

# RNA Conference 2018 – Sessions and Speakers

Please see the timetable for details of times and choices

Friday 13<sup>th</sup> July

## **Sue Moorcroft & Juliet Pickering:**

## **Building a Bestseller**

After eight novels with a variety of publishers, and a host of short stories, serials, articles and a writing 'How To' on her CV, Sue Moorcroft felt she had a respectable writing career. Then she became a client of literary agent Juliet Pickering and the magic began. Sue is now writing two books a year for Avon (HarperCollins), is a Sunday Times bestseller, an international bestseller, and has had a Christmas #1 on Amazon Kindle! Sue and Juliet discuss their path to success - and how to best adapt to the ever-changing publishing landscape.

*Juliet Pickering is an agent at Blake Friedmann Agency, representing a broad list of fiction and non-fiction. She enjoys thought-provoking novels with a big heart, and multi-dimensional characters.*

*Sue Moorcroft is an international bestselling author of contemporary fiction. She's won the Best Romantic Read Award, the Katie Fforde Bursary and her books have twice been nominated for RoNAs. She has edited two short story anthologies for the RNA. Sue was born in Germany and lived in Cyprus and Malta before settling in the UK. Her latest book is ONE SUMMER IN ITALY. <https://www.suemoorcroft.com>*

## **Freda Lightfoot, Lizzie Lane**

## **Sagas!**

### **Jean Fullerton (chair), Diane Allen:**

### **Ignored by critics. Loved by thousands.**

A few years ago 'clogs and shawls', as they were called in the publishing industry, were regarded by editors and agents as having had their day. Oddly, given the huge number of Sagas on the market, writers of these all-encompassing stories struggled to be published. However, readers know what they want and the last decade has seen a resurgence in the genre to such an extent that saga writers' backlists are hot commodities and many writers are turning their hands to the genre. But what makes a good saga? Are there elements which are essential? Anything you should leave out? And just what makes them so popular?

*Lizzie Lane is a best selling author specialising in World War Two novels, her titles regularly appearing in the top thirty best selling paperbacks. She has had over fifty novels published under various pseudonyms, won the BBC New Writers Award, and written a column for the Western Daily Press. Her HONEY DRIVER cosy crime series (w/a Jean G Goodhind) was a best seller in Germany. First published by Black Lace, she has ghost-written for a number of celebrities. Books from her historical backlist are currently being published as Erica Brown by Canelo and she is branching out with a 1950s series CONNOR'S LOT for Head of Zeus. She lives in Bath but is often to be found in Bristol.*

*Jean Fullerton is the author of eleven novels all set in East London where she was born. She is a retired district nurse and university lecturer. Her first two East London series were set in the mid-1800s and the immediate post-war years respectively. Her current East London series featuring the Brogan family is set during the dark days of WW2. She regularly leads workshops at RNA and Historical Novel Society conferences and has undertaken hundreds of speaker engagements to WI groups, U3As and on cruise ships.*

*Diane Allen was the manager and rights buyer for twenty years at Magna Large Print until she decided to turn from gamekeeper to poacher and become a full-time author. She now has seven sagas set in the Yorkshire Dales, all published by Pan Macmillan. She is also published under the name of Gracie Hart by Ebury with two titles set in and around Victorian Leeds. In her spare time, Diane goes walking in the Yorkshire Dales and researches local history.*

*Sunday Times bestselling author Freda Lightfoot was born in Lancashire, becoming first a teacher, then a bookseller in the Lake District. She wrote over fifty articles and short stories for women's magazines before writing novels for Mills & Boon, then Hodder. When sagas fell from fashion she wrote historicals for two other publishers, reclaimed her backlist and self-published them as ebooks! She has written over forty-five novels and now writes for Amazon Lake Union. She spends warm winters in Spain and rainy summers in Britain.*

## Janet Gover:

## Image Manipulation

At last year's conference, Janet Gover's workshop on basic image manipulation for authors was met with a resounding 'more please'. This follow-on workshop is for those who already know what a pixel is but want to know more about working with layers, combining images, highlighting text, colour changing, and using a magic wand (not the Harry Potter variety). Basically – she's getting to the really interesting bits she didn't have time for last year. If you are looking to improve the images on your social media and website, want to make prettier promo materials or feel like having a go at making your own covers for self-publishing... this is the place for you (wizards cloaks optional).

**Janet Gover** is a self-confessed 'bit of a geek girl'. When not writing novels she works in IT – in really dull places like Pinewood Movie Studios, Puerto Rico and Iraq. When her cat lets her actually sit in her chair, she writes novels, high-end technical manuals and develops IT training courses. Her novel *LITTLE GIRL LOST* won the 2017 Epic RoNA, and she has three (possibly four) books out this year. She writes mostly Australian set romance under her own name. As *Juliet Bell*, in collaboration with Alison May, she rewrites misunderstood classic fiction, with an emphasis on heroes who are not so heroic. She also reads for the NWS, teaches at writing retreats and conferences and provides private mentoring for new writers. [www.janetgover.com](http://www.janetgover.com)  
<https://www.facebook.com/janetgoverbooks> Twitter: @janet\_gover

## Nicola Cornick, RNA chairman:

## WELCOME! plus conference notices from Jan Jones

**Nicola Cornick's** bio is on page 5

Award winning, multi-shortlisted RNA stalwart, **Jan Jones** writes all lengths in several genres. Her only rule is to make the reader believe in the worlds she creates. Her most recent Regency is *A RATIONAL PROPOSAL*, romantic suspense is *ONLY DANCING*, contemporary is *A QUESTION OF THYME* [@janjonesauthor](http://janjonesauthor) <http://jan-jones.blogspot.co.uk>

## Julie Cohen (chair)

## All You Need Is Love: Inclusion and Diversity in Romantic Fiction

**Gillian Green, Emily Yau**

**Rhoda Baxter, Rachael Lucas**

Love is universal—but how friendly is romantic fiction to diverse stories and points of view? Two editors and three authors talk about how the industry and the RNA can be more welcoming to authors and stories reflecting the full range of human experience, regardless of race, religion, background, sexuality, gender, age or disability. How can we write books that reflect our truths and the wider world around us?

**Julie Cohen** has written twenty-two books across the spectrum of romantic and literary fiction. Her novels *DEAR THING* and *TOGETHER* were both chosen for the Richard and Judy Book Club; *TOGETHER* won the 2018 Contemporary RoNA. She has taught creative writing for *The Guardian*, PRH, *Literature Wales* and the V&A among others, as well as running an oversubscribed literary consultancy, where she has helped many clients to publication. Her next novel, *LOUIS & LOUISE*, will be published by Orion in January 2019. @julie\_cohen

**Gillian Green** oversees fiction on Ebury Press and Del Rey (PRH). More on *Industry Appointments* page.

**Emily Yau** is currently Editorial Director on Quercus's commercial fiction list, having previously worked at Penguin Random House. More on *Industry Appointments* page.

**Rhoda Baxter/Jeevani Charika** writes multi-cultural women's fiction featuring British-Sri Lankan protagonists

**Rachael Lucas** writes romantic comedy and YA. *THE STATE OF GRACE* was recognised by the National Autistic Society as a supportive guide for newly diagnosed autistic girls.

## Anna Baggaley, Katie Barnes-Wallis:

## Falling in Love... With Mills & Boon

An iconic brand. An exciting future

**Anna Baggaley** is a Senior Editor at Mills & Boon. She began her publishing career with the company over ten years ago, has since worked on the commercial fiction imprint HQ, and now looks after the M&B reprint collections, the North American acquired series and the new M&B Trade list for longer romance titles.

**Katie Barnes-Wallis** joined the Mills & Boon Marketing team in 2013 as Marketing Executive. She has worked on the M&B Bookclub, manages the ecommerce website [millsandboon.co.uk](http://millsandboon.co.uk) and looks after brand and trade release marketing campaigns such as those for New York Times Bestseller Tessa Dare and Eva Leigh

Followed by...

### **Sareeta Domingo, Nic Caws, Sara Jafari:**

### **M&B Editors' Workshop**

Join the editors for an introduction to the various UK-acquired M&B series. This interactive workshop focuses on showing your characters falling in love, and how to use conflict as the key to a truly successful love story!

**Sareeta Domingo** is the Editor on the M&B Modern team, working with authors across all the UK-acquired series. Having worked as an editor in children's fiction for several years, Sareeta made the transition to romance fiction, joining Mills & Boon just over a year ago, and she hasn't looked back! In her spare time, Sareeta is also an author, with her debut coming-of-age romance *THE NEARNESS OF YOU* published in 2016.

**Nic Caws** is the Associate Editor on the M&B Historical team and works with authors across all of the UK-acquired series. Her voracious appetite for books led to her BA in Eng Lit, after which she fell headlong into a whirlwind love affair with Mills & Boon. When she doesn't have her nose buried in a romance, Nic can be found seeking her next theatre trip or proudly admitting she's far too uncool to be living in Camden, London.

**Sara Jafari** is an Editorial Assistant for M&B Historical Romance series. Book publishing has been her dream since she was a teenager; her BA in English & Comparative Literature solidified her belief. A lover of all things romance, she can't believe she gets paid to read about handsome Regency rakes, rugged highlanders, and passionate billionaires. Sara also designs and edits her own indie magazine *TOKEN*, and of course – reads!

Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> July

### **Sam Missingham:**

### **Discoverability - tips, techniques and insights**

The time has gone where authors can rely entirely on their publishers, they must empower themselves in order to be discovered by readers. Sam discusses effective ways for authors to connect with their target readership with examples of authors who are taking an active role in marketing and selling their own books.

**Sam Missingham** recently launched *Lounge Marketing* (<http://www.loungemarketing.com>), a book marketing membership service for authors, following the launch last year of *Lounge Books* (<http://www.lounge-books.com>), a community for book-lovers. She worked at HarperCollins UK for 4 years as head of audience development where she ran large-scale marketing campaigns that connected books and authors with readers. Before that she spent five years at the industry trade magazine, *THE BOOKSELLER*, running conferences, awards, and marketing. She was the co-founder of *FutureBook*. She speaks regularly about book marketing and publishing strategies around the world.

### **Carol McGrath & Charlotte Betts:**

### **Finding the truth, breathing life into characters**

Writing an engaging story is always of paramount importance but how far should you go in embellishing or bending historical facts to suit your story? What is the 'sweet spot' for finding the right balance between 'truth' and fiction? We'll be exploring how to create imaginary characters when writing about historic events and how to place known personalities in credible historical settings and, perhaps, fabricated romantic situations.

Following a first degree in English and History, **Carol McGrath** completed an MA in Creative Writing, followed by an MPhil in English. *THE HANDFASTED WIFE*, first in a trilogy about the royal women of 1066 was shortlisted for the RoNAS in 2014. *THE WOMAN IN THE SHADOWS* was published by Accent Press in 2017. Carol is currently working on *THE ROSE TRILOGY* set in the High Middle Ages. She frequently speaks at events and conferences and regularly reviews for the HNS. Find Carol on her website: [www.carolmcgrath.co.uk](http://www.carolmcgrath.co.uk)

**Charlotte Betts** is a multi-award-winning author of romantic historical novels with a dash of adventure. She is currently researching her eighth novel. A member of the Society of Authors, the Historical Novel Society and the lovely RNA, Charlotte lives in Hampshire in a seventeenth-century cottage. *THE APOTHECARY'S DAUGHTER*, *THE PAINTER'S APPRENTICE*, *THE SPICE MERCHANT'S WIFE*, *THE CHATEAU ON THE LAKE*, *THE HOUSE IN QUILL COURT*, *THE DRESSMAKER'S SECRET*, *THE PALACE OF LOST DREAMS* are all published by Piatkus.

## **Imogen Howson:**

## **New Writers' Scheme Get Together**

In the regular session for members of the New Writers' Scheme. Immi will give an overview of the year so far, and we'll hear from a recent graduate of the Scheme. Come along with your questions!

*Immi Howson is the NWS Organiser. She writes for young adults and was an editorial assistant for Samhain for ten years. When she's not writing or spreadsheet-wrangling for the NWS, she bakes, runs, drinks coffee, sends care packages to her student daughter and looks after a household of a curate, a teenager, a hamster, a Very Tiny Dog and three cats. [www.imogenhowson.com](http://www.imogenhowson.com) and on twitter @imogenhowson*

## **Maggie Swinburne:**

## **Getting your MY WEEKLY pocket novel published**

My Weekly Pocket Novels are romantic and dramatic stories 50,000 words in length. They are published every fortnight - fast, thrilling reads taking the reader on an emotional or adventurous journey, arriving at a positive and upbeat romantic ending. How do you write one that will be accepted for publication? Maggie Swinburne has been the line editor for 10 years and loves nothing better than working with writers to get their novel into print. She will talk about planning, creating characters, submitting your novel and what happens next!

*Maggie Swinburne works for DC Thomson as the Brand Extension Editor of MY WEEKLY; this includes the My Weekly Pocket Novels, the Specials, and the Annual. She is also the Cookery Editor of the weekly title. She has worked on My Weekly for 19 years, following a career in London on women's consumer magazines. She has also worked as a Managing Editor for a company producing publications for the Armed Forces. She thinks she has the best job in MY WEEKLY because she can go to cookery photo-sessions where cake is made, and then read romances while sampling the results!*

## **Felicity Trew & Brigid Coady:**

## **The Agent & Author Unplugged**

### **A behind the scenes conversation and Q&A**

We all know the fairy-tale: you meet each other across a crowded conference floor; effortlessly edited, the MS is sold at auction while the agency agreement ink is still drying. One evening (that's AM in NYC) the film rights are optioned and by the weekend the royalties are pouring in, the champagne is flowing and we can relax. In reality, the truth behind every success story is the vital, powerful, hardworking partnership between author and agent. Felicity and Brigid will offer a rare and honest insight into that relationship from both perspectives, followed by a Q&A where attendees can ask all their burning questions and learn industry secrets.

*Talented, enthusiastic and energetic, Felicity Trew is keenly building up a list of extraordinary writers. Among the highly-talented clients she already represents are Joan Hessayon award-winner Brigid Coady, debut saga writer Rosie Hendry and television journalist Kerry Barrett. She was one of THE BOOKSELLER Rising Stars 2016.*

*Brigid Coady is the author of a number of romantic comedies, including EMMA EVER AFTER, PERSUADING AUSTEN, and the Joan Hessayon award winning, NO ONE WANTS TO BE MISS HAVISHAM. She is Head of Storytelling for an integrated marketing and communications agency, meaning she gets to talk about story structure to corporate folks. Sometimes they even listen to her. She has been a voiceover artist and radio presenter. She will happily discuss fan fiction and all things One Direction, but be warned, once started she won't stop. She and Felicity have been happily engaged in an author and agent relationship since 2015*

## **Alison May:**

## **Self-editing**

Revising a manuscript can feel overwhelming. It's tempting to keep fiddling and tweaking forever, and equally tempting to stick the thing in a drawer and start afresh on something shiny and new. This session will look at how to resist both those urges by breaking editing down into manageable stages, discussing when to stop, how to approach a messy draft and how to keep going when you really feel like giving up.

*Vice-Chair of the RNA, Alison May is an author, tutor and freelance editor, and has been shortlisted for the Love Stories Awards and the RoNAs. Her next book, ALL THAT WAS LOST, is out in September and she also writes modern adaptations of misunderstood classics in collaboration with Janet Gover under the penname Juliet Bell. Alison runs novel-writing workshops and a successful manuscript critique service. [www.alison-may.co.uk](http://www.alison-may.co.uk) [www.facebook.com/AlisonMayAuthor](http://www.facebook.com/AlisonMayAuthor) @MsAlisonMay.*

## **Fiona Harper: Romance Structure - How Three Act Structure Applies to Love Stories**

We've all heard about three-act structure, about brave hero who goes on a journey throughout the course of a story, and conquers seemingly impossible obstacles to achieve his goal, but how does this apply to a romantic novel? What happens when you have two protagonists instead of one? How does it work when there's no antagonist? Are the story beats the same? Do certain elements of a romantic story tend to fall in certain places of the three-act structure every time? Should they? And how can we use this knowledge to help us craft our love stories? There are no rules about how you should write your book, but understanding the familiar dance that many romantic stories follow can help us decide if we want to use that tried and tested choreography, putting our own fresh twist on it, or whether we want to do it our own way and bust out some new moves entirely

***Fiona Harper** started her career in 2006, producing heartfelt, humorous romances for M&B. She now writes quirky, warm women's fiction (sometimes with a hint of mystery) for HQ. Her first book won the Joan Hessayon Award for New Writers and her 25th book, *THE OTHER US*, was the winner of the 2018 Paranormal RoNA.*

## **Debbie Taylor: Pitching your Novel**

This interactive workshop helps identify which aspects of your novel to mention in the pitch letter to pique an agent's or editor's attention. Debbie has led workshops on this topic for over five years, and is currently running a regular 'pitch surgery' on the members' area of the Mslexia website. The ideal synopsis begins with a good pitch, so anyone wanting to attend the 'Writing a synopsis' workshop is recommended to attend this pitching talk first.

***Debbie Taylor** is the founder and Editor of MSLEXIA, the magazine for women writers. She's written for Oxfam, UNICEF, Anti-Slavery, WHO and others about women and social issues. Her books include *MY CHILDREN, MY GOLD*, a travelogue about single mothers, and *THE FOURTH QUEEN*, a novel set in a harem in 18thC Morocco. Her latest novel is *HERRING GIRL*, a paranormal historical murder mystery. An experienced broadcaster and writing workshop tutor, she lives in a disused lighthouse at the mouth of the Tyne. [www.mslexia.co.uk](http://www.mslexia.co.uk)*

## **Nicola Cornick & Andrea Penrose: Adding Mystery to your History**

Writing historical mysteries combines all the best aspects of historical fiction, romance, suspense and intrigue! But how do you keep the balance right between the mystery elements and the rest of the story? This session looks at some of the challenges – and joys – of adding a mystery element to your historical romance.

***Nicola Cornick** writes dual time novels with elements of history, mystery, romance and suspense. She has an MA in Public History and works as a guide and historian for the National Trust at Ashdown House. In her spare time she is a puppy walker for Guide Dogs. Nicola is the current chair of the RNA. [www.nicolacornick.co.uk](http://www.nicolacornick.co.uk)*

***Andrea Penrose** (who also writes as Cara Elliott and Andrea Pickens) wrote her first book aged five on cowboys and the Wild West of America. She then moved on to Regency England, an era that has fascinated her ever since she picked up a copy of P&P (clearly she has a thing for Men in Boots.) A graduate of Yale, she has won numerous writing awards, including two Daphne Du Maurier Awards for historical mystery, the Golden Leaf, and she's been a three-time finalist for the prestigious RITA Award. She's currently writing the WREXFORD & SLOANE series and the Lady Arianna series, Regency-set mysteries with a dash of romance.*

## **Rowan Coleman: Finding your author voice**

A workshop that examines the importance of thinking and self-awareness in order to uncover the trait all publishers and readers want: a strong definable voice. We look at techniques and processes to help uncover who you really are as a writer, and how to enrich and define your work with your own unique characteristics. Despite living in a very full house in Hertfordshire, **Rowan Coleman** has written many life-affirming literary, romantic comedy and YA books. *THE MEMORY BOOK* was a Richard and Judy pick. Her latest book is *THE SUMMER OF IMPOSSIBLE THINGS*.

**Debbie Taylor:****Writing a synopsis**

An interactive workshop that demystifies this most fraught of writing tasks, breaks it down into its constituent parts, then helps you rebuild it. The talk assumes participants have already prepared a good pitch for their novels, so attending the pitching session is recommended as they are designed to work together.

**Debbie Taylor's bio is on Page 5**

**Samantha Bentall:****Radio Gaga - appearing on live radio**

One thing attracting many of us to the writing life is the notion that we can hide behind our laptops, whiling away the hours in our imaginary worlds. But what happens when the books are published and we have to go out into the world to publicise them? Many people find the idea of appearing on live radio extremely daunting but with a smattering of insider knowledge, you can beat the nerves and come across like a radio pro.

**Samantha Bentall** has over twenty years experience in broadcasting, working for independent and BBC stations across the North West and the Midlands. She works as a freelance voice-over and writer. She is a member of the NWS and is currently working on a contemporary romance/mystery. She lives in Liverpool with her husband and two teenage sons. When not hidden away behind her laptop she is frequently out running with her Border Collie Mojo. She recently qualified at a Personal Trainer.

**RNA Open Discussion:****Have Your Say!**

The RNA is your association, and this is your chance to have your say about how you want the RNA to develop and what you would like the association to be doing. It's also a chance to hear about plans that are already underway. This will be an informal session led by RNA Chair, **Nicola Cornick**, and Vice-Chair, **Alison May**, so come along and tell us what you want from the RNA.

**Barbara Erskine:****Truth can be stranger than fiction**

Come and hear Barbara in conversation with Nicola Cornick about books, life and everything.

**Barbara Erskine** studied history at Edinburgh University and went on to work in publishing as an editor of academic, historical and biographical books. From the start she wrote all kinds of short stories and has published three collections, but always saw novels as her first love. She started to write her novel, *KINGDOM OF SHADOWS*, while still at university, but it wasn't finished and published until 1988. Her first published novel, *LADY OF HAY*, (1986) took ten years to research and write and at her agent's suggestion she gave up the day job and wrote some M&B Masquerades in the intervening years. She has just finished her 15th novel, *THE GHOST TREE*. She was presented with an Outstanding Achievement Award by the RNA in 2017. Her love of the time slip format could be ascribed to indecision. She couldn't make up her mind which genre she loved the most – historical, spooky, crime or, just now and again, a little bit of romance! [www.barbara-erskine.co.uk](http://www.barbara-erskine.co.uk)

**Abigail Fenton, Leodora Darlington:****An Introduction to Bookouture****How digital publishing could work for you!**

An introduction to Bookouture (digital imprint at Hachette) and the differences between digital and 'traditional' publishing. A journey through the process from acquisition through to publication and beyond, and a look at how Bookouture's unique, forward-thinking approach has led to the huge success of authors including Louise Jensen, Angela Marsons, Kerry Fisher and Holly Martin. For authors still looking for a publisher, learn what Bookouture's editors are looking for and where the market is going; for self-published or traditionally published authors, learn the tricks of the trade that could get your digital sales to the next level!

**Abigail Fenton** is Commissioning Editor at Bookouture, publishing across the breadth of commercial fiction, including crime and thriller, psychological suspense, romance, saga and historical. She previously spent five years at HarperCollins, where she worked across the digital and audio teams, running the HarperFiction, HarperNonFiction and Avon audio lists.

Before joining Bookouture, **Leodora Darlington** completed a Creative Writing MA and ran a successful writing blog, both of which have given her an extra dose of empathy for the writers she works with. As part of the Bookouture team, she enjoys the opportunity to work on high-quality commercial fiction, including titles that have gone on to become big bestsellers.

## **Rhoda Baxter and Elizabeth Bailey:** **Interact With Readers Using Mailing Lists**

What is a mailing list? Why do you need one? How do you get people to sign up? Liz Bailey and Rhoda Baxter provide an introduction to the basics of how to build and interact with a mailing list of fans who help get you reviews and sales.

**Rhoda Baxter** had childhood ambitions to be an astronaut or at least 5 feet tall. Having failed at both of these, she now writes romantic comedies with a hint of cynicism instead. One of her books was a bestseller on Amazon. She's still not sure how that happened. You can find her wittering on about science, comedy and cake (well, mostly cake) on her website [www.rhodabaxter.com](http://www.rhodabaxter.com) She also writes as Jeevani Charika

**Elizabeth Bailey** has been writing for more than 30 years and been published consistently for 25. She's a hybrid with books still with Mills & Boon, a mystery series now with Sapere, and a growing list of self-published titles. She has been building an email list for 2 years and now has 4000 subscribers.

Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> July

## **Alison Morton & Denise Barnes:** **Critique Partners and Writing Buddies**

A conversation about how this writing relationship can enhance your work and writing life. What it does for you, how to manage the personal relationship (friends, mates and/or colleagues?), setting the professional parameters (aims, goals, boundaries, outcomes, value) and how to find the Golden One. Q&A plus handout.

**Alison Morton** writes Roman-themed alternative history thrillers featuring strong heroines with entangled love lives. Ever since handing over her first draft to Denise Barnes in 2009 for critiquing, she's considered herself blessed. In 2018, two award-winning trilogies and a novella later, she knows she is. Latest book CARINA, published November 2017. Alison is the RNA's first Independent Member. <http://alison-morton.com>.

**Denise Barnes** has written and had published two memoirs, but was desperate to write a novel. So in 2005 she sold her business and began what was to become the award-winning historical trilogy: *The Voyagers*. She is now writing a historical series for HarperCollins, and the first one, *AN ORPHAN IN THE SNOW*, published Nov 2017, shot into *The Bookseller's* top twenty chart in December. It's nearly a decade ago when Denise tentatively put her first horribly-rough manuscript into Alison's hands, but happily admits she wouldn't be where she is today without the best critique writing partner ever. [www.denisebarneswriter.com](http://www.denisebarneswriter.com)

## **Liam Livings & Virginia Heath:** **Sensual Love Scenes without Stuffing the Turkey**

You're not a prude but you can't be doing with all that huffing and puffing and grinding in a book. You want to write a sensual love scene without it reading like instructions for Ikea flat pack furniture or a recipe for stuffing a turkey. You want to have a meaningful love scene in your story - your readers want a meaningful love scene in your story- but you're struggling with the mechanics, the ins and outs (pun absolutely intended!). Liam and Virginia have selflessly read hundreds of love scenes so that you don't have to, from sizzling hot to the faintest waft of spice, rigorously scrutinised what works and what doesn't work and condensed that saucy essence into a practical workshop which allows you to get your hands dirty and experiment. Bring your pen and your sense of humour. Blushing is optional.

**Liam Livings** lives where East London becomes Essex, sharing his house with his boyfriend and cat. He enjoys cooking, classic cars and socialising with friends. He escapes from real life with a guilty pleasure book, cries at sad, funny and camp films – and he's been known to watch an awful lot of *Gilmore Girls* in the name of research. Published since 2013, he writes gay fiction and gay romance, focusing on friendships, British humour, and romance with plenty of sparkle. He's also ghostwritten a client's autobiography and is on the UK Meet organising committee which is a UK event for those who read, write and love GLBTQ fiction.

When **Virginia Heath** was a little girl it took her ages to fall asleep, so she made up stories in her head to help pass the time while she was staring at the ceiling. As she got older, the stories became more complicated, sometimes taking weeks to get to the happy ending. Then one day she decided to embrace the insomnia and start writing them down. Fortunately, the lovely people at Mills & Boon took pity on her and decided to publish her romances, but it still takes her forever to fall asleep.

**Andrew Cornick:****Emotional Resilience for Writers**

This session looks at how to build emotional resilience to help deal with the unique challenges of a writer's life. The two aims of the session are to give an insight into how the preoccupying thoughts in our heads can work against us and to provide some strategies that enable us to think more helpfully about ourselves and the work we do.

*Andrew Cornick is an experienced counsellor and psychotherapist who has worked in the NHS and private sector for 17 years. Before his current career he worked for 16 years in the pharmaceutical industry doing a range of roles including, sales, training, marketing and management. In his spare time he is a volunteer puppy walker for Guide Dogs. He is proud to be the husband of the writer and current RNA chair Nicola Cornick.*

**Mark Stay:****The Bestseller Experiment**

When Mark Stay got a call out of the blue from his old friend Mark Desvaux he had no idea it would propel them both on an insane project to co-write a novel in 12 months in an attempt to get it to the top of the Kindle charts. They launched a podcast *The Bestseller Experiment* and got advice from authors such as Julie Cohen, Liz Fenwick, Erica James, Michael Connelly, Joanne Harris and Bryan Cranston. Did it work? Are they still talking to each other? Can you apply the lessons they learned to your own writing? Mark takes us through the ups and downs of writing with the sole intent of getting one of those coveted orange Kindle bestseller flashes.

*Mark Stay co-wrote the movie ROBOT OVERLORDS with director Jon Wright, selected for the 58th BFI London Film Festival. He also wrote the film's novelisation, published by Gollancz to critical acclaim. Mark is co-presenter of The Bestseller Experiment podcast, where he and Mark Desvaux challenged themselves to write a Kindle bestseller in 12 months. Their novel, BACK TO REALITY, was an international bestseller in 10 categories. His new book THE END OF MAGIC will be published by Unbound. Born in London, he now lives in Kent with writer and Youtube gardener Claire Burgess, their kids, several chickens and a murderous fish*

**Liz Harris:****Pacing - you need more than another dead body!**

How fast? How slow? It's up to you to decide. Get the pacing right, and you'll grip your readers and keep them turning the pages and reading far too late into the night.

*Liz Harris is the author of the historical novels THE ROAD BACK (US Coffee Time & Romance Book of the Year 2012), A BARGAIN STRUCK (shortlisted for the RoNA Historical 2013), and the novella, A WESTERN HEART. Her latest historical novel, THE LOST GIRLS, is set in SW Wyoming in the 1870s and 1880s. Her contemporary novels, EVIE UNDERCOVER and THE ART OF DECEPTION, are set in Italy. Liz has also had several short stories published in anthologies. Her interests are theatre, travelling, reading, cryptic crosswords. Visit her website at [www.lizharrisauthor.com](http://www.lizharrisauthor.com)*

**Milly Johnson:****In Conversation**

Janet Gover ask the questions

*Milly Johnson was born in Barnsley, South Yorkshire and still resides there, although for many years she lived in Haworth hoping to soak up some Bronte influence. For as long as she can remember, she wanted to be an author but did not believe that she would ever be good enough, so pursued a myriad of other careers such as teaching, sales, office management, accountancy eventually falling into the happy world of joke writing for the greetings card industry where she helped to launch Purple Ronnie into the world. Milly has been nominated four times for an RNA award and won twice. She is presently writing book sixteen, a script for film and a crime novel. [www.millyjohnson.co.uk](http://www.millyjohnson.co.uk)*



## Word Wenches:

## Two Nations, One Language of Romance?

**Nicola Cornick (chair), Andrea Penrose**

**Mary Jo Putney and Patricia Rice**

The state of the US romance fiction market and the differences/similarities between the US and the UK is a perennially popular topic. In this panel session, best-selling and award-winning US-based authors Mary Jo Putney, Patricia Rice and Andrea Penrose give their perceptions of the US market and Nicola Cornick contributes the view of an author who is published in both the US and the UK. The panel will cover aspects of craft as well as business and the US market.

*The Word Wenches have been blogging since May 2006, making them one of the longest-running group author blogs on the internet with a large and loyal following. The group consists: Mary Jo Putney, Patricia Rice, Susan King, Anne Gracie, Andrea Penrose, Joanna Bourne, Susanna Kearsley and Nicola Cornick. You can find them at [www.wordwenches.com](http://www.wordwenches.com) chatting about history, writing, books, life and everything in between!*

**Nicola Cornick's bio is on page 5**

**Andrea Penrose's bio is on page 5**

*A New York Times bestseller, **Mary Jo Putney** was born with a reading addiction, a condition with no known cure. Her entire writing career is an accidental byproduct of buying a computer for other purposes. Most of her books contain history, romance, and cats. She has had ten RWA RITA nominations, two RITA wins, RWA's 2013 Nora Roberts Lifetime Achievement Award, and she's so distractible that she's amazed that she ever finishes a book. Next release is *ONCE A SCOUNDREL* in September.*

*With several million books in print, and NY Times and USA Today's bestseller lists under her belt, former CPA*

**Patricia Rice** is one of romance's hottest authors. Her emotionally-charged contemporary and historical romances have won numerous awards, including the RT Book Reviews Reviewers Choice and Career Achievement Awards. Her books have been honoured as RITA® finalists in the historical, Regency and contemporary categories. A firm believer in happily-ever-after, Patricia Rice is married to her high school sweetheart and has two children. A native of Kentucky and New York, a past resident of North Carolina and Missouri, she currently resides in Southern California, and now does accounting only for herself.

## Sonia Duggan:

## Rewrite your life story in 15 minutes

**LIMITED PLACES: Six individual 15-minute mini life-coaching sessions**

You can direct your characters' lives, help them fix their faults, sort out their emotional entanglements and stage manage their personal growth. But your own life? That's another story. With you championing them, your characters can learn to be vulnerable, brave and victorious. But who's got *your* back? Life coaching gives you a chance to gain perspective. Challenge assumptions. Look inside your head and heart with a fresh pair of eyes. It's confidential, personal and powerful.

**For one of six individual coaching sessions at the conference, email Sonia at [info@inspirationcoaching.biz](mailto:info@inspirationcoaching.biz) with a situation, perspective or belief that you want to change. Sessions are on Sunday from 11.45-12.45 and from 2-3pm**

**Sonia Duggan** Sonia evolved from having to know all the answers as a maths teacher to just needing to ask the right questions as a life coach, via 11 years of saying things in the best possible way as a marketer. She is a creative and commercial writer and combines coaching with writing in a monthly magazine article. Sonia particularly enjoys helping writers access their full creativity, increase confidence, enhance focus, tackle overwhelm and writer's block, and balance priorities. She has been a professional coach for over nine years and loves helping her clients to overcome challenges, find fulfilment, increase happiness, raise self-esteem, and improve communication and relationships. She is certified by the Coaches Training Institute (CTI) and a credentialed member of the International Coach Federation (ICF). She coaches clients individually by phone or Skype, leads workshops for writers and runs courses on creativity and happiness. Sonia is also a pranic healer and treats all kinds of physical, emotional and psychological ailments. [www.inspirationcoaching.biz](http://www.inspirationcoaching.biz)

**Kate Johnson:****Alpha or A\*\*hole?**

Sometimes, there's a fine line between a hero and a villain. Sometimes, the line is pretty thick. In this entertaining session, we'll talk about some of our favourite alpha males and decide whether they're bold exciting mavericks or the kind of guy we'd cross the street to avoid. Bring your sense of humour. You'll need it.

*Kate Johnson* misspent her youth watching lots of Joss Whedon and reading even more Terry Pratchett, which made it kind of inevitable that when she grew up to write romance novels, they'd be the weird ones around the edges. In 2017 Kate became the first author to win a Paranormal RoNA with *MAX SEVENTEEN* (the first self-published book to win in any category). She has been shortlisted twice more, for *THE UNTIED KINGDOM* and *MAX SEVENTEEN: FIREBRAND*. Her latest books are *NOT YOUR CINDERELLA* and *NOT YOUR PRINCE CHARMING*.

**Ali Adams: From Babywipes to the Burlesque Stage - a life story with a difference!**

Ever wanted to get your groove on? What if you had to in order to earn money to feed your children? Divorce, two children and background as a dancer led Ali Adams to make just such a decision: take to the stage as a Burlesque performer only to discover it wasn't simply a case of whipping a boa on and off her shoulders. Join Ali as she talks through the journey that brought her to the world of smouldering looks, beautiful music and...yes...loosening her corset. Instead of feeling humiliated, she found it empowering.

*Ali Adams* trained as a dancer and actress in London and worked professionally in the entertainment world until love, marriage and the baby carriage (possibly occurring in a different order) changed her life entirely. When her marriage didn't work out? She decided to take her life back into her own hands and started working as a shop assistant, a primary school secretary and, eventually, a burlesque performer.

**Denise Barnes:****From self-published to trad-published**

Denise's route through publication.

*Denise Barnes* has written and published two memoirs, the first being self-published (her very first book) and the second was picked up by a traditional publisher who she found purely by serendipity. However, she was desperate to write novels. After numerous rejections she self-published her first two novels, one of them achieving an American award. She then decided to have a final go at pitching her third in the trilogy which incredibly led to her present 3-book deal with HarperCollins. She tells her story in a frank and detailed way, hoping to show writers who are also desperate to get their book taken on that there's more than one way to go down the traditional route. And equally, for Denise, self-publishing isn't the poor relation – it's just different.

[www.denisebarneswriter.com](http://www.denisebarneswriter.com)

**Alison May:****A Book in an Hour**

One hour. One room full of writers. As much wine as you've got left over. And a totally coherent novel by the end of the session. Trust me. It'll be awesome.

*Alison May's bio is on page 4*