



# WRITE ON

*Wimbledon BookFest celebrates its 10th anniversary this year with a stellar line-up of celebrity writers and literary stars*

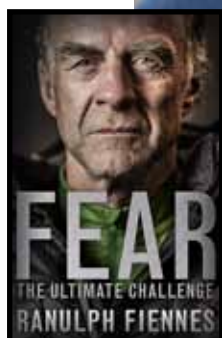
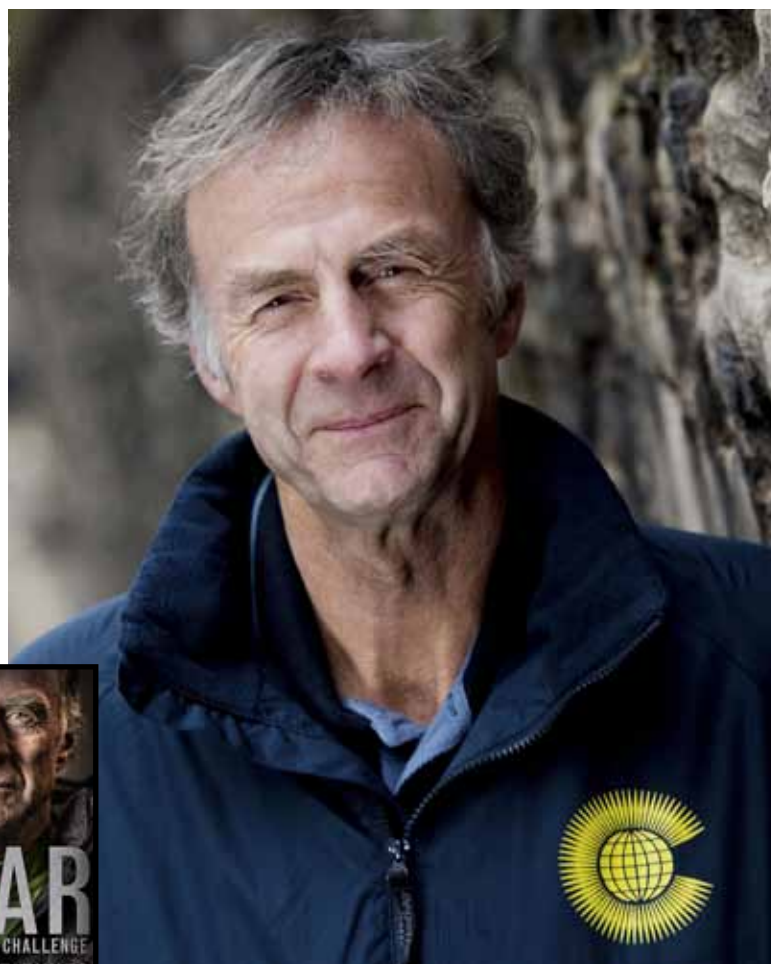
Words MADELEINE HOWELL

**T**he tenth annual Wimbledon BookFest returns to the Big Tent on Wimbledon Common this month, bringing together the worlds of literature, food, politics, film and sport. We caught up with three of the most prolific headliners to discuss their latest work ahead of the festival...

## SIR RANULPH FIENNES

**Intrepid explorer Sir Ranulph Fiennes was the first person to reach both the North and South Poles, and the first to cross Antarctica on foot.**

Now, he's trekking to SW19 to discuss his latest book, *Fear*, and his most recent exploits. 'The book is about every possible type of fear,' he tells me in his cut-glass, military accent. 'I interviewed all sorts of people – a brave guy who went to Sierra Leone to battle against Ebola and who was quarantined back in the UK; a lady who was kidnapped and taken to Italy; and the first tornado pilot shot down and tortured in the Iraq war. My fears and phobias come in when they're



ELLA WOODWARD



due. Arab spiders, heights and polar bears in particular.’

Perhaps surprisingly for someone who has spent his career traversing the Nile and the Arctic in the most extreme of conditions, Fiennes reveals that the moment when he most feared for his life was here in the UK. ‘I completed the first ever vertical journey around the Earth in the 80s with my wife. We swept away a lot of records, but we didn’t move more than about eleven miles per hour in about three years. When we got back to the starting point in Greenwich, some fool had brought her car keys. It was absolutely terrifying driving through London and not being in control!’

How serious he’s being, we’re not so sure – but at the age of 72, he’s still taking his adventures and challenges very seriously indeed. He is currently undertaking the Global Reach Challenge, of which HRH the Prince of Wales is a patron, in aid of Marie Curie.

*My personal fears? Arab spiders, heights and polar bears in particular*

The mission is to become the first person to have crossed both polar ice caps and to have climbed the highest mountain on each of the seven continents. ‘I’d already done Everest and Kilimanjaro, a long time ago, so my next challenge was the highest mountain in North America, which is Denali in Alaska. My back completely went so I’ll have to do that one again in May next year. That was bad,’ he admits.

But it wasn’t enough to stop him. ‘I did the highest mountain in Europe last week, which is El Brus near Georgia. In a fortnight, I’m doing Mount Castenz in Australasia. It’s going to be pretty hot and insect-ridden.’ So far, he’s raised £8.3 million for Marie Curie over the course of his lifetime, and over £18.2 million for various other UK charities. Not bad going for a septuagenarian.

To donate, visit [justgiving.com/ranulph](http://justgiving.com/ranulph)

*I’ll be talking all about my journey at the festival – I love events where I can chat to everyone*

**Food blogger Ella Woodward has fast become a household name since leaving university in 2013, having published the UK’s biggest selling debut cookbook *Deliciously Ella* in 2014, closely followed by *Deliciously Ella Every Day*.**

There’s clearly more to the entrepreneur and author than her model looks and plant-based diet: the daughter of former Northern Ireland secretary Shaun Woodward and Camilla Sainsbury, she married Matthew Mills this year and together with him co-founded The Mae Deli, which she tells me has been a ‘massive learning curve’ and a ‘real business lesson’. She has also launched a mini-series, including a book of smoothies and juices. So what’s next, and what will she be discussing at BookFest? ‘I’ve just finished writing my next book, *Deliciously Ella with Friends*, which is all about fun recipe ideas for

entertaining. We’re shooting it at the moment, and I’ve brought out a range of energy balls. The three flavours are perfect for a boost when you’re on the go – cashew and ginger, hazelnut and raisin and cacao and almond. I’m also launching a beautiful skincare range with Neal’s Yard using natural ingredients. I’ll be talking all about my journey at the festival. I love events where I can chat to everyone and it’s amazing to talk to a big audience.’

Despite her positive, go-getting outlook, there have been challenges, such as the inevitable criticism in the media – not that Woodward is likely to let it worry her. ‘There is always going to be some sort of criticism when you put yourself out there in the public eye,’ she tells me. ‘I’ve learnt that it’s best to take it with a pinch of salt and focus on the positive feedback instead.’

Visit Ella’s blog for recipes and tips at [deliciouslyella.com](http://deliciouslyella.com)





ANDY HAMILTON

Comedy legend and Wimbledon resident Andy Hamilton is best known for penning hit TV show *Outnumbered*. In 2014, he wrote and directed *What We Did On Our Holiday*, starring David Tennant, Rosamund Pike and Billy Connolly – which he proudly tells me has ‘washed its face’ (that’s film-speak for made its money back).

Now, the prolific radio dramatist, comedy screenwriter and actor has turned his hand to a new medium – novel writing. ‘The *Star Witness* is very funny, but it’s serious as the same time,’ he says of the book. ‘When you’re writing comedy, there’s often an element of seriousness concealed beneath it. The book is about a soap actor, who makes a series of mistakes and finds himself the target of public vitriol. I wanted to write about the effects of celebrity culture, and the new narcissism of the selfie society.

It’s a commentary on how distorted things can be in the media.’

His first foray into fiction has been an enjoyable, ‘organic’ experience, he says. ‘I’d pick it up and put it down again. I kept going back to it. The best thing about writing a book is that you’re never quite sure where it might lead you. On telly, you’ve only got half an hour, so there’s a limit to the alleyways and avenues you can pursue.’ According to Hamilton, it’s also a much more solitary creative process. ‘You write a book on your own, but TV is hugely collaborative. You write something, but you employ dozens of people to help realise it, actors, technicians... I do enjoy that element. I’m not sure if I would have the temperament to write only novels.’ It’s a page turner, he promises. We’ll be picking up a copy pronto.

To find out more about Andy Hamilton’s debut novel visit [unbound.com/books/star-witness](http://unbound.com/books/star-witness)

*I wanted to write about the effects of celebrity culture, and the new narcissism of the selfie society*



Jeremy Paxman



Clare Balding



Nick Clegg

OTHER FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS

Other speakers not to be missed at Wimbledon BookFest this year include former Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg, multi-award winning novelist Kate Atkinson, broadcaster Jeremy Paxman, poet laureate Carol Ann Duffy, comedian and feminist Laura Bates and businesswoman Jo Malone.

For kids, children’s authors Clare Balding and Michael Morpurgo will be in town, and a special performance of *James and the Giant Peach* will launch the festival in Wimbledon Town Centre.

29 September–8 October, Wimbledon Common; [wimbledonbookfest.org](http://wimbledonbookfest.org)



Laura Bates