

MK LIT FEST



MILTON KEYNES LITERARY FESTIVAL

18 – 22 September 2019

MK Gallery, Central Milton Keynes

Our Authors' Titles

PAUL MASON • CARRIE GRACIE • JACK MONROE

CHRIS RYAN • ATTILA THE STOCKBROKER

ANDREW HODGES • DAN CRUICKSHANK

LISSA EVANS • TOBY LITT • KASSIA ST CLAIR

PRETI TANEJA • SAM BYERS • LUKE KENNARD

MARY JEAN CHAN • LISA BLOWER • SIR DERMOT TURING

JOOLS WALKER AKA LADY VELO • TRACY BUCHANAN

KATE NOAKES • CHRIS POWER • JACK SHEFFIELD

Full details and tickets: www.mklitfest.org

Lissa Evans

Old Baggage



Black Swan; ISBN 1784161217

What do you do next, after you've changed the world?

It is 1928. Matilda Simpkin, rooting through a cupboard, comes across a small wooden club – an old possession of hers, unseen for more than a decade. Mattie is a woman with a thrilling past and a chafingly uneventful present. During the Women's Suffrage Campaign she was a militant. Jailed five times, she marched, sang, gave speeches, smashed windows and heckled Winston Churchill, and nothing since then has had the same depth, the same excitement.

Now in middle age, she is still looking for a fresh mould into which to pour her energies. But what starts as a brilliantly idealistic plan is derailed by a connection with Mattie's militant past that begins to threaten every principle she stands for.

I loved Old Baggage. Such original characters, and so timely. And it made me weep at the end – JoJo Moyes

Old Baggage gives an inspiring model of womanhood. Moving, warm and wry. It is wonderful! – Marian Keyes

Sunday 22 September, 2.45pm: £5



Kassia St Clair

The Golden Thread



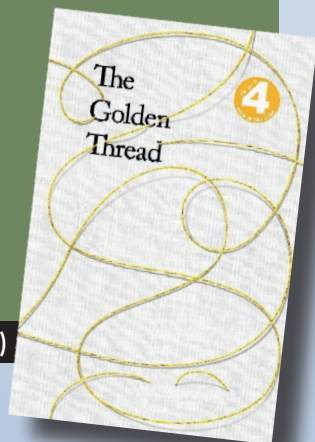
John Murray; ISBN 1473659032

All textiles begin with a twist. From colourful 30,000-year old threads found on the floor of a Georgian cave to what the linen wrappings of Tutankhamun's mummy actually meant; from the lace ruffs that infuriated the puritans to the Indian calicoes and chintzes that powered the Industrial Revolution, our continuing reinvention of cloth tells fascinating stories of human ingenuity.

Fabric has allowed us to achieve extraordinary things and survive in unlikely places. With a cast that includes Chinese empresses, Richard the Lionheart and Bing Crosby, Kassia St Clair takes us on the run with escaped slaves and moonwalking with astronauts.

Running like a bright line through history, *The Golden Thread* offers an unforgettable adventure through our past, present and future.

The history of the world through the eye of a needle... I recommend this book to anyone – The Spectator



Sunday 22 September, 5.30pm: Free (booking essential)

Paul Mason

Clear Bright Future



Allen Lane; ISBN 0241320100

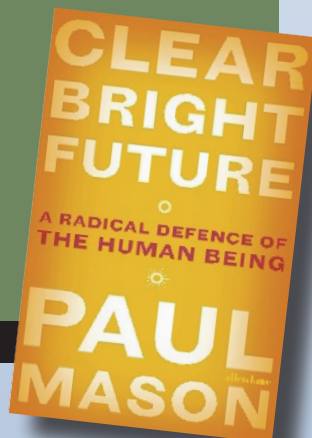
We face a triple threat: the rise of authoritarian politicians and the destruction of verifiable truth; the possibility of intelligent machines whose existence will eviscerate the human claim to agency, rights and consciousness; and a pervasive secular fatalism and irrationality, which has made millions of people susceptible to the mythologies of the new right.

Paul Mason demonstrates how each of these dangers is rooted in the purposeful creation of the “neoliberal self” over the past three decades. Human beings were redesigned to be coerced, governed and pitted against each other in enforced competition. They were told history had ended – but now it’s back with a vengeance.

Clear Bright Future’s account of our political predicament is thrilling – The Guardian

It’s the best analysis of neo-liberalism that I’ve seen for a long time, and puts our lives in a richly described context. Best of all, it’s written with clarity and passion. I hope it’ll change many minds – Philip Pullman

Thursday 19 September, 7pm. £10



Carrie Gracie

Equal



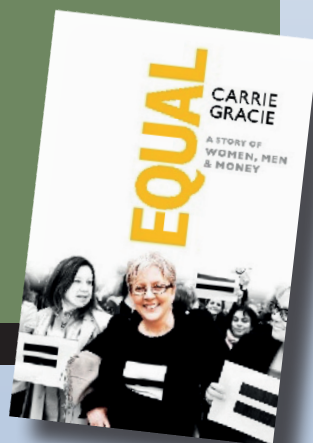
Virago; ISBN 0349012261

Equal is an inspiring, personal and campaigning book about how we should and can fight for equal pay and other kinds of equality in the workplace, by former BBC China Editor Carrie Gracie.

Gracie had insisted on equal pay at the time of her China posting, and after trying with other BBC women to put things right through negotiation, she eventually resigned her post complaining publicly of a 'secretive and illegal' pay culture.

Her protest triggered a parliamentary inquiry into BBC pay, and after a protracted internal complaints process, she won an apology from the BBC and a settlement which she donated to the Fawcett Society.

In *Equal*, Gracie tells her own story, explores why it is often so hard for women to assert their value in the workplace and shows how women, men and employers can achieve equality for this and future generations.



Saturday 21 September, 5.30pm: £10

Jack Monroe

Tin Can Cook



Bluebird; ISBN 1529015286

Food writer and anti-poverty campaigner Jack Monroe presents *Tin Can Cook*, bringing together seventy-five recipes that you can rustle up from tinned and dried ingredients.

Beautifully designed with accompanying quirky hand-drawn illustrations, this book is for you if you've struggled to make a dish because the recipe calls for an exotic ingredient you've never heard of. Jack does away with the effort; all her dishes are exciting and new, but you won't have to look further than your local supermarket to make them.

An exuberant rebuttal to the idea that good food must be expensive, farm-fresh and unprocessed – Ruby Tandoh

Jack Monroe is both cookery writer and tenacious campaigner ... she understands first-hand what it's like to be skint and have the desire to put something delicious on the table – Nigel Slater



Friday 20 September, 7pm: £10 (£5 unwaged)

Jools Walker aka Lady Vélo

Back in the Frame

A Festival of
Creative Urban
Living 2019



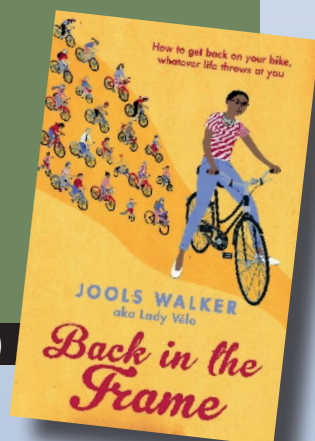
Sphere; ISBN 0751570788

Jools Walker rediscovered cycling aged twenty-eight after a ten-year absence from the saddle. When she started blogging about her cycle adventures under the alias Lady Vélo, a whole world was opened up to her. But it's hard to find space in an industry not traditionally open to women – especially women of colour.

Shortly after getting back on two wheels, Jools was diagnosed with depression and then, in her early thirties, hit by a mini-stroke. Yet, through all of these punctures, one constant remained: Jools' love of cycling.

In *Back in the Frame*, Jools talks to the other female trailblazers who are disrupting the cycling narrative as well as telling the story of how she overcame her health problems, learned how to cycle her own path, and even found a love of Lycra shorts along the way.

Thursday 19 September, 8.30pm: Free (booking essential)



Andrew Hodges

Alan Turing: The Enigma



Vintage; ISBN 1784700089

Alan Turing was the mathematician whose cipher-cracking transformed the Second World War. Taken on by British Intelligence as a shy young Cambridge don, he combined brilliant logic with a flair for engineering. In 1940, his machines were breaking the Enigma-enciphered messages of Nazi Germany's air force. He then headed the penetration of the super-secure U-boat communications.

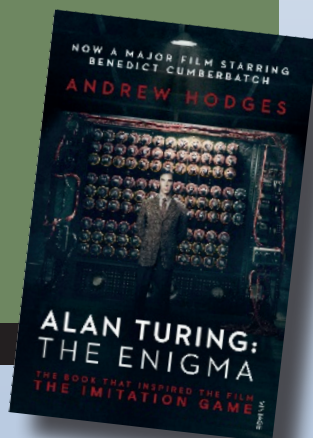
But his vision went far beyond this achievement. Before the war he had invented the concept of the universal machine, and in 1945 he turned this into the first design for a digital computer. Turing's far-sighted plans for the digital era forged ahead into a vision for Artificial Intelligence.

However, in 1952 his homosexuality rendered him a criminal and he was subjected to humiliating treatment. In 1954, aged 41, Alan Turing took his own life.

Andrew Hodges' book is of exemplary scholarship and sympathy. Intimate, perceptive and insightful, it's also the most readable biography I've picked up in some time – Time Out

One of the finest scientific biographies ever – New Yorker

Sunday 22 September, 4pm: £5



Sir Dermot Turing

X,Y&Z: The Real Story of How Enigma Was Broken

The History Press; ISBN 0750987820

December, 1932: In the bathroom of a Belgian hotel, a French spymaster photographs the operating instructions of the cipher machine, Enigma. Later, a mathematician in Warsaw begins to decipher the Third Reich's coded communications and lays the foundations for the Bletchley Park code-breaking operation.

December, 1942: The Polish code-breakers have risked their lives to continue their work inside Vichy France. Now they are on the run from the Gestapo, so MI6 devises a plan to exfiltrate them. If they are caught, the consequences could be catastrophic for the Allies.

Based on original research and newly released documents, X, Y & Z is the exhilarating story of those who risked their lives to protect the greatest secret of World War Two.

Turing unearths a remarkable tale of intellect, bravery and camaraderie that reads like a nail-biting spy novel – Nature

For anyone seeking a more nuanced picture of the human side of Turing, however, this book makes a useful and sometimes poignant contribution – History Today

Sunday 22 September, 4pm: £5



Dan Cruickshank

Architecture: A History in 100 Buildings



William Collins; ISBN 0007581084

Journeying through time and place, from the ancient Egyptian pyramids to the soaring skyscrapers of Manhattan, renowned architectural historian Dan Cruickshank explores the most impressive and characterful creations in world architecture.

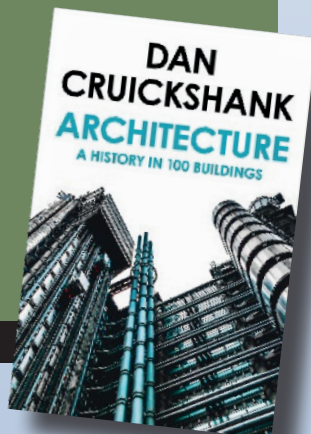
His selection includes many of the world's best-known buildings that represent key or pioneering moments in architectural history, such as the Pantheon in Rome, Hagia Sophia in Turkey, the Taj Mahal in India and the Forbidden City in China.

But the book also covers less obvious and more surprising structures, the generally unsung heroes of an endlessly fascinating story. Buildings like Oriel Chambers in Liverpool and the Narkomfin Apartment Building in Moscow.

The breadth of Cruickshank's knowledge and the very speed of his journey enables him to make striking connections between apparently unrelated cultures... – The Guardian

A colossal melting pot of a book: ambitious, rigorously researched, vigorously narrated and marvellously illustrated – Sunday Times

Sunday 22 September, 7pm: £10



Preti Taneja

We That Are Young



Galley Beggar Press; ISBN 1910296783

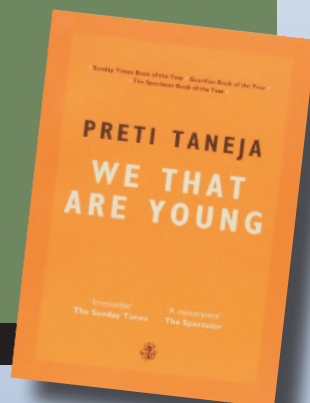
Jivan Singh returns to his childhood home after a long absence, only to witness the unexpected resignation of Devraj, the founding father of the Company, a vast corporation at the heart of Indian life. On the same day, Devraj's youngest daughter Sita absconds - refusing to submit to marriage. Her sisters Radha and Gargi are handed their father's company...

So begins a vicious struggle for power, ranging from the luxury hotels of New Delhi and Amritsar, the palaces and slums of Napurthala, to the beautiful, broken city of Srinagar, Kashmir.

We That Are Young is a modern-day King Lear that bursts with beautifully measured rage. It presents a startling insight into modern India, the rise of religious nationalism, the clash of youth and age, the intensity of life (and the ever-present spectre of death) in one of the world's fastest growing economies. It is the tragedy of our times - for all time.

Misogyny, religious and caste prejudice, plus the madness of money all make for a magnificent, dark and satirical drama
– Marie Claire

... paints a picture of India we won't easily forget. An instant classic – *The Times of India*



Saturday 21 September, 2.45pm: £5

Toby Litt

Patience



Galley Beggar Press; ISBN 1910296996

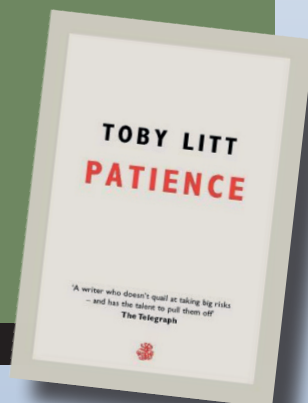
Meet Elliott.

Elliott is something of a genius. He is hugely intelligent. He's an incredible observer. He has a beautiful and unusual imagination. More than that, Elliott is an ideal friend. To know him is to adore him.

But few people do know Elliott, properly, because Elliott is also stuck. He lives in a wheelchair in an orphanage. It's 1979. Elliott is forced to spend his days in an empty corridor, gazing wherever the Catholic Sisters who run the ward have decided to park him.

So when Jim, blind and mute but also headstrong, arrives on the ward and begins to defy the Sisters' restrictive rules, Elliott finally sees a chance for escape. But how can Elliott, unable to move or speak clearly, communicate all this to Jim? How can he even get Jim to know he exists?

A writer who doesn't quail at taking big risks and has the talent to pull them off – The Telegraph



Saturday 21 September, 1.30pm: £5

Sam Byers

Perfidious Albion



Faber & Faber; ISBN 0571336302

In Edmundsbury, a small town in eastern England, fear and loathing are on the rise. Brexit has happened and the ramifications are real.

Grass-roots, right-wing political party 'England Always' is fomenting hatred. The residents of a failing housing estate are being cleared from their homes. A multinational tech company is making inroads into the infrastructure.

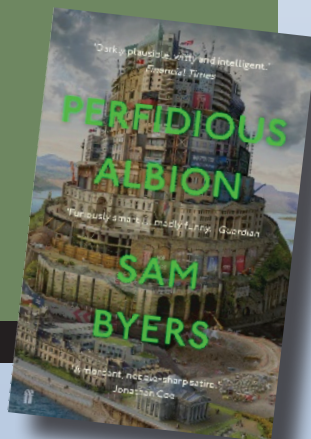
A controversial tweet; a series of ill-judged think pieces; a riot of opinions - suddenly Edmundsbury is no longer the peaceful town it had always imagined itself to be.

The best book about British politics I have read in some time
– John Harris, *The Guardian*

A brilliant, twitchy satire on media manipulation, grievance, one-upmanship and online echo chambers [and] a powerful, ingenious literary thriller – *Sunday Times*

The Martin Amis' Money of our time – David Baddiel

Saturday 21 September, 7pm. £5



Chris Ryan

Black Ops



Coronet; ISBN 1473668069

To murder an SAS man is no easy task. So when three former Regiment guys turn up dead, brutally butchered in different corners of the globe, the hunt is on for a pro. But sometimes it takes a killer to catch a killer.

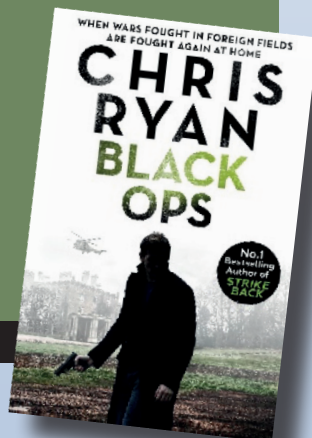
Enter Danny Black. He knows that this will be no ordinary mission. It will be a black op of the highest secrecy and utmost urgency. A black op Hereford will only entrust to Danny.

With the help of the target's impressive female MI6 handler, and accompanied by a grizzled bunch of former special forces operatives, the trail will take him across the world: from Hereford to London, and from the bright lights of Beirut to the badlands of the Syrian desert.

But there is more to this mission than Danny can ever know, and in the secret world, sometimes your deadliest enemy is much, much closer to home.

Nobody takes you to the action better than Ryan, because he's the real deal, and this muscle-and-bone thriller will have fans' blood pumping – Evening Standard

Saturday 21 September, 4pm: £5



Tracy Buchanan

The Family Secret



Avon; ISBN 0008264686

How far would you go to find the truth?

How far will *they* go to find the truth?

2009: Since Amber lost her child ten years ago, her sole focus has been keeping her small business afloat. Her life seems to be on hold until the morning she finds a girl on the beach outside her gift shop. A girl who has no shoes, no name, and no idea where she came from.

1989: As a wildlife documentary maker, Gwyneth's work has taken her all over the world. When she has a terrible accident in the remote Scottish Highlands, she is saved by the McClusky family and taken into their home. But there is more to this family than meets the eye, and something from their past threatens to tear them apart.

Both Amber and Gwyneth are at the beginning of a journey that will unearth long-held family secrets, and has the power to change each of their lives forever...

An ambitious and deeply poignant story that will take you into another world – Heat

Beautiful, heartbreaking, uplifting – Hello

[Workshop] Saturday 21 September, 4pm: £15



Lisa Blower

It's Gone Dark Over Bill's Mother's



Myriad Editions; ISBN 1912408163

The matriarch dominates these award-winning stories in Lisa Blower's debut collection.

From the wise, witty and outspoken Nan of 'Broken Crockery', who has lived and worked in Stoke on Trent for all her 92 years, to happy hooker Ruthie in 'The Land of Make Believe', or young mum Roxanne in 'The Cherry Tree'; she appears in many shapes and forms, and always with a stoicism that is hard to break down.

With a sharp eye and tough warmth, Lisa Blower brings to life the silent histories and harsh realities of those living on the margins.

Reading Lisa's stories is like being given the privilege of scouring over the UK's lesser known towns and picking the roofs off people's houses, then the tops off their minds and delving in to the innermost thoughts and feelings and heartaches and eccentricities of all of those diverse and beautiful and terrible human beings whose stories we hardly ever hear – Hollie McNish

Sunday 22 September, 12.15pm: £5



Chris Power

Mothers



Faber & Faber; ISBN 0571339697

Mothers is a collection peopled by men and women who find themselves at crossroads or dead ends – characters who search without knowing what they seek. A woman uses her mother's old travel guide to navigate nowhere; a stand-up comic with writer's block performs a fateful gig at a cocaine-fuelled bachelor party; on holiday in Greece, a father must confront the limits to which he can keep his daughters safe.

At the heart of this work is Eva, whom we meet in childhood, locked in an enigmatic relationship with her mother; as a woman stumbling from youth into middle age; and in later life as the mother to a daughter of her own. Each story lays bare the emotional and psychic damage of life, love and abandonment.

These marvellously crafted stories brim with menace and moments of truth – Times Literary Supplement

Extraordinary... about the brief moments that resonate across whole lives... Outstanding – Sunday Times



Sunday 22 September, 12.15pm: £5

Mary Jean Chan

Flèche



Faber & Faber; ISBN 0571348041

Flèche (the French word for 'arrow') is an offensive technique commonly used in fencing, a sport of Mary Jean Chan's young adult years, when she competed locally and internationally for her home city, Hong Kong. This cross-linguistic pun presents the queer, non-white body as both vulnerable ('flesh') and weaponised ('flèche'), and evokes the difficulties of reconciling one's need for safety alongside the desire to shed one's protective armour in order to fully embrace the world.

Central to the collection is the figure of the poet's mother, whose fragmented memories of political turmoil in twentieth-century China are sensitively threaded through the book in an eight-part poetic sequence, combined with recollections from Chan's childhood.

As complex themes of multilingualism, queerness, psychoanalysis and cultural history emerge, so too does a richly imagined personal, maternal and national biography. The result is a series of poems that feel urgent and true, dazzling and devastating by turns.

***Heartbreaking and breathtaking poems...
beautifully composed on every page***
– *Diva Magazine*

Saturday 21 September, 12.15pm: £5



Luke Kennard

Cain



Penned in the Margins; ISBN 1908058471

The year is 2016 and Luke Kennard finds himself estranged from his family, his publisher and his faith.

With the help of his Community Psychiatric Nurse, who claims to be the living embodiment of Cain - the first murderer - the poet changes his name to Father K and searches for answers in his childhood, in poetry, in alcohol, and in a notorious, long-running DVD box-set.

Tricksy, acerbic and laugh-out-loud funny, *Cain* is a dazzling collection from Next Generation poet Luke Kennard. In a series of animated conversations, Cain provides therapy sessions for the author, covering everything from interfaith dialogue and genealogy to zombies. *Cain's* central sequence of 31 anagram poems demonstrates the mastery of form and trademark surreal humour that has made Kennard one of British poetry's brightest lights.

Endlessly inventive, bruisingly direct, and rich with a desperate, defensive humour. A stunning achievement – Joe Dunthorne

Luke Kennard is an excruciating observer of the southern cringe. Cain is his best book yet, and ought to bring him coach-loads of new readers – Sunday Times

Saturday 21 September, 12.15pm: £5



Attila the Stockbroker

Arguments Yard



Cherry Red Books; ISBN 1909454303

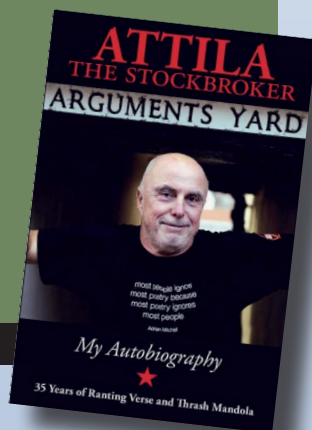
Launched into public consciousness by John Peel in the early 1980s, poet, musician, journalist and political activist Attila the Stockbroker has since spent thirty five years touring the world as a self-sustaining, one man DIY cottage industry.

Having performed over three thousand gigs in twenty four countries, releasing thirty records and seven books of poetry along the way, he pauses here to relate his life story: a tale of ranting verse, punk rock and his relationship with the ever changing, increasingly corporate minded politics of the last five decades.

Tales of Attila's life are energetically and sharply written with a superior eye for prose – Record Collector

A book to read, a mission to sign up for, a practice to learn from. A truly wonderful piece of writing... – Huffington Post

Sunday 22 September, 8.30pm: £10



Kate Noakes

The Filthy Quiet



Parthian Books; ISBN 1912681021

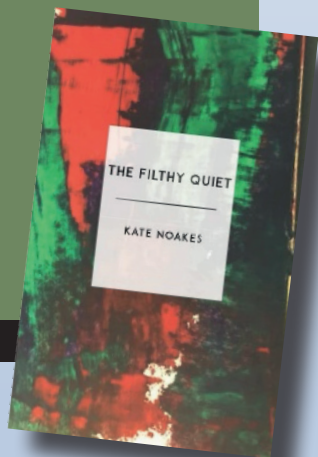
In her most autobiographical collection to date, Kate Noakes explores the pain of losing a long-built life and the joys of exploring a new one. This is a howl that ends with a hallelujah.

Kate has previously published six collections of poetry, and is a trustee of literature advocacy organisation, Spread the Word, and the environmental charity, Smart Earth Network.

The Filthy Quiet is a whirling journey across a lifetime, over great emotional highs and lows. Noakes' collection is intense and deeply personal – Poetry Book Society

Kate Noakes' new collection is a trove of rich materials – rare minerals, sharp sense-impressions and resonant myths – Philip Gross

Wednesday 18 September, 7.30pm: £5



Jack Sheffield

Changing Times



Bantam Press; ISBN 1787632091

For the residents of Ragley, the small Yorkshire village, the war is finally starting to feel like a distant memory. Gone are the days of rationing and sacrifice, replaced with the joys of spin-dryers and Beatlemania.

But Lily Feather can't quite forget the events of the war and the years that followed. Buried in her past remains a terrible secret from which she cannot escape but that still threatens her fragile family. After the death of their mother, her brother, Freddie, has come to depend on her and her husband, but their lives will soon change for ever.

On the cusp of adulthood, Freddie's life is simple: all he really has to worry about is school, girls and a spot of rugby. But when he stumbles across his family's secret past, it is his life that is changed forever. A dark history lies between Freddie, Lily and the truth and they begin to question how much they'll have to sacrifice along the way.

Wry observation and heartwarming humour in equal measure
– Alan Titchmarsh

Jack Sheffield's in a class of his own – York Press

Saturday 21 September, 11am: £5



Colin Butcher

Molly and Me



Michael Joseph; ISBN 0241371767

When ex-policeman Colin Butcher set up his own pet detective agency to search for lost and stolen pets, he quickly realised he needed a partner.

Enter Molly, an unloved and unwanted cocker spaniel he spotted on a rescue website. Clever and charismatic, she melted Colin's heart and the two became instantly inseparable.

Colin's detective skills – combined with Molly's intelligence, tenacity and sense of smell – made them the ultimate team, and it wasn't long before they were cracking cases and solving crimes across the country.

From the search for Pablo the ginger tom cat kidnapped in Devon, to unearthing a treasure trove of stolen jewels in a north London wood, the duo have countless exciting adventures and make plenty of new friends along the way.

The story of a cocker spaniel who thanks to the love and devotion of her owner, finds a new life, a new purpose and a forever friend – Sunday Express

Pet detective Molly the cocker spaniel is a feline's best friend and always ready to help... – Waitrose Weekend

Sunday 22 September, 11am: £5





Milton Keynes Literary Festival
is a five day extravaganza of
books, words, writers and ideas that
celebrates everything literary, bookish or wordy.

This booklet highlights selected titles by
authors who are appearing at MK Lit Fest 2019.

Titles will be available for purchase in the
MK Gallery shop, and many of our authors
will be available to sign copies of their books
after their events.



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Full details and tickets: www.mklitfest.org