



STURMINSTER NEWTON LITERARY FESTIVAL 2023

Sturminster Newton Literary Festival is back for a fourth year and will run from 5-10 June 2023. This year the programme in the North Dorset town has expanded to include non fiction events and now encompasses the wider Wessex footprint.

This year, ticket holders can hear about a range of topics from a sequel to *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* by Michael Langridge, to the experiences of a helicopter test pilot from Chris Taylor, and nuggets of Dorset history from Jon Woolcott. Highlights of the festival include journalist Felice Hardy talking about her grandmother, an Austrian tennis champion who escaped the Nazis and went on to play at Wimbledon. West Dorset based author Brian Jackman will discuss how the natural surroundings of his parish inspired him to write *Wild About Dorset*. Local poet David Caddy will be reading Rupert Brooke's poetry in a railway carriage at Shillingstone Station. The exquisite nature writing of Jane V Adams is the focus of another festival talk. Fiction writers include Salisbury based Elisabeth Conway and Matthew Harffy from Wiltshire.

A dramatic monologue by local playwright Sue Ashby, *From Sturminster Newton to The White House: the Fuller sisters in America* will premiere during the festival. Local singers Rachael Alexander, Rachael Revell, and Lina Felsa will perform some of the songs sung by the Fuller sisters on their tours at the turn of the 20th century.

The festival is collaborating with other businesses and organisations this year. The 1855 building will be transformed into a pre-loved fashion show catwalk for a talk by Libby Page on her new book, *The Vintage Shop of Second Chances*. And pomologist Liz Copas and cider maker Nick Poole will talk about their research into the lost orchards of Dorset. The walks programme includes a look at Robert Young's Sturminster Newton and the Marnhull setting for *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. Talks on the stained-glass windows in St Mary's Church will be given during festival week. The church has glass designed by Harry Clarke and Mary Lowndes, two of the most famous stained glass artists of the 20th century.

Festival committee chairman, Pauline Batstone said: "I am delighted that we have such a full and wide ranging programme for our fourth year. Thank you to all those who have worked hard to bring this together and to all those who plan to attend our events."

Notes for editors:

Sturminster Newton Literary Festival focuses on the three writers associated with the town (Robert Young, Thomas Hardy, and William Barnes, current Dorset and Wessex writers, and aspiring writers from Dorset and Wessex. Events and more information is on the festival website at www.sturlitfest.com.

The Fullers were three sisters who lived on Bridge Street in Sturminster Newton who sang in music halls and wealthy homes and did three tours of America from 1911-1917, including the White House.