

## ASHBURNHAM & PENHURST BOOK GROUPS

# 2015 PROGRAMME

The Afternoon and Evening Books Groups are reading the same books this year. If you can't make your usual meeting, you are welcome to attend the other group.

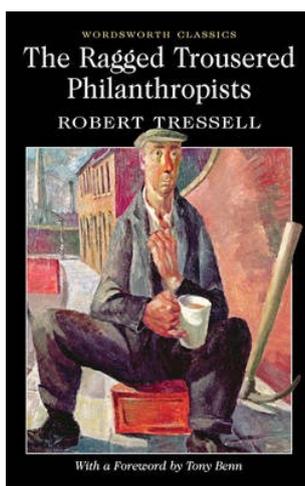
The Evening Book Group meets at 8pm on the last Tuesday of the month in or around Ashburnham Place.

Contact Nicole on 01424 894208 or [theproudfoots@hotmail.com](mailto:theproudfoots@hotmail.com)

The Afternoon Book Group meets at 2pm on the last Friday of the month at Street Cottage, Brownbread Street (opposite the Ash).

Contact Nicky on 01424 892474 or [nickyatstreetcottage@gmail.com](mailto:nickyatstreetcottage@gmail.com)

**All keen readers are welcome !**



**January**

**Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> & Friday 30<sup>th</sup>**

**The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists** by Robert Tressell

Set in Mugborough (Hastings), it tells the story of a group of working men who are joined one day by Owen, a journeyman-prophet with a vision of a just society. Owen's spirited attacks on the greed and dishonesty of the capitalist system rouse his fellow men from their political quietude. It charts the ruinous effects of laissez-faire ethics on the impoverished and politically powerless working classes in Edwardian England, showing how they were ruthlessly exploited by their employers and by the civic and religious authorities. A historic record of the early twentieth century written with cast iron authenticity, its (still relevant) political message is told with wit and passion. *"Spiked, witty, humorous, instructive."* Alan Sillitoe *"Unfailing humour mixed with an unfailing rage."* Michael Foot

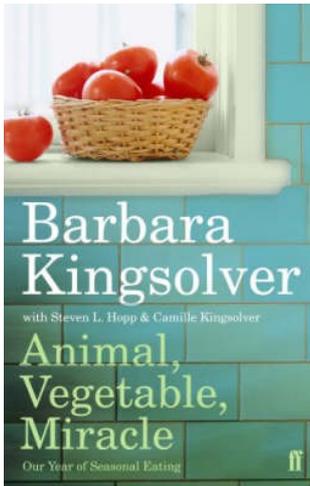


**February**

**Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> & Friday 27<sup>th</sup>**

**The Secret Children** by Alison McQueen

In 1925, James MacDonald, running a tea plantation in Assam, has no wish to return to England and is reluctant to choose a British bride. He loves India, and takes a beautiful young Indian woman as his courtesan. So begins the story of the "secret children", Mary and Serafina. Their childhood is one of contradiction: born of two worlds, but accepted by neither; beloved but hidden away. As the shadow of war falls and the turmoil of Indian partition begins, the girls must face the truth about their parents and begin the search for somewhere to belong. *The Secret Children* was selected by The Independent for their alternative 2012 Booker list.

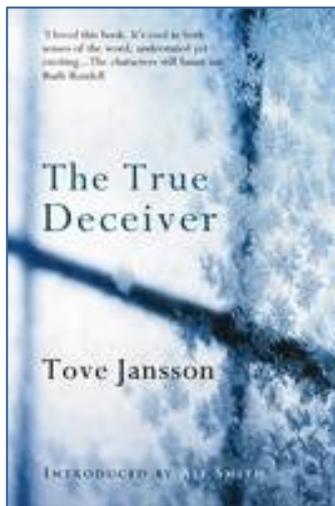


**March**

**Friday 27<sup>th</sup> & Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup>**

**Animal Vegetable Miracle** by Barbara Kingsolver

Pulitzer-prize nominated Barbara Kingsolver, author of the very wonderful 'Bean Trees' and 'The Poisonwood Bible', documents her family's attempt to eat only local food, much of it from their own garden, for one year. Kingsolver explores farmers markets, organic farms, food miles and pesticides, and in doing so puts food back at the centre of the political and family agenda. *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* is part memoir and part journalistic investigation, garnished with original recipes. By turns funny and polemic, this beautifully written book celebrates the pleasures of good food and authenticity in eating and food production.

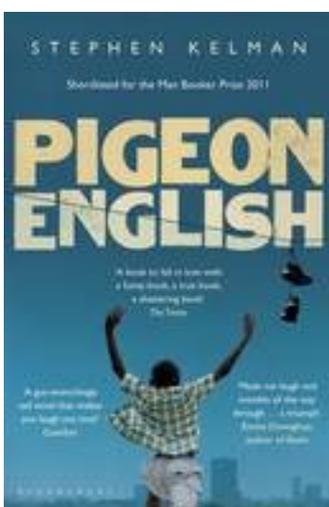


**April**

**Friday 24<sup>th</sup> & Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup>**

**The True Deceiver** by Tove Jansson

A beautifully crafted sparsely written deceptively quiet study of human character, with a tinge of menace lurking in the background. The characters will linger long in the mind after completion. In the deep winter of a small Swedish village full of vicious gossip, clever and sharp outsider Katri, who rarely smiles and never laughs, inveigles her way into the home of Anna, an elderly, isolated and wealthy illustrator of children's books, and helps to organise her life and finances. The villagers assume that Katri is taking advantage of the older woman, but nothing is straightforward as the two strong women grapple with truth and lies, gradually shattering each other's perceptions. By the time the snow thaws, both their lives have changed irrevocably, and we are left wondering who has really gained the upper hand. Readers must decide for themselves who the 'true deceiver' is.

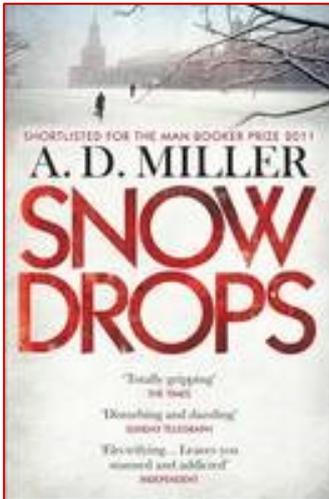


**May**

**Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> & Friday 29<sup>th</sup>**

**Pigeon English** by Stephen Kelman

Eleven-year-old Harrison Opoku, the second best runner in Year 7, races through his new life in England with his personalised trainers - the Adidas stripes drawn on with marker pen - blissfully unaware of the very real threat around him. Newly-arrived from Ghana with his mother and older sister Lydia, Harri absorbs the many strange elements of city life, from the bewildering array of Haribo sweets, to the frightening, fascinating gang of older boys from his school. But his life is changed forever when one of his friends is murdered. As the victim's nearly new football boots hang in tribute on railings behind fluorescent tape and a police appeal draws only silence, Harri decides to act, unwittingly endangering the fragile web his mother has spun around her family to keep them safe.

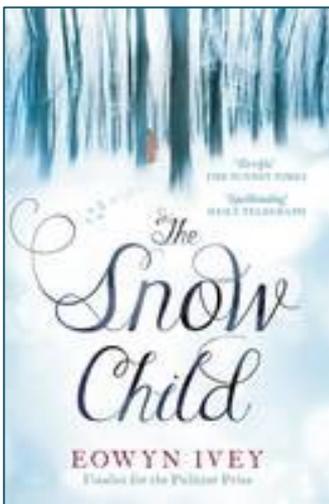


**June**

**Friday 26<sup>th</sup> & Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup>**

**Snowdrops** by A D Miller

A novel of moral ambiguity, uncertainty and corruption, 'snowdrops' is the name the Russians give the bodies that emerge into the light in the thaw. Most are drunks or homeless people who give up and lie down into the whiteness. Some are murder victims hidden by their killers. When Nick worked as a British lawyer in Moscow, he was seduced by Masha, an enigmatic woman who led him through her city: the electric nightclubs and intimate dachas, the human kindnesses and state-wide corruption. He knew that Masha was dangerous, but life in Russia was addictive, and it was far too easy to bury secrets - and corpses - in the winter snow. Shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize 2011



**July**

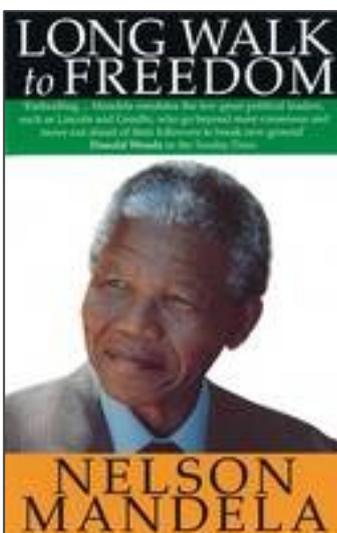
**Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> & Friday 31<sup>st</sup>**

**Snow Child** by Eowyn Ivey

In Alaska in the 1920s, Jack and Mabel have staked everything on a fresh start in a remote homestead. But in the stark wilderness, Mabel is haunted by the baby she lost many years before. When a little girl appears mysteriously on their land, they are filled with wonder and also foreboding: is she what she seems, and can they find room in their hearts for her?

Vividly written, the Snow Child takes its name and inspiration from the Russian fairy tale of bewitchment, heartbreak and hope. A 2013 Pulitzer Prize Finalist.

NO MEETING IN AUGUST



**September**

**Friday 25<sup>th</sup> & Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup>**

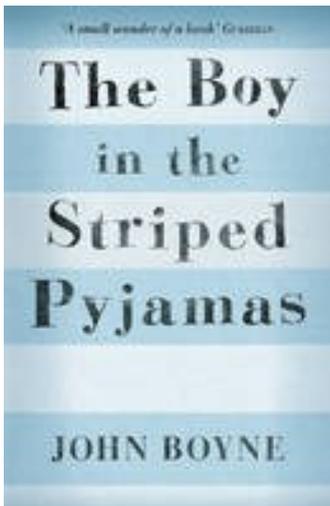
**A Long Walk to Freedom** by Nelson Mandela

The story of an extraordinary life; a story of anger and sorrow, love and joy, hardship, resilience and ultimate triumph told with clarity and eloquence.

"A vivid testimony to an unusual mixture of courage, persistence, tolerance, and forgiveness." *Sir David Steel*

"Burns with faith in the invincible nature of human hope and dignity."

"Mandela emulates great leaders such as Lincoln and Gandhi, who go beyond mere consensus and move out ahead of their followers to break new ground' *Donald Woods in the SUNDAY TIMES*

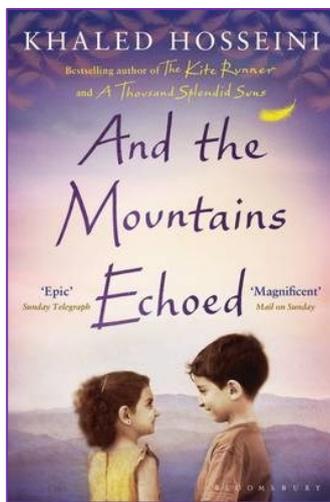


**October**

**Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> & Friday 30<sup>th</sup>**

**The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas** by John Boyne

All 9-year old Bruno knows is that his family has been moved from a comfortable home in Berlin to a house in a desolate area of Auschwitz where there is nothing to do and no one to play with. At the end of the garden is a wire-fence and there Bruno meets Shmuel, a boy who lives a strange existence on the other side and wears a uniform of striped pyjamas. A friendship develops between the two boys, but for Bruno it is a journey from blissful ignorance to a painful knowledge, which carries a heavy price. The book explores the powerlessness of children and the abuse of power by adults. Boyne succeeds in conveying the horror of the 'Final Solution' and the Holocaust without ever showing it on the page.



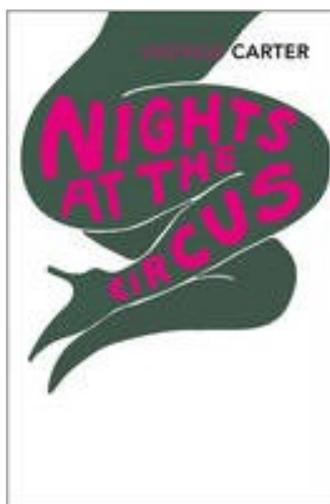
**November**

**Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> & Friday 27<sup>th</sup>**

**And The Mountains Echoed** by Khaled Hosseini

In a life of poverty and struggle, and with no mother to care for them, Pari is the only person who brings happiness to her older brother, 10-year old Abdullah. For her, he will trade his only pair of shoes to give her a feather for her treasured collection. When their father sets off with Pari across the desert to Kabul in search of work, Abdullah is determined not to be separated from her. Neither child know what this fateful journey will bring them. A tale of heartache, hope and the unbreakable bonds of love. "A story of love, separation, friendship, compassion, exile, memory and the troubled history of Afghanistan." *The Times*  
"Hosseini breaks your heart and leaves you smiling." *Daily Telegraph*

**NO MEETING IN DECEMBER**



**January**

**Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> & Friday 29<sup>th</sup>**

**Nights at the Circus** by Angela Carter

Is Sophie Fevvers, toast of Europe's capitals, part swan...or all fake? Courted by the Prince of Wales and painted by Toulouse-Lautrec, she is an *aerialiste extraordinaire* and star of Colonel Kearney's circus. Jack Walser, an American journalist, is on a quest to discover the truth behind her identity. Dazzled by his love for her, and desperate for the scoop of a lifetime, Walser has no choice but to join the circus on its magical tour through turn-of-the-nineteenth-century London, St Petersburg and Siberia.

"A glorious enchantment ... rooted in an earthy, rich and powerful language. It is a spell-binding achievement." *Literary Review*

"Raunchy, raucous ... a rich, turn of the 19th century world, which reeks of human and animal variety." *The Times*