

Page turners

The second Queen's Park Book Festival promises to be even more exciting than the inaugural event last year, says Simon O'Hagan

The Festival, organised by Queen's Park Area Residents' Association, has doubled in size since 2011, with a total of 28 events taking place in marquees in the park over the two days – Saturday 19 and Sunday 20 May. As well as the two main tents, there will be a dedicated Children's Tent and a host of other book-related activities on offer.

The emphasis, once again, is on local talent, of which there is an abundance. Among the authors taking part for whom Queen's Park or neighbouring areas are home are Kate Summerscale, Maggie Gee, Melissa Benn, Alexandra Shulman, Natalie Haynes, Alex Preston, Polly Williams, Henrietta Green, Alex Bellos, the poet Daljit Nagra, and the musician Edwyn Collins.

Other writers you can catch include John Lanchester, Justin Cartwright, Philip Hensher, Linda Grant, Marina Lewycka, Owen Jones, the acclaimed teenage fiction

author Robert Muchamore, and the actress Dame Harriet Walter. The event will also be showcasing newer and debutant writers, plus the work of local writers' groups. And there will be a special event on how to get published that features the leading publisher Jamie Byng and the literary agent Derek Johns.

Local estate agents Queens Park Partnership are the very generous main sponsors, and many other local businesses are supporting the venture. It remains a community event not a commercial one, a companion to the hugely popular Queen's Park Day that takes place every September.

The Book Festival is entirely organised by a small team of volunteers on behalf of the residents' association, supported by the local independent bookshop, Queen's Park Books. The bookshop will sell festival authors' books on the day and authors will be on hand to sign them.

Tickets can only be bought in person from the bookshop at 87 Salusbury Road, NW6. A weekend ticket costs £15 in advance, or it's £10 for each day. An incredible bargain for such a superb line-up. Tickets are not being sold for individual events. Organisers are stressing that if there is a particular event you want to see, make sure you are there in good time.

Full details are on the residents' association website at www.qpark.org.uk/bookfestival. Simon O'Hagan is a co-organiser of the Queen's Park Book Festival.

Alexandra Shulman, editor of *Vogue* and Queens Park resident, will be talking about her new novel *Can we Still be Friends* at the festival. *Absolutely* snatches five minutes with her

How long have you lived in NW6?

I have lived in Queen's Park for 17 years. I moved to the area just before my son was born.

Where do you like to eat, drink and shop locally?

We eat at Penks and The



Chamberlayne and I shop at stores on Chamberlayne Road and L'Angelo in Kensal Rise. I also use Scarlet & Violet for flowers.

The novel traces the futures of three university friends. Was the idea in your mind for a long time?



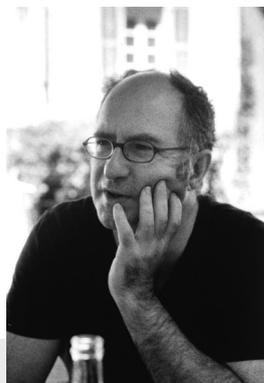
I hadn't thought about the idea for *Can We Still Be Friends* until I started working on it. It began as a story about three friends as I am interested in the bonds of friendship but as I wrote, it also became about being in your 20s in the workplace at that period of time.

Were you very disciplined while writing it?

I had to be, or I would never have got it done. I didn't give myself the option of not writing – even if it was all rewritten the next day.

What will you be doing for the Queens Park book festival?

I am in conversation with another journalist, Lisa Markwell. I also want to listen to some other speakers.



PICTURED: POLLY WILLIAMS AND JOHN LANCHESTER