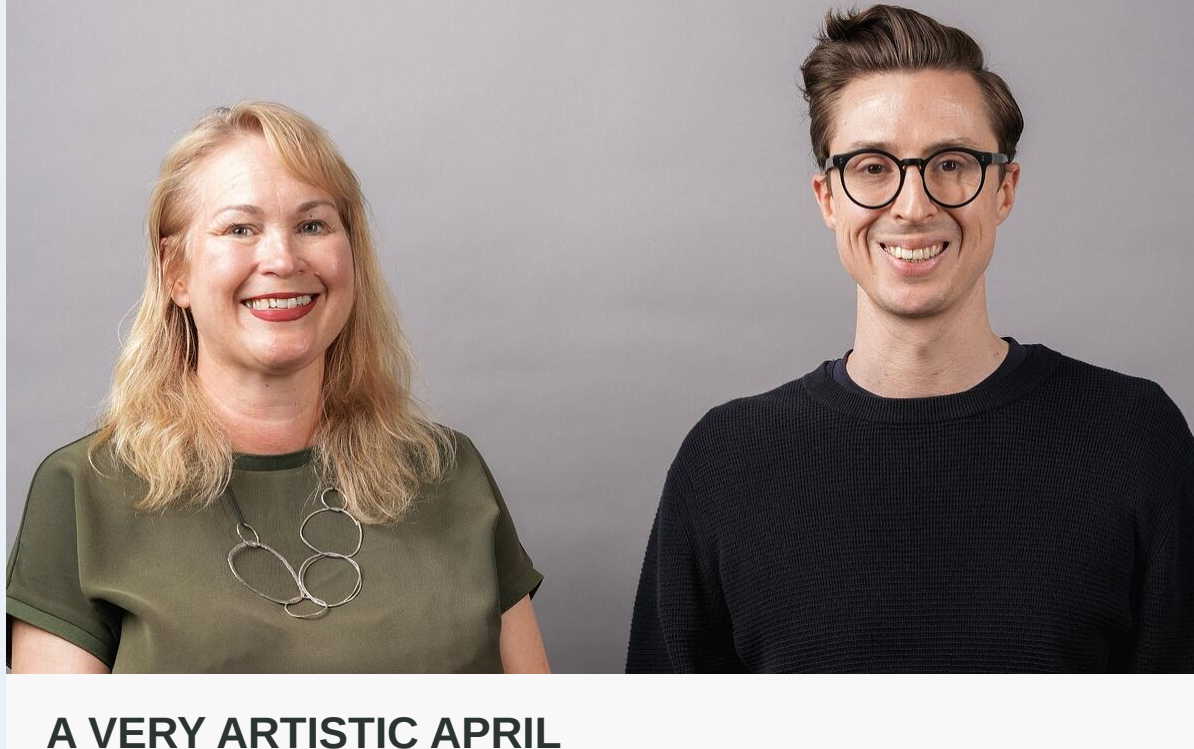


# CULTURE NEWSLETTER

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## A VERY ARTISTIC APRIL

As we enter spring, the team have, as always, been working on a rich mix of cultural projects – book prizes, festival announcements and opening events. Literature has played a pivotal role this month, as the team announced the winner of the Baillie Gifford Prize 25th Anniversary Winner of Winners award. After 25 years of fascinating and moving non-fiction, it was a real delight to bring everyone together to celebrate the meaning of the prize and all that the longlisted, shortlisted and winning works have brought to the literary horizon. Louisa Treger also participated in a sold-out Q&A and signing at Waterstones Kensington, following a successful hardback campaign of her third novel, *Madwoman*. Human rights organisation English PEN have appointed editor, writer, broadcaster, and literary critic Margaret Busby as their new president – huge congratulations to her.

We have also been working on a number of festivals this month – namely Cambridge Literary Festival, Cheltenham Science Festival and Essex Book Festival. It just goes to show that whatever your passion is, there truly is a festival out there for everyone! Continuing with the theme of programme launches, Croydon also opened their programme for London Borough of Culture 2023 with an opening event Oratorio of Hope, featuring music, arts and more.

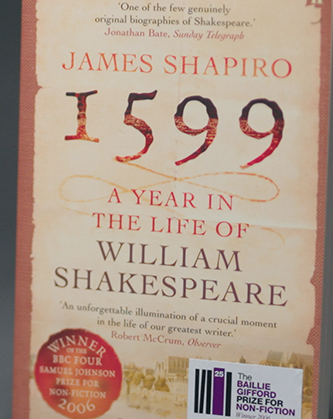
We'll be back again next month to share more news, but in the meantime – have a lovely May!

All the best,

Truda and Matt



#BGPrize25



## A VERY SHAKESPEARIAN ANNIVERSARY

*1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare* by James Shapiro is tonight, Thursday 27 April, named winner of the Baillie Gifford Prize for Non-Fiction 'Winner of Winners' Award. The winner was announced by Chair of Judges, Jason Cowley, at a ceremony hosted at the National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh.

The Baillie Gifford Prize for Non-Fiction Winner of Winners Award marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UK's premier non-fiction book prize by crowning the best work of non-fiction from the last 25 years of the prize. As the winner Shapiro will receive £25,000.

The winner was chosen by a judging panel comprising of: *New Statesman* editor-in-chief, Jason Cowley (chair); academic, critic and broadcaster, Shahidha Bari; journalist, author and academic, Sarah Churchwell; and biographer and critic Frances Wilson. Their selection was made from a shortlist of 6 books, taken from the previous 24 prizewinning books.

In the course of 1599, Shakespeare completed *Henry V*, wrote *Julius Caesar* and *As You Like It* in quick succession, and produced the first draft of his greatest play, *Hamlet*. In his winning book *1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare*, Shapiro shows how The Bard progressed from his tale of two star-crossed lovers to *Hamlet*. Shapiro finds one question the most pressing: how did Shakespeare become one of the greatest writers who ever lived?

In the run up to the winner announcement, we have been posting special shortlist editions of the Read Smart Podcast, as well as six author Q&As. We have also shared prize six bookseller videos in a collaboration with Waterstones, where we called on booksellers who are around the same age as the prize to champion the shortlisted works.

To catch up on all this content and to immerse yourself in all the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations had to offer, check out @BGPrize on our social channels - [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [TikTok](#) and [YouTube](#).



## A SUMMER OF FESTIVAL FUN TO COME

An action packed long weekend saw the Cambridge Literary Festival celebrate its 20th anniversary with over 50 events and 74 speakers taking to the historic city to deliver lectures, debates, workshops and discussions. Speakers from the world of politics, food, fiction, music, art, environment and health appeared with prolific children's literature names such as Dame Jacqueline Wilson, Michael Morpurgo and Cressida Cowell. Politics and activism saw the likes of Andrew Marr, Linton Kwesi Johnston and Paul Johnson. In addition, a captivating debate from the *New Statesman* took place on the Saturday, tackling the current and controversial question of the stability of the British monarchy, encapsulated the audience at the sold out event.

The team worked alongside the festival creators to deliver this fun-filled weekend. With press attendance from The Observer, BBC Radio Cambridge, Daily Mail and a heart-warming interview with Jacqueline Wilson for Sky Kids FYI. Pre-festival build up coverage included interviews and articles published in The Telegraph, Daily Mail and The New Statesman, to name but a few. Overall a fabulous weekend and we are excited for the festival's Winter Programme announcement.

With a star-studded line up featuring leading scientists, authors, activists and even an astronaut, Cheltenham Science Festival's unmissable 2023 programme was also announced this month, once again taking place in the heart of Cheltenham. The line-up of guest curators has included the likes of Claudia Hammond, Tim Peake, Ray Mears, Ian Graham and George Monbiot. The festival's 21<sup>st</sup> birthday will comprise 138 events with 270 of the best scientists, thinkers, writers and creators, promising something for every curious mind of every age. 2023 marks the third year of the Festival's 'Be the Change' theme, inviting audiences to consider their individual and collective role in shaping the future, and the central place of science in this process.

The team have also been working on the programme announcement for the Essex Book Festival taking place from 1 June until 1 July across Essex. With an array of exciting, innovative, challenging and fun events taking place in over 40 venues, the programme spans everything from history to politics; art to environmentalism. The theme of the festival this year is 'The Great Tide', both referring to the 70th anniversary of The Great Flood, which devastated communities on the Essex Coast in 1953, alongside 'great tide' of festival events taking place across Essex. Featuring an unforgettable Radical Pilgrimage that invites visitors to join artist, writer and wildcrafter Lora Aziz as she embarks on a 7-day 70-mile pilgrimage (15-21 June) from Southend Pier to Safron Walden, as well as a Walking Workshop, the festival is an opportunity to explore literature in motion and in a truly unique way.



## LOUISA TREGER TAKES WATERSTONES KENSINGTON

Following a successful hardback campaign, we have once again been working with author Louisa Treger on the paperback launch of her third novel, *Madwoman*, a dark, turn-of-the-century tale of the true-life story of Nellie Bly, a pioneering journalist in New York in the 1880s. In 1887 Bly faked insanity in order to have herself committed to a local asylum – Blackwell's Island, New York. Desperate to be seen as a serious reporter and struggling to make ends meet, Bly showed remarkable courage and drive to carry out an undercover investigation on the wretched conditions faced by the patients. Now widely regarded as America's first female investigative journalist, Nellie's quest for the truth changed the world of journalism forever.

On publication day we organised a sold-out Q&A and signing at Waterstones Kensington hosted by journalist and presenter Martine Croxall, whose fascination with Nellie Bly saw her winning *Celebrity Mastermind* in 2022 with Nellie as her specialist subject.

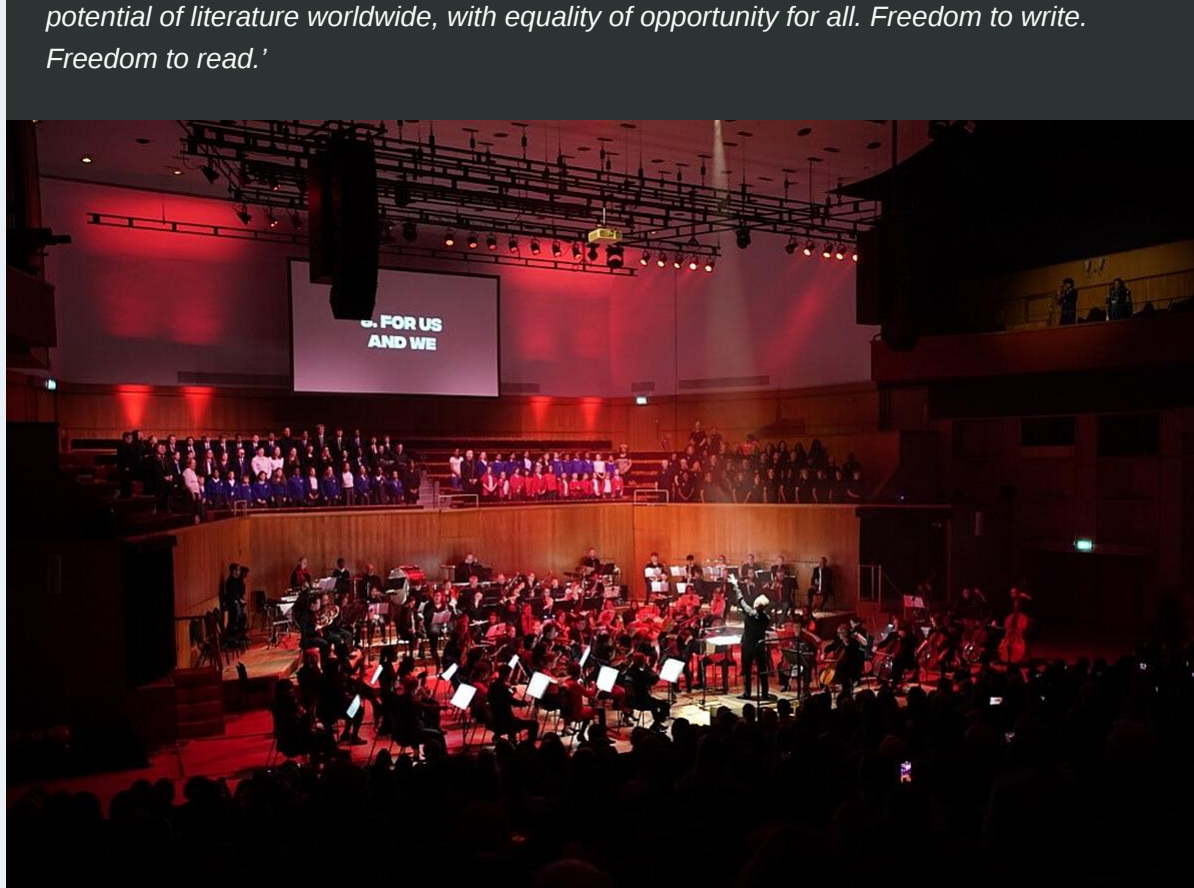
Louisa will also be appearing at Penzance Literary Festival in July.

We highly recommend *Madwoman* for your summer holiday reading!



## MARGARET BUSBY APPOINTED PRESIDENT OF ENGLISH PEN

This month, human rights organisation English PEN appointed editor, writer, broadcaster, and literary critic Margaret Busby as their new president. Busby, taking the place of human rights lawyer Philippe Sands KC, was born in Ghana and educated in the UK, and became Britain's youngest and first Black woman publisher when she co-founded Allison & Busby in the late 1960s. On her presidency, she says, 'I look forward to helping enable the full potential of literature worldwide, with equality of opportunity for all. Freedom to write. Freedom to read.'



## CROYDON BOROUGH OF CULTURE KICKS OFF WITH ARTISTIC SHOWCASE

**'This is Croydon'** - Croydon's programme for London Borough of Culture 2023 opening event Oratorio of Hope, was on 1 and 2 April at Fairfield Halls. It was a brand-new commission which put the Croydon community at the heart of the music, working with local musicians and arts groups. It featured Croydon's poet laureate Shaniqua Benjamin, Agudo Dance Company and Subrang Arts, while composer Tarik O'Regan led on the composition of the music alongside composers Sarah Freestone, Fiona Brice and Jeff Moore.

The Times gave a four star review of the concert referring to the event as 'compelling' and 'a buoyant and ingeniously constructed showcase'. Prior to the event there was some brilliant broadcast coverage with the composer Jeff Moore interviewed by Jim Davies for BBC Radio London where he mentioned that Oratorio of Hope was 'a big weekend for Croydon'. London Mozart Players' chief executive Flynn Le Brocq was also interviewed on ITV London News.

Citizen UK: Caribbean Influencers also opened in April at the Museum of Croydon which explores how Caribbean migration has helped influence the borough through a new exhibition in collaboration with the National Portrait Gallery. The artist Kyam and Shaniqua were interviewed for **ITV London News** about the exhibition which highlighted the stories and influence of Croydon residents who have shaped the borough through their Caribbean roots.

