 April, from 6 pm  
2 Manor Cottages, Elsfeld, OX3 9UH  
Cherry Mostesahr hosts an evening of wine, finger food and chat with friends old and new.

*Members free, guests £5*

**Email RSVP [mostesahr@btconnect.com](mailto:mostesahr@btconnect.com)**

### OXFORD MUSEUM: TALK

Liz Woolley on Oxford's Suburbs  
Tuesday 30 April, 6-7 pm  
Oxford Town Hall, OX1 1BX  
Illustrated talk on why Oxford's suburbs grew so rapidly, what factors affected how they developed, and the effects that suburban growth had on Oxford and its residents.

**Tickets £4.85**

### BODLEIAN LECTURE

Translating Multilingual Britain  
Wednesday 8 May, 1-1.45 pm  
Weston Library, Broad Street, OX1 3BG  
Professor Katrin Kohl looks at the importance of translation for creating the English language, and the manifestations of language exchange in the UK today.  
*Free, but book places at:*  
<https://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/>

### WRITERS IN OXFORD: AGM

Thursday 16 May, 7 pm for 7.30 pm  
The Plough, Wolvercote Green, Oxford OX2 8BD  
Come and meet your fellow members over free drinks and nibbles. We'll also repeat the fun Book Slam, so bring your new publications to present!  
**Email RSVP [alison.baxter@me.com](mailto:alison.baxter@me.com) if you are coming.**

### MEET THE AUTHOR

Professor Bart van Es on his Costa prize winning *The Cut Out Girl*  
Monday 20 May, 7pm for 7.30pm  
*Venue to be confirmed*  
Lien was a Jewish girl in Amsterdam, hidden and raised by a foster family during the Nazi occupation. Bart van Es is the grandson of her foster parents, and uncovered this mystery strand in his family history. The true story won the Costa Book of the Year 2018.

*Members free, guests £5*

**Email RSVP [brendastones40@hotmail.com](mailto:brendastones40@hotmail.com) if you are coming.**

### LITERARTIES EXHIBITIONS

Until 16 April, The Jam Factory  
Until 11 May, The Old Fire Station  
4-26 May, KFL Gallery, The Spice Lounge, Summertown

### ...AND A WARM WELCOME TO NEW WiO MEMBERS:

- Jack Briggs
- Anna Britnor Guest
- John Daniel
- Rachel Edwards
- Sue Eves
- Ray Foulke
- Liz Harris
- Mary Hoffman
- Vina Jie-Min Prasad
- Alan Kestner
- Jake Lynch
- Valerie Mendes
- Jane Spiro
- Gerald Vinestock
- Mariah Whelan

**Visit the WiO website for more details.**

## A Booker evening

 **BRENDA STONES: Teaming up with Blackwells helped to transform our literary event.**

We'd been running our 'Not the Booker Prize' event in the King's Arms for about five years, but were often disappointed that so few WiO members turned up to enjoy the fun.

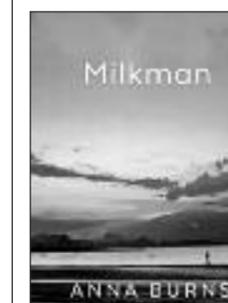
So in October 2018, we teamed up with Blackwell's in Westgate, and this made it a far more convivial evening! Thanks to their publicity, there was an audience of over 30, in an appropriately book-lined open space, which facilitated book sales after the presentations and votes were over. One literary couple came up to us at the end to say what an unexpectedly great evening it was, so maybe we even recruited more members to WiO thereby!

### Strengths and weaknesses

The format of the evening is that a panel of six members of WiO each presents one of the shortlisted titles. They don't have to like it, but they present its strengths and weaknesses to encourage the audience to rank their own preferences. The evening ends with two votes: which title you'd most like to read yourself, and which you think the judges will vote as the winner.

This year, as so often, nobody in the panel or the audience backed the actual winner! *Milkman* was ably presented by Gabrielle Townsend, but our audience loyally favoured Oxford's Daisy Johnson, or else the verse novel of *The Long Take*. Discussion then ranged over the degree of violence in this year's shortlisted titles, and the welcome nomination of lesser known authors over the literary giants.

We believe there was also a Not the Booker evening going on simultaneously in London's Guildhall, but for accessibility and fun, our Oxford competitor was definitely a winner!



*"The language of Anna Burns' Milkman is simply marvellous... distinctive and consistently realised voice of the funny, resilient, astute, plain-spoken, first-person protagonist..."*  
Chair of judges, Kwame Anthony Appiah.

# Sonia Scott-Fleming

 **KAMAL D. LATHAR: A eulogy for an energetic author, who created some extraordinary works.**

When I was young, in my village lived a diminutive figure, a lady, whose custom was to wear a typical but practical Indian attire with hair that was hidden underneath what can only be described as a small turban. It is easier to imagine her as if you had found Aladdin's lamp, you rubbed it and when the smoke cleared, she was standing there. I loved and adored this woman. She was my great aunt, in every way a force of nature.

## Meeting Sonia

Soon after we came to Oxford, and I became part of WiO, I was introduced to Sonia Scott-Fleming. She was in her late eighties, and displayed more drive and ambition

than most people I have ever met, young or old. This energy contained within that small form was undimmed, the burning life within apparent to all who met her, contained in a diminutive body bent by time, it bristled with intelligence and determination. For me this is a thing of brightness, a thing to admire and wonder, and in her passing, a lot of other emotions swirled within my inside, which are closer to awe.

## Blasting away

Packed in this small container, and growing smaller, the power encapsulated in the physical was tantamount to the power of a battery being used to level Mt Etna. Even in her late years, she was blasting away writing another book, publishing a story, thinking about the marketing angle, trying to get someone to make ready her website, setting up the mechanisms to

receive royalties. We could hardly keep up.

My partner Frauke and I lived on the road running parallel to where she lived. Of course she lived on the third floor, how much more convenient and easy would it have been to live on the ground floor. We had her over for dinner quite a few times, and if I was cooking something Indian, something easy for her to eat, I would make a little more for her. Some days, or weeks later I would get the food report; that it had been fully demolished.

## Another example of 'it'

Several times, I saw her on the street struggling with the shopping trolley she used to carry her bread and milk. Sometimes, I would have to struggle to persuade her to get in the car to get a lift to her house rather than drag it around. I have seen and read several versions of

the word 'obstinate'. I have several examples of that in my family, so I recognise it very well. It seems there was another example of 'it' walking the streets of Oxford. Her pride alone made this woman stand out.

## Force of nature

This was no ordinary soul, this was a force of nature, her life had made it an imperative and moulded her into the 'mostly harmless' looking thing many people saw. But, we as humans, we the people still journeying on, and especially we the authors, all know by now that we should not judge a book by its cover. This harmlessness called Sonia was a glorious piece of writing in deceptively simple covers, the power of which lay in engaging its audience to ensure that it was not ignored, nor dismissed, but drew attention to it because she simply dazzled.

writer. Her first novel was *Jessica* (Aidan Ellis, 1979). In 2010 came *Hope Springs* (Back-to-Front) an extraordinary book, the picaresque adventures of Hope, a dwarf with a wicked sense of humour. *He and I* (Back-to-Front, 2014) is a deeply ironic account of some dysfunctional relationships.



Sonia Scott-Fleming.

## Sonia Scott-Fleming

Sonia was a medieval scholar, whose main work was *The Analysis of Pen Flourishing in 13th century manuscripts* (Brill, 1989).

She was also a much-published short story

## Writing Workshop

 **JANE CAMMICK describes her Writing Workshop, an Oxford-based creative evening she chaired on 21 November, 2018.**

Sixteen diverse and stalwart writers cut along St Giles through freezing night air to the Quaker Meeting House for an evening of compelling discussion. The group was lively and perceptive. This was not a workshop where we critiqued each others' work, more an evening where everyone contributed their ideas and experiences about short-story writing.

## Literary experiments

The short story, as a small literary unit in itself, lends itself to experimentation. When asked to give his feelings about this genre, George Saunders, the Booker prize-winning author said, "steer towards the rapids." This was the approach we took.

I took the chair and we discussed any reticence in selecting subjects that might fall under the headline, 'taboo.' We asked ourselves, "Are we concerned to reveal too much, go too far, or take a risk? And are we afraid to tackle the horrors that modern society lives with every single day?"

## Book discussions

We discussed Daisy Johnson's story, *Starver*, Kate Clanchy's prize winning story, *The Not-dead and the Saved*, and Gabriel Garcia Marquez, *A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings*. We then looked at Jennifer Egan's experimental story, *To Do*, which is in the form of a list.

Writers are often alone and I for one, was delighted to spend two hours with like-minded, stimulating people. I hope there will be more workshops in the future. I'm sure there are many members who have experience and knowledge to share. It would be good to instigate a regular workshop programme.

## Winners try harder here

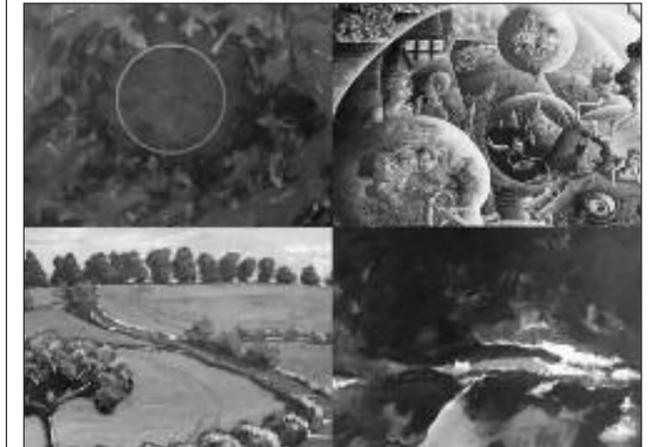
I suggest trying your luck by entering a competition, some of which offer worthwhile prizes. This list of top short-story prizes might come in useful!

[www.neonbooks.org.uk/big-list-writing-competitions](http://www.neonbooks.org.uk/big-list-writing-competitions)

## Launching LiterArties

 **DENIS HAMLEY made a suggestion in the last newsletter that artistic WiO members or their partners might form a viable exhibition group.**

The plan was to focus on Oxfordshire Artweeks 2019, and the nucleus of a group appeared almost overnight. There are now eight exhibiting artists: Maeve Bayton, Karen French, Kay Jamieson, Alan Kestner, Kamal Lathar, Debrah Martin, Rosie Phipps, and Ann Warren.



Four works by members of the LiterArties group.

Even at our first meeting, it was evident that there was an impetus in the room extending beyond merely finding premises with a roof which wouldn't leak for a week. Members had two talents. Why not use both? For this, we needed a distinctive group identity.

## Wide range of activities

Thus, LiterArties was born, with a website that stresses our twofold quality by offering not just exhibitions, but also companion activities to explore connections between writing, painting and other expressive arts.

We started by looking for exhibition space: now we are being offered it. Activities at these venues during Artweeks and beyond will include book launches, talks, and Meet the Artist/Author sessions, which might lead to one-to-one mentoring, workshops, and other exciting ventures. So, as they say, it's all to play for!

We look forward to sharing LiterArties with you.

Visit LiterArties online: [www.literarties.com](http://www.literarties.com)

# WiO members' new books

SEND DETAILS of your latest book to be included on these pages.



**THE ROUGH BEAST: PSYCHOANALYSIS IN EVERYDAY LIFE**  
Denise Cullington  
Routledge

The Unconscious: is there any evidence for it? Why does it help to know about it? Here are some comments on the book:

*"There are such riches to be discovered here, this*

*remarkable book calls out to be read and re-read. ...It is so readily accessible, and yet much of it so profound."*

Patrick Casement, analyst and author.

*"This book... touches the reader's heart and beyond, the unconscious."* H. Scrase, British Mensan.

*"I enjoyed the passion she brings... I gained fresh insights at a personal and professional level."*

Rosemary Pitt MBACP.

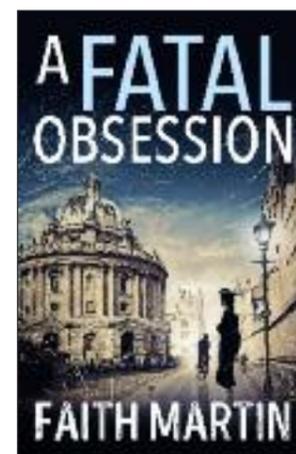
**VISIBLE INK**  
S.L. Powell  
Curlicue Books

What if you found a pen that wrote the truth, even when you didn't want it to? A pen that put into words thoughts you wanted to keep to yourself. Would your life be turned upside down? Or could it be changed for the better?

Especially if, like Alex, your problems include your best friend Lennie flushing one of your new trainers down the toilet.

*Visible Ink* is about friendship and bullying, about growing up and learning that it's OK to be the person you are and not the person others expect you to be.

It's a short novel, written "...with an elegance that enables it to express quite complex feelings."



**A FATAL OBSESSION**  
Faith Martin  
Joffe Books

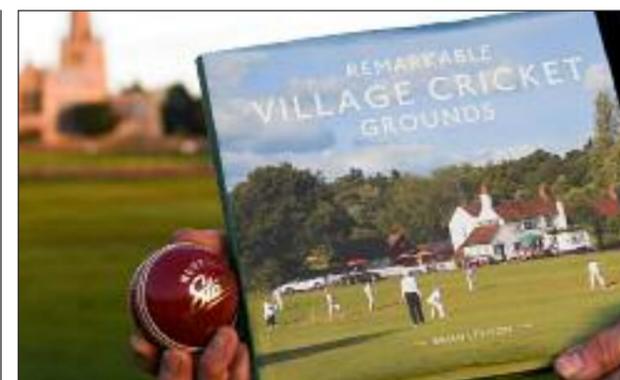
Set in the Oxford of 1960, this crime novel introduces probationary WPC Trudy Loveday. She is the only woman working out of her station, and perhaps not surprisingly, her immediate superiors assign her to very minor

duties. This all changes when city coroner, Dr Clement Ryder, requests a police liaison officer to help him take a look at an old case that he believes warrants further investigation.

Faith Martin's companion title *A Fatal Mistake* (about a death by drowning on the river in Port Meadow) has already joined *Obsession*, and the two books will be followed by more in an ongoing series.

The *Fatal* books are all written against a 1960 Oxford background, but other Faith Martin titles change both time and place.

For example, her popular DI Hillary Greene books are all set in today's world, against a background of the Thames Valley area.



**REMARKABLE VILLAGE CRICKET GROUNDS**  
Brian Levison  
Pavilion Books

This is the follow-up to *Remarkable Cricket Grounds* which was shortlisted for two major Sports Book prizes. It is a homage to the many beautiful cricket grounds where village cricket is played throughout England, Scotland and Wales.

The stunning photographs are accompanied by informative and humorous anecdotes about the various clubs. Brian Levison's research took him all over the country, and hopes are high that *Remarkable Village Cricket Grounds* will be as successful as its predecessor, which was a Number One Amazon cricket bestseller for many months.

**THE BALLAD OF SYD AND MORGAN**  
Haydn Middleton  
Propolis Books

A beautiful young man dressed in Cuban heels and a crushed-velvet jacket cuts a dash as he strides up Silver Street in his native Cambridge, heading for the ornate splendour of King's

College. It is 1968. He is the 22 year old Syd Barrett of Pink Floyd, and his destination is home to the great Edwardian novelist, 89 year-old E.M. Forster.

What follows is a tender exchange of truths between two men belonging to opposite ends of the 20th century. Yet they become unlikely comrades, passing fleetingly through each other's lives.



**47 MEN OF NORTH OXFORD**  
Liz Wade  
Amazon

I wrote this book as a tribute to the 47 men who are named on the St Margaret's War Memorial in North Oxford, and to the many others in our parish and in the wider city who either didn't survive the Great War or were mentally and physically damaged by it. All profits from *47 Men* will be given to Combat Stress, the leading UK charity for armed forces veterans with mental health problems.

The book can be ordered from Amazon, or direct from me: [elizabeth.wade@ntlworld.com](mailto:elizabeth.wade@ntlworld.com)



**DREAMS OF SPACE and EXPLORING THE MOON**  
David Jefferis  
Crabtree Publishing

The first books in a four-title set for the Canadian educational publisher, Crabtree, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Apollo Moon landings.

For David, this new series 'bookends' his earliest works in the space-science genre, in particular the award-winning and influential *World of the Future* trilogy, produced with Usborne.

**AN ANGEL'S CURSE**  
Dennis Hamley  
Joslin Books

Dennis Hamley now has his own imprint, Joslin Books, which is reissuing six medieval murder mysteries as a sextet titled *The Long Journey of Joslin de Lay*, described as "...a juicily macabre series of page-turners". There are five more titles to come in the Joslin de Lay series.

Of Joslin Books, Dennis reckons the imprint will be open to "...writers aiming at children and young adults whose work he knows, and who have suffered at the hands of both agents and publishers in the long and often dispiriting search for publication. Not commercial publishing but not lonely self-publishing either."



## The view from my desk

 **JAKE KENDALL:** writes short stories and screenplays from his hometown of Oxford.

I once kept a Venus fly trap on my desk – potentially the only vegetarian specimen of its species.

I never saw it eat a single bug. Worried for its well-being I eventually caught a fly by hand and placed it within the jaws of the plant. It spat the fly out almost immediately. A sign of moral evolution perhaps? It expired regardless, and has not been replaced.

Truthfully, I see little point in amenities. I am spiritually allergic to ornaments, clutter, and tat. My years working in a museum was illuminating in that regard. I can't help but wonder what future generations will make of the garden gnome, for example. Will they assume it was part of our deification of the garden, or organic produce? Or will they just assume we suffered a prolonged and collective lapse of good taste? Consequently, my desk is a Spartan affair. A well-used tea mug and a packet of Jaffa cakes are the only true necessities.

### The whole world contained

As someone seeking a foothold in writing today my attention is instead fixed absolutely on the 20 by 30 inches of my computer screen. It contains the whole world: every novel ever written, millions of short stories and poems; literary journals; competitions; prizes; blogs...

How does that compare to the pre-internet age? I couldn't tell you that. I can only tell you how this world feels. 2018 was good to me. Twitter connected me, gave me a step onto the bottom rung. I was included in online literary journals. I had strangers send messages



of encouragement, saying that they enjoyed my writing. I've been asked to perform a reading for the first time in public. Enough positivity for me to think that I'm doing something right at least.

### Social media perspective

Yet equally social media offers a recalibration of perspective. I feel noticed by the 300 or so contacts I have on Facebook, they are like some virtual village. Twitter is quite different – like trying to hold the attention of strangers in Piccadilly Circus or Time Square.

Twitter shows that the vast scale of the pond, and the sheer number of people trying to achieve the same goals. It displays a high standard of competition. It demonstrates that writers are so eager for exposure that we work for free, or self-publish and sell years of labour for pennies.

It makes me question what a successful career in writing actually means, and I cannot help but wonder if the reality is that it is all just a nice dream.

**Visit Jake online on Twitter @jakendallo**



Evelyn Waugh, 1940

## The complete Evelyn Waugh

It's (just) too late to apply this year, but for anyone interested in the works of ex-Hertford College man, Evelyn Waugh, the idea of a writer's residency to study his works must appeal.

The University of Leicester's *Complete Works of Evelyn Waugh* project is collaborating with the Bodleian Library and Worcester College, to fund the David Bradshaw Creative Writing Residency.

Grace Boland is the Research Project Officer, and has full details for applicants at the project's website here: <http://tinyurl.com/yygljerf>

### Next issue highlights

- > Summer reads
- > Events diary
- > Members' new books
- > Marketing your titles
- > And more...