

Press Release



Author In Me Publishing Announces *Silver Serpent and the Wild Ice Child*, a New Middle-Grade Adventure Inspired by Anglo-Saxon Cookham



***Silver Serpent and the Wild Ice Child* takes young readers on a magical journey into 8th-century England, inspired by the ongoing archaeological excavation at Cookham Abbey**

A new middle-grade historical adventure combining real archaeology, Anglo-Saxon history, fantasy and gentle humour in a story for readers aged 8-12. Inspired by the ongoing archaeological excavation at Cookham Abbey, where a mysterious world of ghosts, animals, rival kingdoms, ***magic*** and ancient beliefs unfolds alongside real historical discoveries. When a chronicler is drawn into the pages of an ***archaic*** book and transformed into a kestrel, he finds himself soaring above an 8th-century Anglo-Saxon monastery near what is now Cookham Abbey. From the skies, he observes a world shaped by loyalty, belief, rivalry, and the weight of inherited conflicts.

Across eleven interconnected chapters rooted in the Saxon age, the story follows a girl who can speak with **eels and a hawk**, and a boy raised to believe revenge against historic enemies is his duty. Along the way, the mysterious appearances of a ghostly dog and a lost Prince draw them deeper into a world of adventures.

As friendship, courage, and exciting adventures bring the characters closer together, old fears begin to fade and new possibilities begin to grow. But when the time comes to choose between hate and hope, what path will be taken?

At the heart of the novel are themes of **courage, prejudice, kindness, belonging and moral choice**. Rather than presenting history simply as a collection of dates and facts, Gilbert explores the emotions and experiences of the people who lived through it - their fears, friendships, conflicts, beliefs and hopes.

“Silver Serpent and the Wild Ice Child is an Anglo-Saxon adventure for children aged 8 to 12 and their families. Inspired by the archaeological dig at Cookham Abbey, it brings the dangerous and magical world of early Christian Mercia to life through history, mystery, ghosts and strange creatures, while exploring what it means to be an enemy, a friend and a family.” - David Gilbert

David Gilbert is a writer, historian, former Managing Director of Waterstones and Trustee of the Friends of Cookham Abbey, where he leads marketing and supports the organisation's community engagement programme. Each summer, the archaeological dig welcomes more than 1,000 visitors, and David regularly brings its history to life through readings for children and families, sometimes accompanied by live music.

David holds an MA in European Literature and gives talks on philosophy, subjects which strongly influence his exploration of courage, prejudice, kindness and belonging. His mother's family came to Britain from Germany through the Kindertransport, and their experiences have also shaped his interest in identity, exclusion and the moral choices people make.

A lifelong fascination with prehistory, the Anglo-Saxons and the so-called Dark Ages inspired his debut children's novel, *Silver Serpent and the Wild Ice Child*. The story draws directly on the discoveries made at Cookham Abbey, including evidence of its possible role as a place of healing, as well as objects associated with the spiritual and **magical** world of early medieval England.

Through his writing, David hopes to show young readers that history is not simply a collection of dates and facts, but the story of real people experiencing friendship, joy, fear and loss. *Silver Serpent and the Wild Ice Child* is his first book but will not be his last.

Publication Information

Title: Silver Serpent and the Wild Ice Child

Author: David Gilbert

Publisher: Author in Me

Publication Date: 29 September 2026