

## NEWS RELEASE

# ENGLAND OPENS ITS DOORS FOR HERITAGE LONG WEEKEND

**Castles to Factories, Country Piles to Cottages, Offices to Homes: All Open for the Nation's Biggest Free Community Event**

**Heritage Open Days, Thursday 9 - Sunday 12 September**  
[www.heritageopendays.org.uk](http://www.heritageopendays.org.uk)

From Cumbria to Cornwall, Northumberland to Norfolk, properties across England will throw open their doors for free as part of the country's annual celebration of local architecture, history and culture. Supported nationally by English Heritage and run locally by an army of volunteers and community champions, Heritage Open Days takes place on people doorsteps and is the country's leading grassroots cultural event.

One million people are expected to take advantage of the four day event, exploring more than 4,000 properties of every style, period and function, many of which are normally closed to the public. They include Medieval cottages, timber-framed Tudor buildings, Gothic temples, Georgian townhouses, Victorian factories, Second World War defences, Art Deco cinemas, Modernist masterpieces and 21st-century eco-homes [list of highlights below].

Heritage Open Days offers people the chance to visit those historic, cultural and architectural gems not normally open to the public or which usually charge an admission fee. There is also an extensive events programme run by local organisers at museums, churches, historic parks and elsewhere, ranging from re-enactments of Roman life to battlefield walks.

Baroness Andrews, OBE, Chair of English Heritage, said: “Heritage Open Days is about people and places. It offers a chance to explore those local landmarks which however familiar, are normally closed and therefore mysterious and alluring. Not only are the secrets and history laid bare, but it means you can meet the people who live or work in those buildings and who are delighted to share their knowledge and enthusiasm. Those are the people who, by dedicating their spare time to opening properties and organising activities, make Heritage Open Days the huge success it is. English Heritage is proud to support them.”

Full details of Heritage Open Days activities will be available from the website [www.heritageopendays.org.uk](http://www.heritageopendays.org.uk) from mid-July.

### **Highlights of Heritage Open Days 2010**

The Battle of Britain command centre – **Bentley Priory in Stanmore, Hertfordshire** – has been closed to the general public during its 70 years as a RAF base. Re-enactors will re-create the tensions within the Operations Room and there will be a Spitfire and Hurricane flying display. The Second World War **Beacon Hill Radar Tower at Harwich, Essex** and the **Royal Air Force College in Cranwell, Lincolnshire** will also be open.

The 18th-century ironstone **Gothic Temple at Stowe, Buckinghamshire** with its circular domed vault and magnificent views over the Stowe Landscape Gardens. And in the Gothic Revival style is the former home of architect and Houses of Parliament designer, Augustus Pugin. Built in 1845, **The Grange in Ramsgate, Kent** reflects Pugin’s desire to live out his life in the Middle Ages.

**The new Aardman Animation headquarters in Bristol**, home to the creators of Wallace and Gromit and housed within a state-of-the-art sustainable building.

One of the earliest buildings designed by Norman Foster after establishing Foster Associates, the **Willis Building in Ipswich, Suffolk**, was the youngest building to be given Grade I listed status. Completed in 1975, the kidney-shaped, glass-sheathed office for the

insurance company Willis Faber & Dumas was a pioneering example of energy-conscious design. Another Foster-designed building, the **Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts in Norwich, Norfolk**, will be hosting behind the scenes tours.

The honeymoon destination of composer Edward Elgar, **No.3 Alexandra Gardens in Ventnor on the Isle of Wight**, one of eight grand Victorian villas overlooking the Isle's south coast. Other Heritage Open Days properties associated with the arts include the former home of Jane Austen's brother, **Chawton House in Hampshire**, and the Elizabethan **North Lees Hall in the Peak District National Park**, said to be the inspiration for Charlotte Bronte's description of Mr Rochester's House, Thornfield Hall in *Jane Eyre*.

A quintessential Modernist home, **The Concrete House in Bristol**, was built in 1934 and designed by Basil Ward of architectural firm Connell, Ward and Lucas. And **Anderton House in Barnstaple, Devon** is an exceptional example of 1970s design, still furnished with contemporary curtains, furniture, ceramics and paintings.

**The Fisherman's Hospital in Great Yarmouth, Norfolk** was founded in 1702 to provide housing for old or "decayed" fishermen who could no longer support themselves. There are charming ornamental details and Saint Peter, patron saint of fishermen, stands proud on the roof of the brick building. Staying on the English coast, one of **Hastings' unique net shops in East Sussex** (built in 1835 to store fishermen's equipment) will reveal its old nets, ropes, corks and sails, all harking back to a lost age of fishing.

The **North of England's great Victorian theatres** open their doors with special backstage tours of both **The Journal Tyne Theatre** and **The Theatre Royal in Newcastle upon Tyne** and **Leeds' Grand Theatre & Opera House**.

And for sports fans, there will be tours of the Victorian **Jesmond Dene Real Tennis Club in Newcastle upon Tyne** (one of the few remaining indoor courts for the precursor to the modern game of tennis); **Chester Racecourse**, dating back to the early 16th century and the country's oldest racecourse; **Molineux Stadium, home to Wolverhampton Wanderers** since 1889; the Georgian swimming pool, **The Cleveland**

**Pools in Bath, Somerset; and a number of 1930s lidos including Broomhill Pool in Ipswich, Suffolk and Sandford Parks Lido in Cheltenham, Gloucestershire.**

Heritage Open Days is part of European Heritage Days, taking place across 49 countries during September as part of a mass celebration of Europe's cultural heritage.

### **ENDS**

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Images are available from

<http://picasaweb.google.com/ehcorpcomms/HeritageOpenDays?authkey=GvIrsRgCKv9ndzKml7MQ&feat=directlink>

### **Notes to Editors:**

- English Heritage is the government's lead body for the historic environment in England and is responsible for protecting the best of the country's unique legacy of historic buildings, landscapes and archaeological sites for the benefit of this and future generations.
- English Heritage previously helped the Civic Trust to fund and deliver Heritage Open Days, but concern was raised over the programme's future in 2009 when the Civic Trust in England went into administration. English Heritage stepped in and took on co-ordination of Heritage Open Days in May 2009, securing the future of this popular cultural event and reassuring one million participants and 35,000 volunteer organisers. English Heritage's Outreach department co-ordinates Heritage Open Days nationally. For more details about English Heritage, please visit [www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk) or contact English Heritage customer services on 0870 333 1181.
- Heritage Open Days is England's contribution to European Heritage Days, taking place across 49 countries. Other events in the UK are Doors Open Days in Scotland ([www.doorsopendays.org.uk](http://www.doorsopendays.org.uk)); Open Doors Days in Wales ([www.civictrustwales.org](http://www.civictrustwales.org)); European Heritage Days in Northern Ireland ([www.ehsni.gov.uk](http://www.ehsni.gov.uk)); Open House London ([www.open-city.org.uk](http://www.open-city.org.uk)).

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