

NEWS RELEASE

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ENGLAND'S HIDDEN TREASURES REVEALED

**Castles to Factories, Country Piles to Cottages, Offices to
Homes: All free to explore**

Heritage Open Days, Thursday 8 - Sunday 11 September
www.heritageopendays.org.uk

What does England's oldest town hall clock, the water-mill that inspired Tolkien's *Hobbit*; unseen working manuscripts from Wordsworth; artworks from Barbara Hepworth and Paula Rego; a 28 foot long tapestry; the last remaining herring smokehouse in Great Yarmouth; the oldest public toilets in Leeds; the top secret decontamination chamber at Greenham Common and HMS Victory all share? The answer; they're all taking part in this year's Heritage Open Days [see list of highlights below].

From 8 – 11 September, this annual long weekend is the largest volunteer event in Britain and celebrates the quirky to the majestic, the grand to the minute and all that is unique about England's heritage.

This year's programme sees a wealth of new highlights join the likes of the inspiration behind Mr Rochester's house in *Jane Eyre*, North Lees Hall in Derbyshire; Pugin's home and self-designed Gothic masterpiece The Grange in Kent; the Aardman Animation headquarters in Bristol, home to the creators of Wallace and Gromit; and the North of England's great Victorian theatres, The Theatre Royal in Newcastle upon Tyne, Blackpool's Grand Theatre and the Grand Theatre & Opera House in Leeds, which will open their doors for special backstage tours.

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 or charge for admission. 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.

Heritage Open Days offers people the chance to explore historic, cultural and architectural gems on their doorstep, completely free of charge. There is also an extensive events programme run by local organisers at museums and galleries, churches and historic parks, ranging from re-enactments of Roman life to battlefield walks.

Baroness Andrews, OBE, Chair of English Heritage, said: "Heritage Open Days is a unique event. For four days England opens its doors and everyone is free to explore. An army of volunteers welcome the public to an array of fascinating buildings. It is these volunteers, and the places they celebrate, that are the lifeblood of our country's heritage."

Full details of Heritage Open Days activities will be available from the website www.heritageopendays.org.uk from mid-July.

Highlights of Heritage Open Days 2011

Military highlights:

- **Behind the scenes at the National Museum of the Royal Navy** in Portsmouth where visitors will be able to see buildings, archives and collection stores not normally open to the public
- **Below HMS Victory's Water Line** a unique chance to walk under 3,500 tonnes of ship in Portsmouth and view Victory's keel at close range
- Discover more about one of Britain's most courageous women at the **Violette Szabo GC Museum**, in Herefordshire. This small but fascinating museum is dedicated to the daring Second World War female secret agent who was executed at the hands of the Gestapo in 1945
- Visit the **decontamination centre** at the **Greenham Common** air base, against chemical or biological attack

- Wander around and explore the **Royal Air Force Holmpton Bunker**, in the East Riding of Yorkshire, constructed between 1951 and 1954 the bunker was part of a programme to modernise the United Kingdom's radar defences

Private home highlights:

- **Prysten House**, having survived bombing raids which destroyed most of the city centre, Prysten is the second oldest private house in Plymouth, built in 1498. The house contains very fine, preserved historic interiors and houses the 28 foot long Plymouth tapestry depicting the history of the city
- **Bridge Street**, in Essex, a unique 16th century house with exposed timbers will host a 17th century living history display by a group of re-enactors from the Essex Militia
- Grade II **Grey Cottage** in Disley is now a bed and breakfast but the earliest part of the building is dated around 1680. Ownership is established back to 1840 and included a calico engraver, James Ralston, and the playwright and novelist Allan Monkhouse, Literary Editor of the Manchester Guardian
- **Parsonage House** in Sheffield, built 1906, is also Grade II and designed by Edgar Wood. This family home has been restored to its original splendour by its present owner, the house is carefully placed on a sloped site, with rooms designed to follow the sun path and reveal magnificent views which span the surrounding Yorkshire countryside

Literary highlights:

- **The Jerwood Centre at The Wordsworth Trust**; a chance to see part of the Trust's "hidden treasures" including original poetical manuscripts by Wordsworth and Dorothy's Grasmere Journals from the collection in a beautiful Lake District setting
- Walk in Tolkien's childhood footsteps and visit **Sarehole Mill** just outside Birmingham, his inspiration for 'the great mill' in *The Hobbit* and the bad-tempered miller Ted Sandyman in *The Lord of the Rings*
- **Chawton House, Hampshire**; a Grade II* listed Elizabethan manor house, once owned by Jane Austen's brother Edward and now a unique research library of English women's writing from 1600-1830

- **King Edward VI School**, Stratford upon Avon; will open the classroom where, in all probability, William Shakespeare was taught and the guildhall where he would have seen his first theatre performances.

Religious highlights:

- **Scotch Corner Chapel**, a small and secluded war memorial in North Yorkshire, built by local man and sculptor John Bunting. The Chapel houses a number of his works and was recently famed in the book *The Plot* authored by his daughter Madeleine Bunting; Also in North Yorkshire a rare medieval Leper chapel
- **Chapel of St Mary Magdalen** containing a medieval pavement with Roman decoration, a window and stone altar will host the Old Codling Feast, an 18th century tradition with tasting of apples, cake, juices and ciders to identify
- **Sandham Memorial Chapel**, a modest red-brick building housing an unexpected treasure – an outstanding series of large-scale paintings by acclaimed artist Stanley Spencer, inspired by his experiences as a World War I medical orderly and soldier
- **St Mary's Abbey**, West Malling, founded in 1090 by Bishop Gundulf of Rochester for Benedictine nuns. After its closure by Henry VIII in 1538 the property was owned by various families. Today it is the home of a community of Anglican Benedictine nuns. Visitors can see the wonderful Norman tower, medieval gatehouse and guest house and the Grade II* abbey church, built in 1966
- **Shri Venkateswara Balaji Temple**, Oldbury West Midlands, the largest Hindu Temple in Europe, covering 12.5 acres. The main temple, several satellite temples and other buildings for the use of the community will all be open to visitors

Transport highlights:

- **Vintage bus displays** in Oxford and Colchester
- A **historic vehicle cavalcade** including 40 vintage vehicles stopping at three Heritage Open Days sites in the Burnley area
- The Humber car collection in Hull
- A transport-themed **Window-to-the-Past** event taking over one of the largest shop units at Wakefield's Riding Shopping Centre

Other highlights include;

- **Wickwar Town Hall** with the oldest town hall clock in England
- **New Hall Art Collection, Cambridge** housing works by famous female artists such as Paula Rego and Barbara Hepworth
- A chance to see behind the scenes at the **National Film & Television Archive** in Hertfordshire
- Club LSI & Three Albion Place, home to the Leeds Club since 1849 whose Gents' are the '**oldest public toilets**' in the city
- The **H.S. Smokehouse**, the last surviving and still working herring brick smokehouse in Great Yarmouth
- The **Cider Museum and King Offa Distillery** in Herefordshire
- The Grade II* **Park Hill Estate** in Sheffield
- The largely unspoilt **Winsford Cottage Hospital**, an Arts and Crafts masterpiece by C. F. A. Voysey, which was closed by the NHS in 1998
- Leeds' **Red Hall** home to **The Rugby Football League**

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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 and took on national co-ordination of the event in 2009 after the Civic Trust went into administration, securing the future of this popular cultural event. For more details about English Heritage, please visit 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 50 countries. Other events in the UK are Doors Open Days in Scotland (www.doorsopendays.org.uk); Open Doors Days in Wales (www.civictrustwales.org); European Heritage Days in Northern Ireland (www.ehsni.gov.uk); Open House London (www.open-city.org.uk).

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