

PRESS RELEASE

Helm: Sarah Hall in conversation

A discussion of the latest novel from “a writer of show-stopping genius” is set to take place amid the scenic back drop of a Westmorland Dales village this July.

Award-winning author Sarah Hall will be talking about her elemental new novel, *Helm*, the story of the ferocious, mischievous wind — a subject of folklore and wonder — that has blasted in Cumbria’s slice of the North Pennines since the dawn of time.

Taking place at Maulds Meaburn Village Institute (MMVI), Hall will be in conversation with Barbara Wallis for an evening demonstrating how Hall’s powerful storytelling examines the relationship between nature and people, as well as asking what role fiction can play in current debate.

Helm is a mighty, epic tale of climate change in slow motion that was 20 years in the making. The Cumbrian wind, which happens to be the UK’s only named wind, is the central character in what *The Guardian* described as “a huge, millennia-spanning achievement”.

Barbara Wallis, a retired journalist and former managing editor of *The Good Food Guide*, said: “It’s fantastic to be able to host such a talented, award-winning author as Sarah Hall. She is extraordinarily creative and *Helm* is a really unusual, compelling read, aptly described by fellow author Mark Haddon as both gripping and boisterous.

“Bringing to life multiple stories around the *Helm* wind in a modern way, for a global audience, many of whom will be unaware of it in the way that we are in Cumbria, is impressive in itself. But within these stories the book deals with social norms, identity and expectations across the ages, for instance how we’ve treated mental health, how people can become fixated on goals, as well as the part we all play in our environment.

“To have someone of Sarah’s calibre coming to the MMVI is an absolute delight. I’m sure it’ll be a lively evening and there will be a chance for people to put their thoughts and questions to Sarah.” Hedgehog Bookshop of Penrith will also be there on the evening, selling *Helm*, which is now out in paperback.

A two-time Man Booker Prize nominee, Sarah Hall is the award-winning author of ten novels and short-story collections. Notably, she is the only writer to win the BBC National Short Story Award twice, first in 2013 with *Mrs Fox* and again in 2020 with *The Grotesques*.

Hall’s latest novel, published by Faber, continues the author’s love affair with Cumbria that was evident from the first paragraph of her debut novel *Haweswater*. Throughout her writing she’s continued her concerns with the landscape, nature in all its forms, people’s ambitions and the impact those can have.

Pete Button, chair of MMVI, added: “This talk is a privilege for us to host, and continues the hard work and effort by our fantastic team of volunteers to bring first-class events to the village.

“We hope the whole community, whether in the parish or further afield from Penrith, Appleby, Kirkby Stephen and surrounding villages, will come along to show their support and have a great evening.”

An Evening with Sarah Hall takes place on Thursday 16th July, with doors and the bar opening at 6:30pm for a 7pm start. Tickets cost £10 including tea or coffee, and there will be a chance to get books signed by Sarah Hall. Book online via <https://wegottickets.com/f/17865>, or contact MMVI via mmvi.booking@gmail.com to ensure you don't miss out.

-ENDS-

Notes to editors

About MMVI

Maulds Meaburn Village Institute (MMVI) and the committee than runs the hall is a not-for-profit organisation registered with the Charity Commission (Charity number: 523068)

MMVI is a modern village hall with rooms for hire and a bumper programme of events for the whole community.

We're right in the heart of Maulds Meaburn, one of Cumbria's prettiest villages, and we're also at the heart of the community. From coffee mornings to quiz nights, we run events that bring people together – young and old, villagers and visitors. We're also a well-equipped venue to hire for your own events, from celebrations to fitness classes.

MMVI is a community venue run entirely by friendly and dedicated volunteers, who go the extra mile to give you a fantastic experience, whether you're attending one of our events or running your own function.

Browse our forthcoming events and explore our first-class facilities for hire here:
<https://www.mmvi.org/>

The Institute exists to provide a service for the community, bringing people together through a varied programme of events throughout the year and offering a great venue for social activities and a meeting place for clubs and organisations.

A village hall has existed on the current site for many years, with the new building opening in 2011.

Media contacts and location

To get any further information, imagery, or to speak to someone about this event then email

mmvi.booking@gmail.com and MMVI.publicity@gmail.com

See attached pictures of MMVI and Sarah Hall. Please credit any pictures used of MMVI as by kind permission of Maulds Meaburn Village Institute (MMVI), while the Sarah Hall photo must be credited to Sarah Lee

Address and location: Maulds Meaburn Village Institute, Maulds Meaburn, Penrith, Cumbria, CA10 3HN

On Google Maps: <https://maps.app.goo.gl/ZeHjCMY4EpNx1MLx7>