Get Involved

Becoming a part of Heritage Open Days couldn’t be easier. Our organisers hold talks, webinars, rural fairs and urban gardens; open up historic buildings that are now offices and private homes; and reveal unseen sides of familiar sites such as cinemas, theatres and museums. Whether there is a local figure you would like to celebrate, a historic area you would like to see recognised, or simply want to tell the story of your home, office or place of work, we’d love you to take part.

So go on, what are you waiting for? Join us!

heritage open days

Intersted?

Find out how you can take part at:

www.heritageopendays.org.uk

Or get in touch with the national Heritage Open Days team:

Telephone: 020 7824 7180
Email: info@heritageopendays.org.uk

@heritageopenday
facebook.com/heritageopendays
@heritageopendays

Who We Are

Heritage Open Days is England’s biggest cultural festival, taking place annually in September. Part of the European Heritage Days initiative, which involves 50 countries, HODs will celebrate its 25th year in 2019. We are supported by the National Trust and players of People’s Postcode Lottery.

As HODs, we understand that sometimes historic places can feel a little distant, boring or predictable. But our festival is about more than old buildings and textbook history. At its heart, HODs is about local communities coming together to share and celebrate the stories that are important to them.

Tell Your Story

Tell your story to your local community, and help others experience your heritage.

As national stewards of our cultural heritage, we encourage you to share your story and ask others to do the same. By doing so, you will contribute to the richness and diversity of the festival.

We’re confident that we offer something truly unique – exciting and empowering local people to showcase the stories and places they care about. We don’t define ‘heritage’ or ‘history’ – that’s up to you. And it’s no surprise that 82% of visitors say going to a HOD event makes them feel more part of their local community, with 71% saying they feel a greater sense of pride in where they live.
England’s towns and cities are steeped in history, but while we stay focused on the grandeur, cathedrals, museums and connections that feed our urban stories, there are countless lesser-championed corners that have their own stories.

Some of England’s most iconic sites have opened up for HODs, including the Liver Building in Liverpool and many of Oxford’s historic colleges. But there are also plenty of lesser-known buildings with fascinating histories – from Stevenage’s iconic Strawberry Studios – where Joy Division, the Smiths and 10CC all recorded albums – to Gosport’s ‘Hider Hospital’ – the country’s first official air raid hospital which received its first patients in 1944. We revisited secret places in our building cities and towns from the Whitworth in Manchester to the picturesque lighthouse of Haverfordwest.

For Heritage Open Days, history extends beyond the built environment, to our green spaces, hills, mountains and agricultural land. We celebrate the many and diverse uses of our countryside, from open spaces and nature reserves to beautifully maintained gardens and British parks.

We welcome events with a strong environmental focus like the Barnhouse WWF (Wetland & Wildlife) Fund centre just outside London, open up for HODs, and for the Museum of the Brecks in Norfolk run special tours to explore the unique landscapes. Our natural treasures can be found in towns and cities too, such as Guilford’s Cage of Love and the River Thames – where the Lee Navigation in Richmond will open up for the first time in recent memory to celebrate the importance of the river as a vital link to the capital.

British’s industrial heritage is a fascinating mix of imposing buildings and ingenious working-class areas that have all but disappeared. Textile mills, potteries, factories and hundreds of other manufacturing buildings open up for us, along with landmark sites such as Chatsworth’s Whitchurch – the largest surviving deep mine in England. We feature the quirky ‘tunnels’ Cheddar’s Anderton Boat Lift, a Victorian marvel of engineering providing a 500 vertical ft between two waterways.

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We also have more contemporary stories. 18th Century Hunsley House, a Queen Anne mansion, is the current home of IBM, and opens its doors for HODs to tell the history of the company and the inventors dream up within its walls. In Birmingham, the Newman Brothers Coffin Works has maintained much of the original machinery that made coffins for the nation’s rich and famous.

At HODs we believe that heritage belongs to everyone, and are committed to a truly open festival. Places of worship from every faith open for us, from cathedrals to Hindu temples to Islamic mosques.

We actively champion stories that have been pushed to the sidelines. LGBTQ history was a core theme in 2018 as we championed four landmarks, and campaign that focused on the battles fought for the freedom to love as we choose. In 2018, our theme was ‘Extraordinary Women’, celebrating community heroines whose history has been overlooked or forgotten.

Inducing and engaging Heritage Open Days is a wonderful day out, weather with lovers, friends or exploring on your own. There are cocktail masterclasses, pop-up dance workshops and spoken word events – a whole with hundreds of family-friendly activities. All of this is heritage. All of this is Heritage Open Days.