



**Simply Debonair Dogs**  
GROOMING SALON SPA PET SUPPLIES

**EVENTS AT**

*Lingham's*  
BOOKSELLERS

**19th APRIL 2018**  
**CARL FOGARTY**  
Venue: BUSHELL HALL, BIRKENHEAD SCHOOL

**23rd APRIL 2018**  
**SIMON MAYO**  
Venue: THORNTON HALL HOTEL AND SPA

**25th APRIL 2018**  
**CLARE MACKINTOSH LITERARY LUNCH**  
Venue: GUSTO RESTAURANT  
*Two-course lunch and signed book.  
Starter and main course.*

**26th APRIL 2018**  
**AN EVENING WITH NISHA KATONA**  
Venue: NESTON CRICKET CLUB

**1st MAY 2018**  
**KATE MOSSE**  
Venue: THORNTON HALL HOTEL AND SPA

**31st May**  
**ALISON WEIR**  
Venue: BUSHELL HALL, BIRKENHEAD SCHOOL

**Tickets on the website  
or call 0151 342 7290**

## Author Elizabeth Gates tells readers about her 'Writing for Well-being' workshops starting at the end of April in Heswall



Anecdotes abound regarding the value of writing for well-being. As Anne-Marie Smith writes: "When my dad was dying, I sat by his hospital bed and drew mandalas and wrote. Writing was a comforting anchor. Afterwards, I wrote poems about his last days and hours – these took me through the grief. I am now in training as a poetry therapy practitioner, and daily journaling and writing offer portals into deep reflection. It is the process of writing that restores and maintains a feeling of peace and well-being."

This is a common experience. So much so, that in the 1980s, while at the University of Austin in Texas, researcher Dr James Pennebaker decided to look for formal evidence of personal or expressive writing (not novels, short fiction or plays) having an impact on physical and mental well-being. He asked a group of student volunteers to write about the most upsetting thing that had ever happened to them. They were to do this for twenty minutes on each of four days. And their well-being – both long and short term – was subsequently discovered to have improved.

The students achieved a balance in their emotions, losing all the hurt, sense of loss, anger and frustration which had settled in them at the time of the event. And, they began to count their blessings. (Since Pennebaker, other researchers have found noting things you are grateful for in your daily life leads to less depression.)

Pennebaker's expressive writing students also displayed certain physical benefits. They resisted coughs and colds more easily and could better manage the 'fight/flight' response, which, when thwarted, leads to stress.

This can happen for major life crises but also the lesser ones, the little everyday sadnesses.

### So how does it work?

Begin this sort of writing and you begin a meaningful conversation with yourself. You are recording the story of your life. On reflection, this shows who you are and how you became 'you'. But if you are unhappy with this, it shows you what needs to change so that your life can change.

### What do you have to do?

Buy a notebook and choose one of the many tools used in writing for well-being. This may include journaling, mindful writing or unsent letter writing but there are many more!

Unsent letter writing can be a neat trick. You may have lost touch – for whatever reason – with your go-to friend for advice on a certain issue. So write a letter you will never send, telling them what is wrong in your life. Then – as if from them – write a letter back giving you some practical suggestions. Has any of these suggestions surprised or intrigued you? Why? Discuss this further in more unsent letters – backwards and forwards – until you've explored the whole issue and its possible solutions. If it helps, write a character sketch of your 'friend' before you start.

'Writing' as a way of coping is there for everyone. It is non-judgemental and it matters not one jot what Miss Sullivan said about your English in primary School! It doesn't even matter if, as a middle-aged clergyman, you choose to express your thoughts and feelings about someone in four-letter words. Remember your journal is on your side. Some people have called notebooks devoted to expressive writing, a counsellor in their pocket!

Writing for well-being can also cost very little. You need nothing more than paper and a pencil or an iPad – whatever suits you best.

### Like to know more?

On Monday 30 April, at 2pm in Heswall Library, a series of four linked Writing for Wellbeing workshops will start. In these tasters we shall be looking at stress, loss, low mood, life events that haunt, and you'll learn more about how to look after your own well-being. Please see my website, [www.lonelyfurrowcompany.com](http://www.lonelyfurrowcompany.com) for further information and pay in advance at Heswall Library. The cost is £20pp for the whole series. No writing experience is required and all levels are welcome. Just bring a notebook and an open mind. Hope to see you there.