

# **Borders Book Festival kicks off this Thursday at Melrose's Harmony Garden**

**The Borders Book Festival kicks off this Thursday (13<sup>th</sup> June) with One Day author David Nicholls and the BBC's Great British Sewing Bee presenter Patrick Grant, both taking to the stage in front of packed audiences, as well as former Labour Home Secretary Alan Johnson and leading WWII historian James Holland.**

Taking place this weekend from Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> June in Melrose's Harmony Garden, in the Scottish Borders, the packed four days of events will feature well-known names from the worlds of fiction writing, sport, current affairs, health and wellbeing, comedy and history, as well as children's literary favourites.

The book festival officially opens with the announcement live on stage of the prestigious Walter Scott Prize for Historical Fiction, with six shortlisted international literary talents in contention for the £25,000 prize, with the shortlist this year as follows: THE NEW LIFE by Tom Crewe; HUNGRY GHOSTS by Kevin Jared Hosein; MY FATHER'S HOUSE by Joseph O'Connor; THE

HOUSE OF DOORS by Tan Twan Eng; IN THE UPPER COUNTRY by Kai Thomas; ABSOLUTELY AND FOREVER by Rose Tremain.

Further highlights over the weekend include: two legendary female comedians – Scotland’s own Janey Godley and, from south of the border, the fantastically funny Jo Caulfield – discussing with typical humour, candour and warmth their acclaimed memoirs; in the run-up to the General election, well-informed Westminster insider, broadcaster Robert Peston; memoirs from BBC stalwarts Clive Myrie and recently retired Rory Cellan-Jones; former BBC Breakfast presenter Louise Minchin with astonishing female stories of courage and adventure; nature-lover and queen of cosy Kate Humble with her refreshingly pared-back approach to the good life; explorer, writer and filmmaker extraordinaire Benedict Allen, and the ever-fabulous Rory Bremner on stage with fellow legendary comedian Fred MacAulay.

The book festival is also honoured to host, in this Paris Olympic year, a very special event on the centenary of Scotsman Eric Liddell’s historic 400m win at the 1924 Olympics – also in Paris – which was immortalised in the 1981 blockbuster film Chariots of Fire in which he is portrayed by fellow Scot Ian Charleson (and later, in 2012, by local Borders actor Jack Lowden in the West End stage play).

In an Adam & Company Event, unique to the book festival, Sally Magnusson, Liddell’s biographer, will be joined on stage by: Allan Wells, the Scottish athlete who dedicated his 1980 100m sprint win at the Moscow Olympics to Liddell, even before Chariots of Fire had been released and Liddell’s popular legacy secured; Eilidh Doyle, Olympic and Commonwealth medallist and an ambassador for the [Eric Liddell 100 Programme](#) and Liddell’s niece Sue Caton.

Festival Director, Alistair Moffat, said: “The Harmony Garden stage is set for another glorious celebration in our beautiful

Borders home, and we could not be more excited to welcome old and new visitors alike to share in the joy.

'This year's book festival sees familiar, much-loved faces returning to our marquees to spark laughter, debate and applause, as they do every year, but our programme also brings together new voices from across the cultural spectrum, creating a truly unique opportunity for exchanges of ideas and the sharing of connections.

'Harmony Garden is where the party is at this weekend, and we don't want anybody to miss out. There are the myriad events to explore, but there is also the Food & Drink Village in which to indulge those summer cravings, and the electric atmosphere is added to by live music, unrivalled beauty in our surroundings, and the reunions of friends from far and wide in high summer.

'You have to be at Harmony Garden to experience the Borders Book Festival in all its glory. You can't stream this on catch-up! So make sure you're there with us to share in the magic.'

The family festival takes place throughout the day on the Saturday and Sunday (15th & 16<sup>th</sup> June), packed with exciting author events, including: beloved author and former Children's Laureate Michael Morpurgo OBE, now celebrating 50 years in print, with more than 35-million books sold; the wonderful Abi Elphinstone with *Ember Spark* and *the Thunder of Dragons*; festival favourites Vivian French and Alan Windram; Josh Silver and Sally Nicholls with their young adult novels *Dead Happy* and *Yours From the Tower*, respectively; Craig Graham and Mike Stirling – both former Beano editors – with a very special Beano event; and debut author Fiona Carswell with her joyful story of friendship and acceptance, *The Boy Who Loves to Lick the Wind*, illustrated by acclaimed artist Yu Rong.

The Orchard tented food village adjacent to Harmony Garden plays host to live music and free, fun activities for all the family, making the Borders Book Festival a great day out for young and old alike (and all those in between!)

Alan Bett, Head of Literature & Publishing at Creative Scotland said: “Borders Book Festival provides an important and diverse literary offering to the region and beyond. Covering everything from cookery to crime, politics to picture books, the programme caters to a broad range of literary interests and fosters a lifelong connection with books for everyone.

“It’s particularly encouraging to see a strong focus on young readers through the family festival, which lays essential groundwork for engaging children and young people in a future filled with reading and imagination.”

Tickets available at [www.bordersbookfestival.org](http://www.bordersbookfestival.org) or by calling 0131 290 2112 and from the Book Festival Box Office on the day subject to availability.