



Charity number 1169618

Post Festival Newsletter, July 2024



**Young literature fan,
with books for
bedtime reading**

**ILF -
Appealing
to
all ages!**



**Bill Lawson (left) aged 103, with
speaker Peter Clark at
'The Men of 1924'**

After 25 events over 10 days and with more than 1000 tickets sold, Ilminster's very own Literary Festival 2024 lived up to its reputation as an annual town highlight.

Huge thanks to the wonderful audiences who turned out in force. Coming largely from Ilminster but also from many of the surrounding villages and from towns as far afield as Frome, they even included some 'audience firsts' - a gentleman aged 103 , two babies and a dog - owned by Felice Hardy, speaking about her book 'The Tennis Player who Escaped the Nazis'



“Do You Have a Green Room?”

2024 saw several totally unexpected requests from some speakers for a Green Room* where they could relax, make calls, mingle with other speakers and consume food and drink courtesy of ILF. Another ‘first’, it’s never happened before and we put it down to the likely influence of the mighty Hay Literary Festival, where those who enquired had just been appearing. Heads are now being scratched about whether Green Rooms plus support services can / should be made available at future ILF’s, since they seem to be a definite attraction to the better known speakers in particular.

* A room originally set aside in theatres where the cast could compose themselves before going onstage. Walls and ceiling were painted a calming green.

Book Raffle

A new idea – for the first time, audiences were offered the chance to buy raffle tickets, which were entered into a draw on ILF’s final night. Prize winners received a copy of one of the books featuring in this year’s festival. This idea proved popular with proceeds covering the cost of the book prizes and producing a small profit for ILF funds. Thanks to the many who took part - we hope winners enjoy their read!

Waterstones

It’s hard to remember what tough work it was to organise book sales in the early days of ILF before Waterstones stepped in and made life so much easier. For the last two festivals Marcus Bishop , Manager of Waterstones Yeovil and occasional colleagues from the Yeovil and Taunton stores, have been there, ordering the books requested for sale by authors, lugging them to venues on the day, organising book signings and sales and taking orders when needed - ALWAYS with a smile. So it’s big thanks to Marcus and co and to Waterstones. Authors are always impressed and re-assured to know that the link exists and Marcus is personally known by many of them for his friendly, professional service.

Links with Ilminster Library

This year the library acted as a venue for three FREE, well received events led by Somerset authors. The Library’s ILF display is pictured and Librarians Angie and Kelly provided superb support and endless enthusiasm. The three sessions featured :



Elizabeth Delo, just back from winning a prestigious prize in France for best debut novel of 2023, ‘Becoming Elizabeth Taylor’

Paul Toolan, author of 5 successful detective novels, speaking on ‘How NOT to write a Crime Novel’

Hazel Prior, who brought her harp along for special effects and spoke about her novel ‘Away with the Penguins’. It topped the Sunday Times best seller list - with Barack Obama’s book in only second place !

With sincere thanks to ILF's partner organisations for staging 3 further events to enrich this year's festival week. As always, thanks also to the sponsors, brochure advertisers and festival week volunteers.



Thanks again for such a lovely event – I shall spread the word about Ilminster! -
Amanda Craig (The Three Graces)

I really enjoyed giving the talk and conversing with members of the audience afterwards. - Alom Shaha (Why Don't Things Fall Up?)

Can I just say what a lovely audience they were last night? They were very enjoyable to give a talk to! - Tim Mirfin (The Opera Singer Phenomenon)

As well as speaker feedback there have been many positive comments about the events from those who came along. One speaker went 'off piste' moving too far away from the given title, another read rather than presented the talk. Both received a fair amount of tut tutting! Otherwise there was praise all round for the high standard and content of presentations. One in particular drew huge admiration - "It was one of the most enjoyable and inspiring talks we have ever attended" (of Scotty Mills, "Never Give Up: The 12 Commando Rules for Life"). **All photos will be posted on the ILF website.**

Looking to the future..... This year there were more niggling problems immediately before and also during ILF, than in the past. Although all seemed calm on the surface, there was under surface paddling! There's a need to share the burden by recruiting more members to the planning committee, in addition to our valued festival week helpers. It's great news that, as a result of recent appeals, a number of people are interested in helping to put together and deliver another ILF. If they decide to commit, that will go a long way to ensuring there will be an Ilminster Literary Festival in 2025.

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