

# PROGRAMME



# 2023 HERTFORD CLUB LITERARY FESTIVAL

## NEIL PEARSON

Star of *Between The Lines*, *Bridget Jones* and *Drop the Dead Donkey* talks about *MADLY DEEPLY: The Alan Rickman Diaries* with Rick Mayston.

## JOHN LYONS

ALEX DEANE

JASON McCUE

JON TRIGG

CHRISTIAN GOVAN

JOE SAUNDERS

JOHN ROGERS

LES MIDDLEWOOD

AIOFE McMAHON

PLUS live music showcase with  
Pat Crilly and friends

**FREE ADMISSION - ALL WELCOME**



**Friday 30th June &  
Saturday 1st July  
At The Hertford Club**

Visit: [www.hertford.club/litfest](http://www.hertford.club/litfest)  
to find out more

And (NEW THIS YEAR!),  
our poets:

TOM HURST

DAREN PEARY

TARÁ McKERR

POPPY WINTER



THE HERTFORD

CLUB





# 2023 HERTFORD CLUB LITERARY FESTIVAL

## Welcome to the fifth Hertford Club Literary Festival

I'm very happy indeed to welcome you all to the Hertford Club's fifth Literary festival – and my first as Chairman. As always, the festival promises a rich and varied line-up of speakers from all areas of creative endeavour from spoken word and literary poetry and songwriting to talks with prominent actors of stage and screen and, as always, some fascinating insights on Hertford's own unique cast of historic characters.



As is now customary, the Festival begins gently with breakfast at the Club, followed by a pleasant amble through Hertford's historic streets with Les Middlewood as a prelude to two whole

days of stage talks, which climax with publisher and agent Rick Mayston's freewheeling chat with Between the Lines, Bridget Jones and Drop The Dead Donkey star Neil Pearson about the posthumous publication of 'Madly Deeply – the Alan Rickman Diaries'.

**Rob Bryan**

Chair, Festival Committee





# THE PROGRAMME

10.00 - 11.00	Breakfast at the Hertford Club	11.45 - 12.00	Welcome from Club Chairman Rob Bryan
11.00 - 13.00: (approx.)	Historic Hertford walk with Les Middlewood	12.00 - 13.00	Dr Joe Saunders
13.00 - 14.00	Lunch at the Club	13.00 - 14.00	Daren Peary
14.00 - 15.00	Songwriters' Showcase: Pat Crilly, Peter Crossley & Laura Dannan talk about their process and play some of their work	14.00 - 15.00	John Rogers
15.00 - 16.00	Aoife McMahon	15.00 - 16.00	Jon Trigg
16.00 - 17.00	The Poets: Tom Hurst, Tará McKerr & Poppy Winter	16.00 - 17.00	Alex Deane
17.00 - 18.00	Christian Govan	17.00 - 18.00	Jason McCue
18.00 - 19.00	John Lyons with Rick Mayston	18.00 - 19.00	Neal Pearson with Rick Mayston
19.00 till late.	Live music with Pat Crilly, Peter Crossley, Laura Dannan and Dear Wife	19.00 till late.	Live music with The Banter Boys and The Junkyard Dawg Jug Band

# THE SPEAKERS

**11am, Friday 30th June**

**Les Middlewood**

TALK TITLE: **A stroll through Hertford with Les Middlewood, Hertford Club member, Hertford Museum volunteer, and author of “One for the Road: A History of Hertford Pubs”**



Join Les for a pleasant hour ambling through the streets of historic Hertford town centre, stopping at the homes of some of the town's famous former residents and writers and hearing about their lives, times and works in our town. Along the way, you can look forward to hearing about prominent Hertfordshire historian, Henry Chauncy, suffragist and fiction writer Annie Swan, firebrand MP Eric Heffer, novelist W.E. Johns (creator of “Biggles”), naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace, best known for independently conceiving the theory of evolution through natural selection plus a few more!



**2pm, Friday 30th June**

## **Songwriters' Showcase**

**With Pat Crilly, Peter Crossley and Laura Dannan**

This session will be an insight and presentation of the songwriting of three local songwriters who will also perform the songs that they have presented.



**Pat Crilly** was born in Ireland, raised in Scotland and has been based in Hertford since 1978. He has worked in many other lands from Norway to Nova Scotia and Cork to the Congo. Pat runs the Four Rivers Folk Club which is based in the Hertford Club and is a seasoned performer on the local folk scene. His songs reflect the places he's worked, the people he's encountered and his observations of life. He will perform on guitar and Irish bouzouki. He has recently produced a new album of original songs "Amber and Gold".

**Peter Crossley** was born in Halifax, studied interior design and has lived in London and Germany and has eventually ended up living in a Hertfordshire village. Peter is a teacher of violin and guitar and is a very popular local singer songwriter and performer. Peter writes inspirational and uplifting folksy songs that make you think. His subjects range from childhood memories of skimming stones with his father to getting married later in life. His latest album is "Rags to Riches" has been very well received.



**Laura Dannan** is a singer songwriter from St Albans. She loves writing songs and has a unique style and quirky insights into subjects such as having a midlife crisis, being addicted to chocolate and a love of romantic stories all which make for entertaining listening. Laura's songwriting has a lighthearted narrative style with vivid imagery reflecting life's trials and tribulations. She is also the founder and host of The Flying Squirrels Club that promotes local singer songwriters and original artists.

You will be drawn into the songwriting process starting with the writer's inspiration, through their word smithing and eventually the editing but more importantly the passion they bring. In addition in the evening all the presenters will perform a 30 minute showcase of their songs.





**3pm, Friday 30th June**

## **Aoife McMahon**

TALK TITLE: **Aoife's debut novel This Grace**



Originally from Co. Clare, Aoife McMahon is a multiple award-winning actress and voiceover artist with over two hundred books, an Audofile Award and places in 'The Irish Times', 'The New York Times' and Amazon's top ten audiobooks to her credit. Aoife trained at RADA and has gone on to work with the RSC, National, Young Vic, Royal Court and Abbey theatres as well as BBC TV and radio, RTE and many others. Aoife currently lives in London and travels regularly to Sri Lanka where she teaches Kundalini Yoga and takes time out to write. *This Grace* is her first novel and with a bit of luck, it will be gracing your bookshelves soon.

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**4pm, Friday 30th June**

## **The Poets: Tom Hurst, Tará McKerr & Poppy Winter**

### **Tom Hurst**

Passionate about poetry from a young age, Tom sought to imitate the classic English poets in the study of ancient languages, which he eventually pursued at Downing College, Cambridge, where he was awarded two Browne medals for his Latin lyrics, *Consolatio contra mortem voluntariam* and *De laetitia indecenti*. He didn't neglect English poetry, though, and, under the influence of Sidney, Donne, Pope, and the *Dolce Stil Nuovo*, developed a style that synthesises the Elizabethan poets' rhetoric with Miltonic learning, and the paradoxes of Mannerism with Augustan symmetry. To date, Tom has composed over a thousand sonnets,



*Continued over*



many of which are included in his as-yet-unfinished *Sequentiae*, a series of sonnet sequences that both explores the psychology of love, and critiques the genres of erotic poetry as a whole. A fascinating introduction by a familiar Hertford Club face to one young man's passion for language and poetry.



### **Tará McKerr**

Tará is an Irish polymath with specific interests in the environment, human rights, and finance. With a law degree and several years in the industry under her belt, she decided to shake things up and she now works as a journalist for one of the creative industries' top publications in the heart of Soho, where she helps celebrate creativity and the people behind it. For Tará, the common thread has always been poetry: spoken word has been her way of understanding the world outside of the regular narrative and Tará joins us here tonight having appeared at most open mic nights around London's creative areas.

### **Poppy Winter**

Poppy Winter is an actor and a writer who grew up in Hertfordshire and who moved to London at eighteen to study at a drama school called LAMDA. Having graduated in 2020, she has just finished touring a play called *Sucker Punch* with the National Theatre – this was its first UK revival since its opening at the Royal Court in 2010. Today, Poppy will be introducing three pieces of her latest work – all sharing the common theme of the drive to create art as well as the search for meaning and connection through art and each other.





**5pm, Friday 30th June**

## **Christian Govan**

**TALK TITLE: The Enemy With My Face - an extraordinary autobiography**

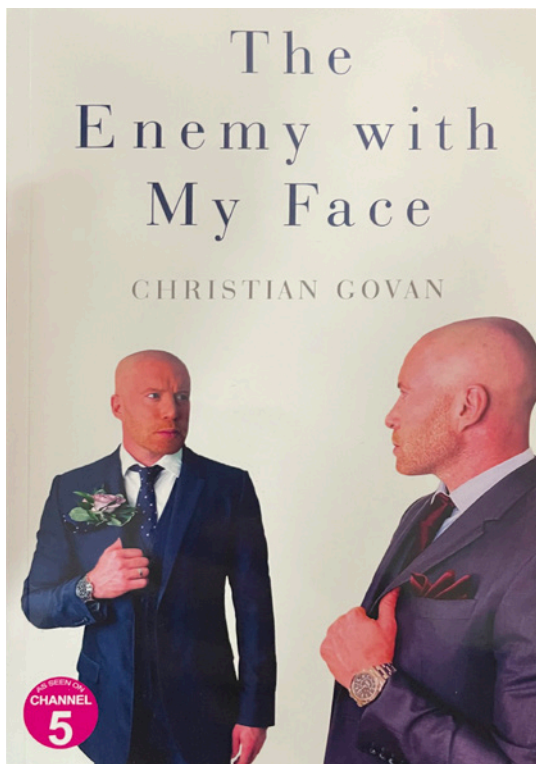
Christian Govan talks candidly about his extraordinary life-journey into mental illness and wrongful arrest, which later led to drink, drug and gambling addiction. Christian was brought down past his knees but somehow fought back to come out on the other side.

In June 2015, his world was turned upside down when the police stormed his house, executing a European arrest warrant over a “60-million-Euro tax fraud”. And, although he’d already overcome childhood emotional and physical abuse to become a successful businessman, this was the final straw. An innocent man facing prison, wearing an electronic tag and reporting to the police, Christian was at the end of his tether – and soon his drinking and drug habit spiralled out of control.

Now drug-free and optimistic, Christian talks today about *The Enemy With My Face*, which took a great deal of courage to write, as Christian readily admits:

*“I have been brutally honest and truthful, and turned myself inside out to write something very special to give a little hope that all is not lost and that you are definitely not alone.”*

We look forward to a rollercoaster ride of a talk from Christian – one whose ultimate message is one of hope.





**6pm, Friday 30th June**

## **John Lyons**

**TALK TITLE: Stage and screen star John Lyons talks with Rick Mayston about his long and illustrious career and his autobiography 'Not Just George'**



Having begun his acting career in 1961 as a founder member of the East 15 Acting School, John Lyons has his work cut out covering the contents of his autobiography in a mere hour. Published in May 2021 by Mooney and Lambert, with a foreword by Sir David Jason OBE, the title of 'Not Just George' alludes to the role for which John's probably best known – as Sir David Jason's long suffering sidekick D.S. George Toolan in 'A Touch of Frost'

which ran for a very successful 17½ years and is currently being repeated daily on ITV3. As that title suggests, of course, that's just one among countless roles, including more than 500 TV appearances ranging from 'Upstairs Downstairs', 'Play for Today' and 'The Sweeney' to 'On the Buses', 'George & Mildred' and 'The 19th Hole with Eric Sykes'. Add to that countless stage appearances in West End musicals and straight plays such as The Mousetrap and, of course, pantomime and you have a huge amount to pack into what promises to be a fascinating hour!



**11.45pm, Saturday 1st July**

**Welcome address  
by the Hertford Club's  
Chair Rob Bryan**

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**12pm, Saturday 1st July**

**Dr Joe Saunders**

**TALK TITLE: Alfred Russell Wallace: Dispelling the myths about Hertford's almost forgotten hero of science**

While in a fever on a specimen collecting trip in the East Indies, Wallace had an exhilarating idea: many are born; few survive. Those that fit their environment survive better – and only those few have descendants. This is what Darwin would call “Natural Selection”. When recovered, Wallace wrote up his ideas and, in one of the greatest ironies in history, mailed it to Darwin, some 9,000 miles away in London. Two months



later, the essay arrived, and the astonished Darwin wrote, “I never saw a more striking coincidence”, referring to its similarity to his own theory of evolution, hatched 20 years earlier but never published. In this talk, Joe explains the story of Wallace and Darwin both arriving at the Theory of Evolution – and looks into questions such as: Did Darwin really keep his discoveries secret for 20 years? Did Darwin plagiarise Wallace? And were their theories the same?

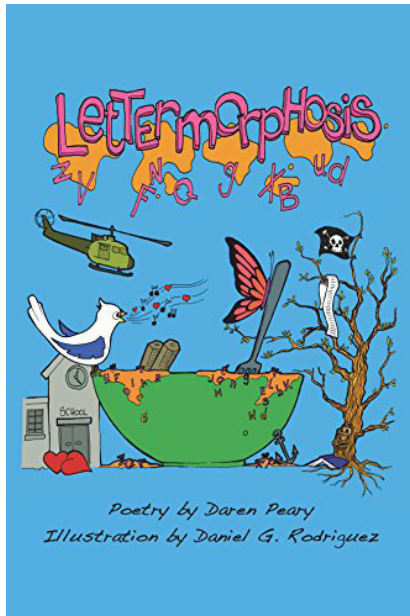
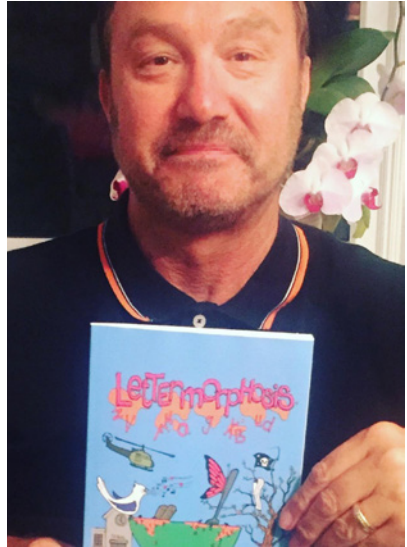


**1pm, Saturday 1st July**

## **Daren Peary**

**TALK TITLE: Lettermorphosis – Poetry in performance and on the page**

Influenced and inspired by the likes of Spike Milligan, John Cooper Clarke, Mark Grist and Harry Baker, as well as the visual arts and music in general, Daren is a local poet and spoken word artist who's been writing for some twenty years. As an education professional, Daren loves sharing his passion for poetry and getting people engaged with it. Today he'll be talking about the poetry process – and his approach to writing – as well as performing a selection from his book Lettermorphosis. With subject matters ranging from tea to tattoos, from Marilyn Monroe to Marmite, from Betty the Yeti to burlesque, this eclectic, hectic and entertaining collection of Daren's work is the perfect



gateway to poetry, for young and old alike. The poems take a variety of forms: some in-character, such as the delightful The Hiphopotamouse while others are more experimental, such as The Day My Dog Turned into a Cat. Without exception, though, they're playful, imaginative, amusing and inventive. Audience participation is definitely on the cards. Speed poetry, anyone?



**2pm, Saturday 1st July**

## **John Rogers**

**TALK TITLE: This Other London: Adventures in the Overlooked City and Welcome to New London: Journeys and Encounters in the post-Olympic City**

When John Rogers packed away his rucksack to start a family in London he didn't stop travelling. But instead of canoeing up the Rejang River to find retired head-hunters, he caught the ferry to Woolwich in search of the city's edge at Crayford Marshes. Today John will be talking us through that expedition along with countless others – all on foot and epic in their own cartilage-crunching way.



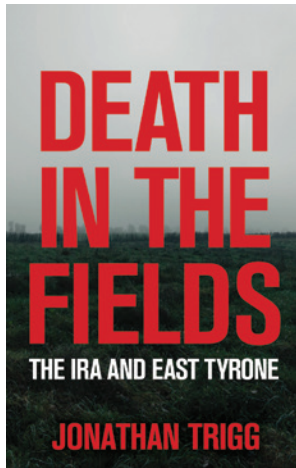
Denounced by his young sons as a 'hippy wizard', John delved into some of the overlooked stories rumbling beneath the tarmac of the city suburbs: holy wells in Lewisham; wassailing in Clapton; a heretical fresco in West Ham... He met the Highwaymen of Hounslow Heath and Viet Cong vets still fighting Stanley Kubrick's 'Full Metal Jacket' in Beckton... And headed out to Uxendon Hill to witness the end of the world... Published by Harper Collins UK in 2013, John's book 'This Other London' will take you into the London where people actually live; the London where workaday dormitory suburbs sit atop a rich history that could rival those of Westminster and Tower Bridge. In an age when no part of the globe has been left untrampled by hordes of tourists, John introduces us to the wonders on our doorstep.

John will also be previewing extracts from his new book Welcome to New London: Journeys and Encounters in the post-Olympic City, which include episodes that relate to the Hertford area.

**3pm, Saturday 1st July**

## **Jon Trigg**

**TALK TITLE: Death in the Fields –  
The IRA and East Tyrone**



A graduate of Bristol University and the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, Jon served as an infantry officer in the Royal Anglian Regiment, serving tours in Northern Ireland and Bosnia, before finishing his service on loan to the United Arab Emirates army. He is the author of over a dozen books on military history, and his work has been translated into more than half a dozen different languages. His book on the destruction of Hitler's Axis allies in Russia, *Death on the Don*, was nominated for the Pushkin Prize for Russian history in 2014.



# **WOTCHA**

**By Kev Saunders**

Paperback and Ebook **STILL** available at all bad-ass bookstores, as well as Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Apple et al and probably Oxfam bookshop. Please note, the Kindle version is worse than useless at propping up wonky tables.

'A rollicking rollercoaster. . . The perfect mix of raw sex, drugs and rock and roll with black comedy in beautiful poetic prose.'

N. GAME

'I've been totally engrossed in Wotcha... A must-read for anyone with an ounce of that Strummeresque attitude still inside of them, and if you haven't, read it anyway and get some!'

S. CHANDLER

'An amusingly filthy page-turner.'

D.G. HUNT

'Unfunny liberal elite filth.'

THE DAILY MAIL





**4pm, Friday 30th June**

**Alex Deane**

**PLAY TITLE: More Lessons from History:  
Uncovering the colourful characters  
of the past**

After an enjoyable talk at last year's festival, we're very pleased to announce that Alex Deane is back to share with us the second volume of his popular series rummaging around history's most absurd stories and eccentric characters. As before, he reminds us that throughout history human nature has remained the same – and that people's comical, crazy or downright horrific reactions in the past can teach us a lot about who we are today.



Among Alex's weird and wonderful tales are the story of big, flightless birds taking on a military regiment, why carrots are orange and the world's worst-run battleship...

The words of some of Alex's famous readers say it best!

*"Fabulously entertaining, Alex Deane's wry, witty stories take hidden gems from our shared history and polish them until they shine. A must-read."*

Iain Dale

*"Ribald, riotous and sometimes surreal, Alex Deane's dispatches from the forgotten corners of history bring heroes and villains roaring vividly and often poignantly back to life."*

Gavin Esler

*"More rollicking tales of fascinating figures who should not be lost to history – told with Alex Deane's warm empathy, shrewd insight and glistening wit."*

Lord Parkinson, former special adviser to Prime Minister Theresa May

**5pm, Saturday 1st July**

## **Jason McCue**

**TALK TITLE: Modern Lawfare: Taking on the Bad Guys**

*"There are lawyers who weigh their words carefully, who are guarded when talking to journalists, and then there's McCue."*

Esther Addley, The Guardian

Jason McCue is renowned for pioneering "lawfare" against terrorists, dictators, rogue states and corporations that otherwise appear to be above the law. And he does so with a great deal of success. For instance, helping families afflicted by the Omagh bombing to sue the Real IRA, prosecuting Belarus dictator Alexander Lushenko for torture and hostage-taking and as UN facilitator of Sudan peace talks. So, it's no surprise that Jason's in demand as a speaker (perhaps you've seen his 2012 Ted Talk entitled "Terrorism is a failed brand") – and it's a privilege to have him here today!



As well as all of the above, in what promises to be a fascinating and revealing hour, Jason will be speaking about his firm McCue, Jury & Partners LLP's current action in the High Court on behalf of Ukrainian victims of Russia's illegal war against the Russian private military company Wagner Group and its founder Yevgeny Prigozhin. The implications of this action are profound and far-reaching – as Jason will explain in his not-to-be-missed talk today.

**6pm, Saturday 1st July**

## **Neil Pearson**

TALK TITLE: **Madly Deeply:**

**Neil Pearson talks about the Alan Rickman Diaries with Rick Mayston. Not so much an interview as a fireside chat!**



Literary agent, former Getty Images Europe Book Publishing Director, publisher and founder of literary and multimedia agency Agent Fox Media, Rick Mayston hosts this festival highlight – a conversation with Neil Pearson. Best known for his performances in smash hit TV shows such as *Between the Lines* and *Drop the Dead Donkey* and many movies, including all three *Bridget Jones* films – he's a very familiar face to us all.

Today, though, he's not here to talk about his acting career or any of those starring roles. This is not so much an interview as a freewheeling “fireside chat” – and it's all about Neil's other passion: Neil Pearson Rare Books ([neilpearsonrarebooks.com](http://neilpearsonrarebooks.com)) and the company's role in carrying out the instructions of the late Alan Rickman's estate to find a publisher for his diaries. Neil will, of course, be talking about the diaries (*Madly, Deeply, The Alan Rickman Diaries* – published Oct. 2022 by Canongate), which are by turns anecdotal, indiscreet, witty, gossipy and utterly candid, and all adorned with beautiful illustrations by Rickman himself. He'll also be talking about the much-missed man himself, who was master of almost every genre from his breakout role as *Die Hard*'s villainous Hans Gruber to his embodiment of Severus Snape in the *Harry Potter* film series and beyond.

This is sure to be entertaining, amusing and revealing – and a highlight of this year's festival!





THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS



Steven Oates



CLEARSHORE  
CAPITAL



BOOKBINDERS  
OF LONDON  
est. 1880



ONE OF THE UK'S LEADING ONLINE VAPE STORES



A special thanks goes out to **Guy Moss** who provides the Festival floor covering.