

From working lives to cherished rituals, many events will focus in on this year's festival theme, 'Everyday Histories' presented by leading family history website Findmypast. Organisers are invited to explore the varied and often overlooked stories of ordinary working people and their daily lives. From factory floors, workhouses and high streets to kitchens, schools, and community centres, this theme shines a light on working-class voices, local superheroes and the part-of-the-furniture places that have quietly shaped England's heritage.

Thanks to Findmypast's support, organisers can delve deeper than ever into these hidden histories – One hundred participating organisers will receive free access to Findmypast's extensive archive of historical records and newspapers to help research and shape their events, while eight flagship activations will benefit from specialist research and support at locations including Killerton (National Trust), The People's History Museum and Grainger Market.

Visitors can learn about the everyday people behind the not-so-everyday places all around us, uncovering questions such as what did your ancestors do, and what was their daily life like? Early highlights include:

- Insights into the working worlds of nurses, reformers, and the patients they cared for at **Florence Nightingale Museum** in London.
- Stories of Dobcroft's brickmakers at **The Intact Centre** in Preston, where the former site of Cottam Brickworks has been transformed into a thriving nature reserve.
- British postal history at a unique private collection with hands-on experiences at **Colne Valley Postal Museum** in Essex.
- The lives of the 'unexpected investors' of **Clifton Suspension Bridge** in Bristol from carpenters, dressmakers, and undertakers to toy dealers, road surveyors, and wine merchants.
- A look at the intriguing job titles that have faded into obscurity with **Aireborough Historical Society** in Yorkshire. From the Slubber Doffers and Scavengers to the Tenters and the local Bobby.
- Visit National Trust **Chedworth Roman Villa** near Cheltenham and meet costumed Villa residents and hear stories and insights into what life was like nearly 2,000 years ago.

Liam Montgomery, Heritage Open Days Marketing & Projects Manager, said, "There are so many brilliant stories that are celebrated through the festival each year, but this year I can't wait to see all those everyday *hidden-in-plain-sight* stories centre stage in our programming through the 'Everyday Histories' theme. I'm so excited to see our community uncover new stories and delve deeper than ever before"

Beyond our theme, the 2026 festival will feature a wide range of places that normally charge for events outside of the festival, along with free sites offering something extra special and many venues that are not usually open to the public. Visitors can see the journey of coffee from bean to cup with a **Moon Roast Roastery Tour** in Hampshire, go on an after dark torchlit tour of the **Church of the Holy Sepulchre** in Northampton, take a guided tour through the last working windmill grinding local grain at **Drapers Windmill** in Kent, and experience the North East's only Mighty Wurlitzer Theatre Pipe Organ at the **New Victoria Centre** in Durham.

Founded in 1994, Heritage Open Days has been making history and culture more accessible for more than 30 years. Last year over 2,500 organisers and 44,200 volunteers

ran 5,879 events across the country, attracting over one million visits. Around one-quarter of visitors had not visited a heritage site/event in the past year while 83% of festival-goers said their visit made them more proud of their local area.

There's still plenty of time to get involved. Local organisations, community groups and enthusiasts have until 13th August to register their events by visiting the Heritage Open Days website.

Laura Chow, Head of Charities at Postcode Lottery, said: "It is fantastic that Postcode Lottery players have been supporting Heritage Open Days for 14 years, allowing millions of people to explore England's rich heritage for free. This year's theme of 'Everyday Histories' shines a light on the workers who helped shape the country we know today and are often missing from history books. Through an exciting programme of special events, experiences and activities, visitors will have the chance to discover more about these unsung heroes and their extraordinary lives!"

Lee Wilkinson, Managing Director of Findmypast said: 'History doesn't belong only to famous figures or major events; it belongs to all of us. Every street, workplace and community holds stories of ordinary people whose lives shaped the world around us. This partnership is about helping people discover those stories and see their own connection to Britain's past in a new way.'

Heritage Open Days is brought to you by the National Trust with support from Postcode Lottery players. Every single Heritage Open Days event is free, including access to many sites that usually charge for admission.

For further information, and to register your event, visit www.heritageopendays.org.uk.

ENDS

**A selection of photos from previous HODs events is [available here](#)
Photos from events in this release are [here](#).**

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Notes to editors:

About Heritage Open Days

- Heritage Open Days is England's largest festival of history and culture. Running for ten days every September, the festival offers free access to heritage events and activities across England.
- Heritage Open Days is brought to you by the National Trust, supported by Postcode Lottery players, and delivered locally by a large range of organisations (including civic societies, heritage organisations and local councils, community champions and thousands of enthusiastic volunteers).
- 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 (cadw.gov.wales/visit/whats-on/open-doors); and European Heritage Open Days in Northern Ireland (www.communities-ni.gov.uk/articles/european-heritage-open-days).
- The public facing event directory goes live on **June 1st**.
- Tailored lists of events (by topic or location) with images are available on request (press@heritageopendays.org.uk).

About Findmypast

- Findmypast is a UK-based technology-driven search platform and genealogy subscription service that helps those with British & Irish roots uncover their ancestors' lives. Their clever and innovative technology enables members to delve deeper into their family history within billions of unique historical newspapers and records, to gain a greater understanding of their ancestors and the world in which they lived.
- Rooted in British and Irish culture, Findmypast works with trusted partners like the British Library and The National Archives to digitise and publish an ever-growing online archive that offers access to over 1000 years of history.
- Findmypast is wholly owned by DC Thomson, a historic family-run publishing company. We take pride in our passionate and expert team, united by our values of *Honour History*, *Create Magic*, *Stay Curious* and *Be Human*.
- Delve deeper into your family history at www.findmypast.co.uk
- Flagship events are being developed in partnership with Findmypast at the following places: Grainger Market, Newcastle City Council (Tyne & Wear), People's History Museum (Greater Manchester) Ironbridge Gorge, National Trust (Shropshire), Norwich Cathedral (Norfolk), Guards Museum (London) Pippbrook House, Mole Valley District Council (Surrey) Killerton House, National Trust (Devon) – Further information available on request.

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