

Cirencester History Festival

23 OCTOBER–1 NOVEMBER 2026

EXPLORE
THE PAST

CHALLENGE
THE PRESENT

CRAFT
THE FUTURE



TICKETS ON SALE
FROM 4 SEPT AT:

cirencesterhistoryfestival.org



Cirencester
History Festival

In association with



Gloucester
History Festival

A WORD FROM OUR FRIENDS AT GLOUCESTER HISTORY FESTIVAL



I'm thrilled that Gloucester and Cirencester History Festivals are working together once again, united by our shared passion for bringing history to life across Gloucestershire and beyond! Our county is so rich in extraordinary places, people and stories, and this partnership gives us an exciting opportunity to reach new audiences and explore the past together. I hope your visit to the festival will both inspire you and show how history can deepen our understanding of the world and each other.

Prof. Janina Ramirez, President of Gloucester History Festival

HOW TO BOOK:

ONLINE: cirencesterhistoryfestival.org

Corinium Museum, Park St, GL7 2BX

Open: Mon-Sat 10-5pm & Sun 2-5pm. 01285 655611.

Local Information Centre: Bingham House, 1 Dyer St, GL7 2PP

Open: Mon-Fri 9-4:30pm & Sat 10-4pm. 01285 655646.

£5 YOUTH TICKETS are available for under 22s, generously subsidised by Gloucestershire Community Foundation and The Organic Farm Shop and subject to availability.

MAPS, CAR PARKING & VENUE INFORMATION: cirencesterhistoryfestival.org/venues

BOOKS: authors will be **signing books** after their events, provided by Waterstones, Octavia's Bookshop and Corinium Museum.

SEE PAGE 15-17 for all the **Fringe activities** running throughout the week, including popular walks.



BOOK YOUR TICKETS NOW AT
cirencesterhistoryfestival.org



Welcome! I am thrilled to introduce our third Cirencester History Festival, returning this October half term after the incredible success of previous years. Once again, we have a brilliant programme of local, national, and global history spanning everything from the humble smock frock to the New World Order via Bach and the Beatles. A particular highlight this year is the Bayeux-inspired Cirencester Tapestry Project. You can find full details under Saturday 24 October (p5), but this spectacular community event will be running all week.

I also warmly encourage you to explore our vibrant 'Festival Fringe' (p15-17), packed with walks, immersive tours and myriad other unique happenings, all organised by community groups and festival partners. Booking goes live at cirencesterhistoryfestival.org on 4 September. I can't wait to see you there!

Fiona

Dame Fiona Reynolds, Festival President
and former Director General of the National Trust

It's a real privilege to be back as Ambassador for my hometown's History Festival, and I couldn't be more excited about this year's line-up. We've got archaeology from @RomanFound, Ronald Hutton on the Sisters dig, a bit of wild foraging, and two great local folk acts. To cap it all off, Professor Mark Horton is making the case for King Arthur being a Cirencester local—I can't wait to hear that one!

I'm also really pleased that the £5 ticket scheme for under-22s is back. Encouraging the next generation to explore history is such an important part of what this festival does, and hopefully it inspires a few future archaeologists, historians and storytellers along the way. So grab your tickets, get stuck in, and hope to see you there!

Charlie Cooper, Festival Ambassador
and actor, writer & star of the BBC's This Country, Myth Country & Nightwatch



Cirencester History Festival is a project of Cirencester Community Development Trust (CCDT), charity number 1150810. It is organised with more than 40 local organisations and in association with Gloucester History Festival.

BACH BY CANDLELIGHT Cirencester Parish Church, 7-8:15pm
Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. £15-£45

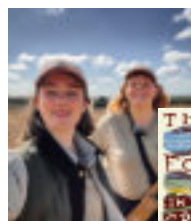


 **Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment** is one of the world's leading period-instrument ensembles with residencies at the Southbank Centre and Glyndebourne. Join us in Cirencester's majestic 12th-century wool church as they open this year's festival with a candlelit programme devoted to the extraordinary Bach family. Discover how the high Baroque, epitomised by Johann Sebastian, gave way to the Classical age through the works of his sons and cousins, Johann Ludwig, Johann Christoph Friedrich and Johann Christian. Together, their music traces a remarkable period of transition in European culture, as complexity and counterpoint yielded to new ideals of clarity and expression. Not to be missed!

Event sponsored by Redkite Solicitors

SATURDAY 24 OCTOBER

THINGS WE FOUND IN THE GROUND Corinium Museum, 12-1pm
Eleanor Bruce & Lucilla Gray of @romanfound. £12.50



 When cousins **Eleanor** (Ellie) and **Lucilla** (Lucie) reconnected after twenty years apart, they picked up a metal detector and accidentally transformed their lives. Spending months digging through British fields – frequently fuelled by rain and lemon drizzle cake – they have unearthed everything from Roman coins and Bronze Age axes to lost thimbles and unexploded WWII bombs. Join the duo behind the massive online platform Roman Found for a joyful, witty, and wonderfully down-to-earth look at the secret history right under our boots.

LORD PETER RICKETTS & LUKE HARDING Cirencester Parish Church, 2-3pm
A New World Order: Can We Keep the Post-War Peace? £12.50



 The international order built after 1945 was designed to prevent catastrophe: diplomacy over conflict, alliances over force, democracy over authoritarianism. Today, that settlement is at breaking point. War has returned to Europe, global power is shifting and democratic confidence is under strain on both sides of the Atlantic. **Peter Ricketts**, former diplomat and National Security Adviser, and Guardian foreign correspondent **Luke Harding** discuss whether the institutions that shaped the modern world can still endure – or whether a different era has already begun. Chaired by HistoryExtra's **Dave Musgrove**.

Event sponsored by HistoryExtra

BEN MACINTYRE Cirencester Parish Church, 4-5pm
Redwood: The Untold Story of the Cold War's Most Extraordinary Spy. £12.50



The year is 1981. Tehran is in violent turmoil in the wake of the Iranian Revolution. The Soviets are planning to overthrow the Ayatollah's fledgling Islamist regime and – unknown to the public – the Americans are contemplating a nuclear response. Master storyteller, multimillion-copy bestselling author and The Times columnist **Ben Macintyre** tells the story of how at the height of the Cold War, one mysterious double agent, known to MI6 as 'Redwood', revealed the Kremlin's secret plot and prevented armageddon. A gripping true story of espionage, deception and high-stakes intrigue at the height of the Cold War.

KATE WILLIAMS Cirencester Parish Church, 6-7pm
The Winstone Talk – Regina: A New History of Women and Power. £12.50



Join bestselling historian and broadcaster **Kate Williams** for a sweeping new history of the royal women who shaped power across millennia. From Hatshepsut and Boudica to Catherine of Aragon and Lady Jane Grey, she explores the lives of women whose influence has often been misunderstood or overlooked. In a compelling illustrated talk she reveals how they navigated politics, power and prejudice in male-dominated worlds, challenges long-held myths and reclaims their place in history.

The Winstone Talk is sponsored by The K D Winstone Charitable Trust



CIRENCESTER TAPESTRY The Old Department Store, 10-4pm
Launch Day! £FREE drop in, going on all week – see p.16

To celebrate the return of the Bayeux Tapestry to England for the first time in nearly 1000 years, come and help create a giant Cirencester Tapestry featuring scenes of local life past and present designed by local people with festival illustrator, Emily Moss. Using the two simple stitching techniques from the real Bayeux Tapestry, everyone is invited to drop in, take up a needle and make a mark on our beautiful medieval-inspired community artwork. No experience necessary! The tapestry workshops will be open all week from Saturday – please see p.16 for more details.

Project sponsored by The Bathurst Estate, Daniel Bingham Foundation and The Summerfield Charitable Trust



KING ARTHUR: AN EXHIBITION OF MINIATURES Cirencester Growth Hub, 2-4pm
Royal Society of Miniature Painters, Sculptors and Gravers. £FREE drop in

Originating among its medieval courts, miniature painting developed as one of Europe's most intricate, intimate and irreverent forms of portraiture and visual storytelling. Join us for the launch of an exquisite exhibition of over 400 miniatures, including a selection inspired by the legend of King Arthur. Exhibition runs all festival week.



PAINT LIKE LOWRY Watermoor Hall, 2-4pm
A Practical Workshop with Cirencester Arts Society. Age 15+ (ish). £15

To mark the 50th anniversary of LS Lowry's death, come for an exploration of his famous naïve style with local artists **Liney Hill** and **Heather Teather**, and try your hand at a Lowry-inspired masterpiece in acrylics. Includes a short introduction to Lowry, plus demonstrations and dedicated tuition. All materials included and all abilities welcome.

RONALD HUTTON & LUKE JENKINS RAU, 2–3:30pm

Secrets of the Sisters Long Barrow. £15



Just outside Cirencester lies one of the most significant prehistoric discoveries in the Cotswolds: the Sisters Long Barrow, a 6,000-year-old burial monument built about a millennium before Stonehenge. The latest research from the site sheds new light on one of the biggest questions in British prehistory: who were the first farmers to settle these islands, and where did they come from? Prehistory expert **Ronald Hutton**, excavation director **Luke Jenkins** and landowner **Will Chester Master** share the latest findings from the final 2026 dig season, revealing evidence that transforms our understanding of the people who brought farming to Britain and placing the monument within the wider story of Neolithic long barrows. Chaired by **Dave Musgrove**.

DECODING THE BAYEUX TAPESTRY RAU, 4:30–5:30pm

Top 10 Things to Spot with Dave Musgrove. £12.50



As the Bayeux Tapestry returns to England for the first time in nearly 1000 years, HistoryExtra Content Director and Bayeux Tapestry expert, **Dave Musgrove**, shares his top ten things to look out for in the iconic 230-foot medieval masterpiece. From oaths to omens, weapons and willies, Dave examines how the tapestry's curious marginalia and hidden clues reveal the drama, propaganda and surprising secrets behind one of the most defining events in English history – the battle of Hastings in 1066. Your essential illustrated guide to the biggest and most significant historical exhibition of our lifetime.

Event sponsored by HistoryExtra



THE COTSWOLD FORAGER Meet: war memorial outside Parish Church, 11–12:30pm

A Foraging Walk in Cirencester. Adults. £20

Join Rob Gould, the Cotswold Forager, for a guided walk through Cirencester's untamed corners. Explore the wild harvests of the season, from berries and nuts to fungi and woodland plants, while discovering how people have gathered food, medicine and materials from the countryside for centuries. A fascinating introduction to the history, folklore and practice of foraging in the Cotswolds. Sturdy shoes and wet weather gear recommended.



FOLKLORE OF THE BARROWS Tithe Barn, RAU, 3:40–4:30pm

Storytelling with Olly Lavery. £FREE drop in between talks.

Archaeology is shedding new light on the mysterious builders of Britain's long barrows and chambered tombs, but for centuries people told very different stories about what lay beneath these ancient hills. Drop in to the Tithe Barn and gather round with a drink as storyteller **Olly Lavery** weaves a tapestry of three traditional tales drawn from the folklore of Britain's passage graves and hidden places. Hear stories of tomb guardians, sleeping kings, fairy smiths and forgotten gods. A lively journey through the myths and legends that sprung up around Britain's ancient monuments long after their original builders had been forgotten.

DAN CRUICKSHANK The Barn Theatre, 5:30–6:30pm

The English House: A History In Eight Buildings. £12.50



From the elegant townhouse to the humble terrace, our homes tell the story of England itself. Broadcaster and architectural historian **Dan Cruickshank** explores eight remarkable buildings that reveal centuries of social change through the lives, ambitions and fortunes of the people who called them home. From a Huguenot silk-weaver's house in Spitalfields to a pioneering modern home in Northampton and a block of East End flats, these buildings offer a fresh perspective on the very story of our nation. A fascinating illustrated journey full of remarkable buildings, human stories and Dan's trademark insight and enthusiasm.

Event sponsored by Yiangou Architects

HOW TO LIVE LIKE A STOIC The Barn Theatre, 7:30–8:30pm

Tom Hodgkinson. £12.50



Stoicism is one of the world's oldest and most radical philosophies, originating in ancient Greece and built on a combination of theoretical wisdom and practical advice for everyday life. Its leading figures range from wise Emperor Marcus Aurelius to former slave Epictetus and its lessons have inspired everything from Christianity to mindfulness via Shakespeare, Ghandi and The Beatles. **Tom Hodgkinson**, editor of the iconic Idler Magazine, introduces us to some of stoicism's world-changing ideas and biggest personalities and – in these times of trouble – urges us to ditch the doom scrolling and 'let it be'. Chaired by Festival Director, **Jess Yarrow**.



WINNIE-THE-POOH IN PICTURES Cirencester Library, 11–12pm

100 Years of the Hundred Acre Wood. Age 4+. £FREE drop in

Join us for a special celebration marking 100 years of Winnie-the-Pooh and his adventures in the Hundred Acre Wood. Discover the much-loved stories and original artwork behind the world's favourite honey-loving bear, and take part in a creative drawing session inspired by Pooh and his friends. Children must be accompanied by an adult.



LATIN FOR BEGINNERS Corinium Museum, 2–3pm

Carpe Diem! Taster Session for Beginners. Age 14 to adult – all welcome. £8

Ever wished you could decipher those Latin inscriptions on buildings or wondered what that Latin motto actually means? This fun taster session, for complete beginners, will introduce you to the richly rewarding Latin language, once spoken on the streets of Roman Corinium and still a source of much of our language and culture today. Start by discovering the Latin words you already use and by the end you'll be reading a famous Latin love poem. If you want to know your *amo*, *amas*, *amat* from your *veni*, *vidi*, *vici* then *carpe diem* and sign up! No previous experience necessary.

THE MAKING OF THE MIDDLE AGES Corinium Museum, 2–3pm

Medieval Europe in Maps by John Haywood. £12.50



Europe from AD 476 to 1000 remains a mystery to many and is often mischaracterised as a time of darkness and decline. In this illustrated talk, however, **John Haywood** demonstrates how a new and more resilient continent ultimately emerged from the ashes of the crumbling Roman Empire. Using a series of specially commissioned maps, John traces the spread of Christianity, the emergence of Islam, the rise and fall of kingdoms, and the birth of the leading nations of modern Europe to tell a tale not of decline, but of endurance, reinvention and remarkable strength.

MUGHAL INDIA: EMPERORS, MERCHANTS & EVERYDAY LIFE Corinium Museum, 5–6pm

Jagjeet Lally. £12.50



Step inside the vibrant world that powered one of history's greatest empires. Leading historian **Jagjeet Lally** brings Mughal India to life through the experiences of merchants, artisans and ordinary people as well as emperors. Travelling from countryside to city, he reveals how trade, consumption and global connections shaped daily life and explores how these forces helped build and ultimately transform the Mughal Empire. This is Mughal India as never seen before: dynamic, diverse, and driven as much by its people as by its emperors.

THE TANGLED HISTORY OF THE SMOCK FROCK New Brewery Arts, 6:30–8pm

Alison Toplis. £12.50 incl a glass of fizz



With its intricate, decorative embroidery, the smock frock is often wrapped in nostalgia for England's rural past and celebrated as one of the country's few surviving forms of folk dress. Yet these garments were, in fact, the high-vis jackets of the Victorian era: practical, hard-wearing workwear worn by labouring men across the countryside. Textile historian **Alison Toplis** explores the men who wore smocks and the women who made them, revealing the ordinary lives, skills and labour hidden behind this ordinary extraordinary garment. Includes a display of historic smocks from the Corinium Museum collection.

ACTIVITIES

FILM: GHOSTS –THE POSSESSION OF BUTTON HOUSE The Barn Theatre Cinema, 2-4pm

Brand New Film Release for Halloween. £10 (or £8 for under 16s).



Calling all Ghosts superfans! Pat, Kitty, Robin and the team are back for one last haunting, just in time for the history festival. Will Thomas pen a tragic verse? Will Julian get his trousers back? Join us for a one-time-only fancy-dress special, complete with Ghosts prizes for the best costumes. Don't leave The Captain waiting – grab your tickets now!

ROMAN CURSE TABLES Corinium Museum, 2–3pm

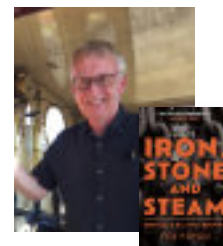
Roger Tomlin. £12.50



From stolen goods to broken hearts, the Roman world had a striking way of dealing with grievance: curse tablets. Oxford historian and top epigraphist **Roger Tomlin** explores these eerie inscriptions, scratched onto thin sheets of lead and hidden away in temples, wells and rivers, where they were meant to reach the gods. What did people hope to achieve with these petty and often vindictive curses – and what do they reveal about everyday life and the quest for supernatural justice in the ancient world? Timed for Halloween and the arrival of the newly acquired Tarlton curse tablets at the Corinium Museum.

BRUNEL, CIRENCESTER & THE GOLDEN AGE OF RAIL Ashcroft Church, 7–8pm

Tim Bryan. £12.50



The arrival of Isambard Kingdom Brunel's railway in 1841 transformed the fortunes of Cirencester, connecting the town to the expanding network reshaping Britain in the nineteenth century. **Tim Bryan**, historian and former curator of STEAM and the Brunel Institute, tells the story of this seemingly modest branch line, with stops at Kemble and Sapperton along the way. Discover how Cirencester formed part of Brunel's bold vision for a railway empire stretching across the West Country, Midlands and Wales – and follow the dramatic story of the line's growth, decline and lasting impact on the town. A companion talk to last year's Old Station Experience.

Event sponsored by Cirencester Archaeological and Historical Society

ACTIVITIES

MAKE YOUR MARK! Cirencester Library, 10:30–12:30pm

Workshop: Writing Through the Ages. Age 6+. £FREE drop in

Ready to get your hands a little messy and your imagination flowing? Travel back in time and discover how people wrote before keyboards and pens. Try pressing your own marks into clay tablets, smoothing out messages on wax, and using a quill just like writers from centuries past. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

HISTORICAL COOKERY SCHOOL Corinium Museum, 11–1pm

The Real American Burger with Cotswold Cookery School. Age 6–11(ish). £20

To commemorate the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, come and learn how to make a traditional American burger entirely from scratch with the **Cotswold Cookery School**: beef or vegetarian patty, homemade bread roll and a little jar of real tomato ketchup. All ingredients included and burgers for four to take home. Parents can drop and go.

THE LOST ART OF SMOCKING New Brewery Arts, 10am–3:30pm

Day Course: Make Your Own Smocking Sampler with Jocasta Bullock. Adults. £45

Explore the traditional craft of smocking in this hands-on workshop with textile artist **Jocasta Bullock**. Inspired by historic smock frocks worn by Victorian labourers, you will learn basic stitches and create your own decorative sampler, discovering how this once-practical technique combined durability with intricate design in everyday working garments.

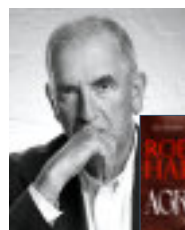
THE SECRETS OF MEAD HOUSE Corinium Museum, 1–2pm Restoring the Cripps Family Home with **Adrian Zareba**. £12.50



Built in the mid-1700s in the fashionable Palladian style, Mead House was the long-time home of the prominent Cripps family, perhaps especially associated with the barrister and antiquarian Wilfred Cripps. It was Wilfred who, in 1889, added the house's prominent side wings to accommodate a member's club and private collection of Roman remains, later absorbed by the Corinium Museum. In 2022 the building was bought by James Morris & **Adrian Zareba**, ending a three-decade stint as commercial offices and returning it, slowly and sympathetically, into two fine residences. Find out what Adrian found in the archives and behind the woodchip in this evocative illustrated talk.

Event sponsored by Rockwealth

ROBERT HARRIS Bingham Hall, 5–6pm **Agrippa: Power, Ambition and the Birth of an Empire**. £15



International bestselling master of historical fiction **Robert Harris** (Fatherland, Pompeii, Conclave) joins HistoryExtra's **Dave Musgrove** to discuss his new smash-hit thriller, *Agrippa*. Set against the backdrop of Imperial Rome, the novel explores the life and times of Marcus Agrippa, close ally of Augustus, who helped him take on the titans of antiquity and win – ultimately ruling the Western world together for twenty years. Don't miss this evening with one of the world's finest storytellers as he discusses the eternal mechanics of propaganda and power, untangling fact and fiction and what the classical world can teach us about politics today.

Event sponsored by Postscript Books

SIMON SEBAG MONTEFIORE Bingham Hall, 7–8pm **The Cauldron: The Making of the Modern Middle East**. £15



The Middle East has forever been the source of religions, prize of empires, spark-wheel of conflicts, well of radicalism and epicentre of our tumultuous world. No other region has such a hold on our imagination, yet few know its real history. Join prizewinning historian **Simon Sebag Montefiore** as he discusses his new history of the entire region in all its diversity, from 1900 up to the present day. He takes us on a spectacular journey from the Ottoman Empire to the Trump presidency, from Morocco to Iran. Hear the story of how the Middle East of 1900 became the Middle East of today - and tomorrow.

Event sponsored by Steppes Travel

ACTIVITIES



YOUNG ARCHAEOLOGISTS' CLUB Corinium Museum, 10:30–12:30pm Games, Puzzles and More. Age 8–16(ish). £FREE drop in

Can you tell your bronze age burial from your iron age coin hoard? How about your Roman pottery from your medieval bone shard? And what counts as treasure? Come and participate in some real archaeology with the Corinium Museum's **Phill** and **Michaela**, and discover the rules of the dig, the tricks of the trade – and why archaeology matters!

JAMILA GAVIN Corinium Museum, 11–12pm **The Children of WWI**. Age 8–teen(ish). £5 for under 22s (and £12.50 for adults)



How do you survive when the world goes to war around you? Meet Lotte, a Belgian girl fleeing a destroyed farm; Ernst, a teenage German soldier trapped in the trenches; and Khudadad Khan, the legendary Indian gunner fighting a war thousands of miles from home. Trapped on a dangerous battlefield ridge, these very different young people are about to cross paths. Join Nero Book Award-winner **Jamila Gavin** for a gripping journey into the First World War, inspired by the incredible true story of Khudadad Khan, the first Indian soldier to win the Victoria Cross for bravery. Includes a reading, Q&A, and book signing at Octavia's Bookshop.

ALICE LOXTON Bingham Hall, 5–6pm **A History of Britain in 21 Paintings**. £12.50



Discover Britain's past through the stories hidden in its most evocative artworks from Millais' 'Ophelia' to 'The Rainbow Portrait' of Elizabeth I. Bestselling historian and social media sensation **Alice Loxton (@history_alice)** explores the nation's history through 21 remarkable paintings, from royal portraits to scenes of everyday life. Each work reveals the people, events and social changes that shaped Britain across the centuries and her vivid journey shows how art has both reflected and influenced the story of a nation.

Event sponsored by The Arts Society Corinium

BEATLEMANIA! HOW THE FAB FOUR RE-WIRED THE SIXTIES Bingham Hall, 7–8pm **David Kynaston & Steve Taylor**. £12.50



In the mid-1960s, Britain was vibrating to a radical new frequency. From the screaming crowds of Beatlemania to seismic shifts in fashion, politics and class, the whole country was fundamentally re-wiring itself. Or was it? Join legendary social historian **David Kynaston** and psychologist and TED Talk veteran **Steve Taylor** for a nostalgic journey into the heart of the decade. Sixty years on, they debate the myths of the '60s and explore how four lads from Liverpool tapped into a collective British psyche, transformed global youth culture, and created a rapidly evolving musical and social phenomenon that still echoes today. Chaired by **Vernon Harwood**.

ACTIVITIES



DEFIXIO! Corinium Museum, 10:30–12pm Make Your Own Curse Tablet. Age 8+(ish). £10

Did you know that the Romans wrote secret curses on lead tablets and threw them in springs to hex their enemies? From stolen cloaks to chariot race rivals, no grudge was too small! Come and learn how to inscribe your own spooky curse tablet with **Phill**, just in time for Halloween.

HOW TO READ AN ANCIENT BUILDING Cirencester Parish Church, 2–3pm

Janina Ramirez, Andrew Ziminski & Daniel Wilson. £12.50



Join master stonemason and bestselling author **Andrew Ziminski**, online sensation **Daniel Wilson (@greatbritisharchitecture)** and bestselling historian **Janina Ramirez**, author of *Legenda*, in the splendour of Cirencester's twelfth-century Parish Church for a fascinating, practical guide to reading the secrets hidden in Britain's ancient architecture. From the grand buttresses of a medieval castle to the weathered gargoyles of a country church, discover how to spot the physical tool-marks of long-dead masons, decipher ancient graffiti, and better understand the delicate, urgent craft of restoring these priceless monuments for future generations. You'll never look at the world around you the same way again!

Event sponsored by Rixon Architects

SIMON JENKINS Cirencester Parish Church, 4–5pm

The Village in Britain. £12.50



We are a nation of villages, from the picturesque hamlets of the Cotswolds, to the tight-knit terraces of Cardiff. Villages link us with our past and are the stuff of art, folklore and song — and for many they offer a place of connection and sanctuary. And yet Britain today is one of the most centralised in Europe, with local decisions made by national government, and communities feeling increasingly disempowered and disconnected. Bestselling author, journalist and conservationist **Simon Jenkins** traces the village from medieval origins through industrial decline to its rebirth in urban and digital spaces, and explores what it has to teach us about belonging, place and the future of communities today.

WOLFPACK: INSIDE HITLER'S U-BOAT WAR Cirencester Parish Church, 6–7pm

Roger Moorhouse. £12.50



Hidden beneath the Atlantic, Hitler's U-boats posed one of the gravest threats faced by the Allies. **Roger Moorhouse**, bestselling author of *Wolfpack* — *Waterstones* and *The Times* Book of the Year — tells their story through the experiences of the crews themselves, drawing on archives, diaries and memoirs. Discover the claustrophobic reality of life inside a steel hull, the early confidence of Germany's submariners and the fear, hardship and catastrophic losses that followed as the Allies turned the tide of the war.

Event sponsored by the Corinium Hotel

HEADS UP! TODAY'S YOUR LAST CHANCE TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE BAYEUX-INSPIRED CIRENCESTER TAPESTRY AT OUR OLD DEPARTMENT STORE POP-UP. SEE P.5 & 16 FOR DETAILS.

**GHOSTS OF ROMAN BRITAIN** Cirencester Marketplace, 9am–5pmSpooky tales from *Chedworth Roman Villa*. £FREE drop in

Roman Britain had a dark side and it's coming to Cirencester. Meet costumed characters from Chedworth Roman Villa as they share chilling tales of restless spirits, strange omens and ancient superstitions in this spooky, family-friendly history experience.

**SEW A HALLOWEEN POUCH** The Old Department Store, 10:30–1pm & 2–4:30pm

Costume accessories with the Barn Theatre team. Age 5+. £FREE drop in

Come and learn how to make a simple drawstring medieval pouch with the Barn Theatre costume team. The perfect accessory for Halloween, this would make a brilliant highwayman's pouch or witch's spell purse with plenty of space for stolen loot or plants, roots and charms.

**MYTHS, MAGIC & MYSTERY** Cirencester Library, 11–12pm

Stories for Halloween. Age 5+. £FREE drop in

Settle in for a special storytelling session with children's author **Elka Evalds**, featuring tales inspired by myths and legends from the past. With imaginative storytelling and just the right touch of mystery, children will be invited to join in and help bring the stories to life as they unfold. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

**HOW TO DINE LIKE IT'S 959** Corinium Museum, 11–12:30pmSecrets from the Viking Kitchen with **Emma Kay**. Age 10–adult. £15

Before modern Halloween, there was *Vetrnætr* and *Álfablót* – Norse winter festivals dedicated to sacrifice, potions, and honoring ancestral spirits. This Halloween, join food historian and archaeologist **Emma Kay** to explore the culinary rituals of 9th- to 11th-century Vikings living in Britain. Learn the truth about fearsome Norse elves (formidable demi-gods, not tiny helpers) and the feasts that sustained them. Guests will sample authentic ancient grain bread and non-alcoholic mead, and even craft a traditional clay pinch pot to take home. Learn to dine like it's 959!

FORAGE, FEAST & FOLK The Long Table, 7–11pm (food and live music from 8pm)With **Tom Herbert**, **Rob Gould** and **Songs for the Porch**. £40

Join us for a memorable evening of foraged feasting and folk at the Long Table, with a seasonal menu created by **Tom Herbert** and **Rob Gould**, *Cotswold Forager*, inspired by autumn's wild harvests and the bounty of hedgerow and woodland. Live music comes from all-female ensemble **Songs from the Porch**, bringing their trademark mix of folk-reimagined classics, close harmonies and irresistible retro energy. A unique chance to celebrate the flavours, music and rural traditions of a season long associated with harvest, hospitality and the turning of the year.

Event sponsored by Cotswold Lakes Brew Co.

PHILIPPA LANGLEY Bingham Hall, 2–3pm The Princes in The Tower: The Final Chapter. £12.50



A centuries-old royal mystery is reopened with startling new evidence. In 1483, Edward V and his younger brother Richard vanished after entering the Tower of London, leaving historians divided over their fate. **Philippa Langley**, who led the discovery of Richard III's remains, discusses new findings from her Missing Princes Project that challenge the traditional narrative. Drawing on extensive international research, she offers a fascinating re-examination of one of England's most enduring historical enigmas. Chaired by **Vernon Harwood**.

THE BATTLE FOR THE BRITISH COUNTRYSIDE Bingham Hall, 4–5:15pm Guy Shrubsole, Fiona Reynolds, Andrew Bullock and Mary-Ann Ochota. £12.50



What is the British countryside actually *for*? A working food factory, a concrete solution to the housing crisis, a sanctuary for nature, or simply a picturesque backdrop for tourists? As modern pressures collide, the centuries-old battle over land ownership, purpose and public access has reached a tipping point. Join Festival President and former National Trust Director General **Fiona Reynolds**, bestselling author **Guy Shrubsole**, and seasoned Cotswold farmer **Andrew Bullock** to interrogate the history of our rural spaces and debate who gets to decide their future. Chaired by broadcaster and CPRE President **Mary-Ann Ochota**.

CIRENCESTER AND THE ARTHURIAN MYTH Bingham Hall, 6:15–7:15pm A Quest for Camelot with Mark Horton. £12.50 (includes folk set – see below)*



Is it possible that Camelot – and even the round table – could have been here in Cirencester? In this revelatory talk, archaeologist and BBC Coast regular **Mark Horton** takes us deep into the 'Dark Ages' of late fifth-century Britain to re-examine the enduring legend of King Arthur. Behind the myth lies a powerful leader who, as Rome crumbled and Saxons advanced, defended a wealthy Christian kingdom and a Roman way of life. Drawing on the latest archaeological evidence, Mark maps fact onto fairytale to make a bold case for Arthur 'coming home' – and asks what drives our enduring desire to claim him as our own.



FEAST OF FOOLS* The Rifle Range, Bingham Hall, 7:15–8:30pm Songs of Land & Rebellion. £FREE with your Cirencester & the Arthurian Myth ticket.

After the King Arthur talk, come and raise a glass with us to wrap the festival in style! The bar will be open as a *cappella* folk quartet **Feast of Fools** sings us out with a traditional folk set, included with your ticket. Expect rich harmonies, deep-rooted British lore and timeless protest songs, from John Ball to The World Turned Upside Down and John Barleycorn – all about community, resilience, history, and gathering together. The perfect way to end the week!

ALL EVENTS ON THESE PAGES ARE ORGANISED AND PROMOTED BY COMMUNITY GROUPS AND FESTIVAL PARTNERS. PLEASE VISIT THEIR WEBSITES FOR BOOKING & FURTHER INFO.



WALKS & TOURS

SAT 24 OCT

11am WALK: Cirencester in the Civil War. Book via coriniummuseum.org

SUN 25 OCT

11am-12pm WALK: Anecdotes and relics of the Cirencester to Cheltenham railway line with Will Chester-Master and David Viner. Meet: car park, Organic Farm Shop, Abbey Home Farm. £5 donation to Friends of the Corinium Museum.
2:30pm WALK: From the Romans to the Present. Cirencester Civic Society. No booking. £5 donation. Meet at Parish Church.

MON 26 OCT

2:30pm TOUR: Parish Church guided tour. No booking required but donations welcome.

TUES 27 OCT

11am WALK: Roman Cirencester. Book via coriniummuseum.org
11am TOUR: Behind the Scenes at The Old Department Store. Book via theolddepartmentstore.co.uk/whats-on
2.30pm WALK: WW2 Ciren. Living Memory Historical Association. Meet at Air Raid Shelter. Free but donations welcome.

WEDS 28 OCT

10:30am TOUR: Parish Church guided tour. No booking required but donations welcome.
11am WALK: Votes for Women with Sue Jones. Book via coriniummuseum.org
11am TOUR: Behind the Scenes at The Old Department Store. Book via theolddepartmentstore.co.uk/whats-on

THURS 29 OCT

11am WALK: Georgian Cirencester. Book via coriniummuseum.org
11am TOUR: Behind the Scenes at The Old Department Store. Book via theolddepartmentstore.co.uk/whats-on
2:30pm TOUR: Parish Church guided tour. No booking required but donations welcome.

FRI 30 OCT

10:30am TOUR: Parish Church guided tour. No booking required but donations welcome.
2:30pm WALK: From the Romans to the Present. Cirencester Civic Society. No booking. £5 donation. Meet at Parish Church.

SAT 31 OCT

11am WALK: Cirencester Wool Walk. Book via coriniummuseum.org

SUN 1 NOV

2:30pm WALK: From the Romans to the Present. Cirencester Civic Society. No booking. £5 donation. Meet at Parish Church.

EXHIBITIONS & DISPLAYS

CORINIUM MUSEUM OPEN: MON-SAT 10AM-5PM; SUN 2-5PM

ROMAN TETTINE CUP: Newly restored and now on display. This child's drinking cup was found with the rare bronze and enamel cockerel that inspired the History Festival logo. For the first time since their discovery, the two objects will be reunited just before the Cirencester History Festival for visitors to enjoy.

TARLTON CURSE TABLETS: On public display for the first time, having been in private ownership since their discovery in the Cotswolds. The Tarlton Tablets allow us to hear, in their own voices, the strange curses Romans called down on the thieves who stole from them.

'HENRY TUDOR: THE INCREDIBLE DIARIES OF ME!' TRAIL Follow the rude and chaotic adventures of Prince Henry aged-eight-and-a-half around the museum on this fun trail based on the new children's novel by award-winning writer and TV presenter Danny Wallace.

DANIEL BINGHAM FOUNDATION GALLERY OPEN: MON-FRI 9:30-4PM; SUN 10:30-3:30PM

PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION: Historical Cirencester in the twenty-first century. Display of winners in an open photography competition organised by Cirencester Rotary Club in conjunction with Cirencester Civic Society supported by Concordfoto. Free drop-in at Bingham House.

CIRENCESTER GROWTH HUB, RAU OPEN: SAT 24 OCT-MON 2 NOV 9AM-5PM

KING ARTHUR - AN EXHIBITION OF MINIATURES: Royal Society of Miniature Painters, Sculptors and Gravers annual exhibition with a King Arthur theme. Daily art demonstrations and refreshments. Free drop-in and free parking. Opens noon on 24th and closes noon on 2nd.

CIRENCESTER LIBRARY OPEN: FRI 23 OCT-SAT 31 OCT. SEE LIBRARY WEBSITE FOR OPENING TIMES.

YOUNG WRITERS EXHIBITION: Display of the Soroptimist young writers short story competition, Herstory: Women & Girls' Voices from History. Free drop in. More info: sigbi.org/cirencester

DEER PARK SCHOOL OPEN SAT 24 OCT 11AM-1:30PM

EXHIBITION & OPEN SCHOOL: 60 years of comprehensive education in Cirencester. Open to all. Come along to share memories over a cup of tea. Exhibition of student work. No booking required.

THE OLD DEPARTMENT STORE OPEN MON-SAT 10.30-4PM (NO SUNDAYS)

CIRENCESTER TAPESTRY PROJECT: To mark the Bayeux Tapestry's return to England for the first time in a millennium, come along and add to the Cirencester Community Tapestry using two traditional stitching techniques from the original. No experience required! Free drop in. See p.5 for more details.

FOOD

JOSSER OPEN: WEDS, SAT 10AM-4PM; THURS, FRI, SUN 10AM-7:30PM

'TALK AND A TOASTIE': Across the road from Bingham Hall, the J Kiosk, St Michael's Park will run extended opening hours on Bingham talk days so festivalgoers can refuel with refreshments including tea, coffee and toasties.

WORKSHOPS

NEW BREWERY ARTS ALL WORKSHOPS 10AM-4PM. BOOK: newbreweryarts.org.uk

FRI 23 & SAT 24 OCT (2 DAYS): Make a Willow Shoulder Bag with Tess Wakeling (adults). £180

SAT 24 OCT: Stone Carving Taster - Carve a Sycamore Seed in Portland Stone with Ann-Margreth Bohl (adults). £125

SAT 24 OCT: Historic Cyanotype Printing with Laurinda Bellow (adults). £90

SAT 31 OCT: Inlaid Medieval Clay Tiles with Dr Tom Chamberlain (adults). £95

THE OLD DEPARTMENT STORE OPEN WEDS 28 OCT 10AM-4PM

CREATE, MAKE, REPAIR WITH CIRENCESTER WORKBENCH: The Workbench team can help you fix, change, modify anything or even start a project from scratch. We have a good selection of tools, a wide range of skills and drinks & snacks are on hand. Free drop-in.

FILMS & TALKS

THE BARN CINEMA £10 ADULTS; £8 UNDER 16s. BOOK: barntheatre.org.uk/barn-cinema

SHAUN THE SHEEP & THE BEAST OF MOSSY BOTTOM. SUN 25 OCT 11AM-12:40PM. What says ancient pagan festival more than a cute sheep battling a malevolent beast created by a Halloween science experiment that goes wrong?

SAVAGE HOUSE. SUN 25 OCT 7-9PM. A darkly comic historical romp set in 18th century England during a pox outbreak and Jacobite uprising. Richard E Grant and Claire Foy star as grasping social climbers preparing to entertain visiting aristocracy.

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY. SUN 1 NOV 7:45-10PM. Daisy Edgar-Jones is Elinor Dashwood in Working Title's take on Jane Austen's 1811 novel. Domesticity, romance and sisterly bonds make for a classic costume drama retold for our times.

DAGLINGWORTH VILLAGE HALL WEDS 28 OCT. COFFEE FROM 10AM. TALK 10:30AM-11:30AM

MEDICAL AND SURGICAL PREPARATION FOR D-DAY LANDINGS by Dr Hugh Thomas of Cirencester u3a Military History Group. Limited parking so please car share if you can. £3 on entry.

IN THE COMMUNITY: COLLABORATING WITH SCHOOLS, CHARITIES & CULTURAL ORGS!

YOUNG PEOPLE. This year we launched a new work experience scheme for local 16-22s interested in history and/or events, to work alongside us as runners for festival week. We also work hard to fundraise for our subsidised £5 under-22s talk tickets, and offer some dedicated events, stewarding and backstage opportunities to local schools.

FAMILIES tell us that FREE DROP-INS are best - there are 9 in this year's core programme.

OUTREACH. We also have a range of free outreach activities running through the week to bring the joys of the festival to the widest possible audience. This year that means one dedicated foraging walk, one historical cookery school, one curse tablet making workshop, one Viking kitchen masterclass and one historical dressing up session for local charity partners.



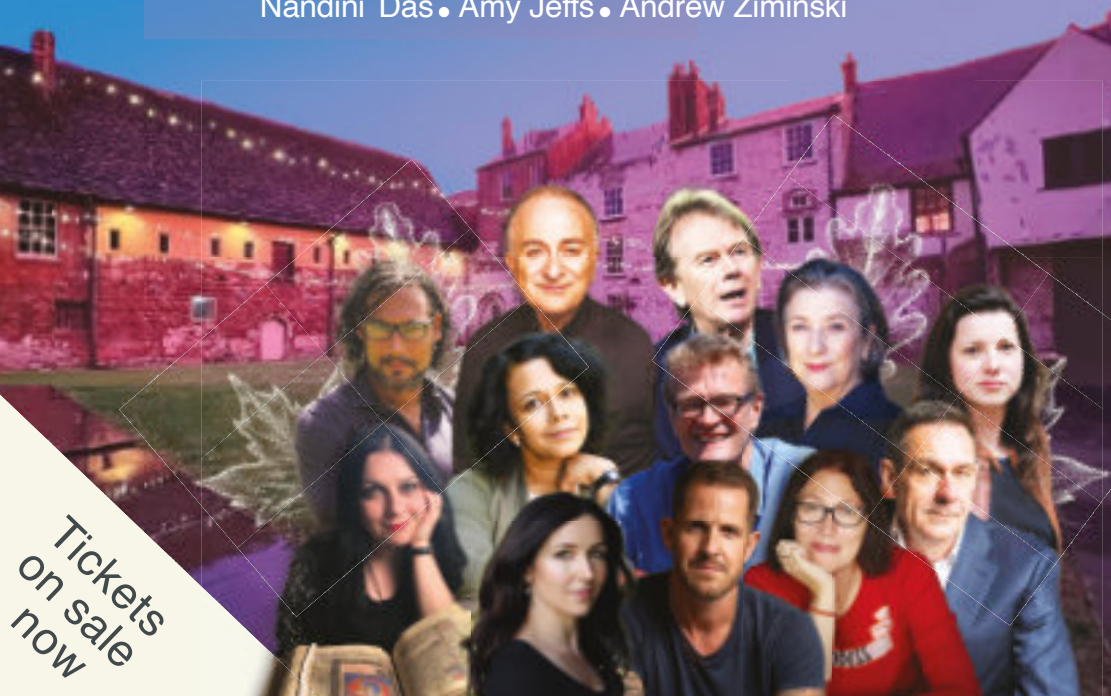
Gloucester History Festival

5th-20th September 2026

Join us under the medieval beams of magical Blackfriars Priory to hear one hundred of Britain's top historians, actors and broadcasters bring history alive. Enjoy two action-packed weeks of talks, tours, parades and exhibitions in the ancient Roman city of Gloucester.

Tony Robinson • David Olusoga • Caroline Quentin
Dan Jones • Natalie Haynes • Penny Mordaunt
Michael Wood • Paul Mason • Katja Hoyer
Turi King • Nick Crane • Max Adams
Ben Robinson • Janina Ramirez • Emily Hauser
Nandini Das • Amy Jeffs • Andrew Ziminski

Tickets
on sale
now



Enjoy on livestream or in person. Book: gloucesterhistoryfestival.co.uk

WITH THANKS TO OUR PATRONS & SPONSORS

This festival is a true Cirencester collaboration, created by over 40 organisations with a shared vision for our town. Making it all possible are our patrons and sponsors, whose overwhelming, and ever-growing, support shows the true strength of our community. Thank you all — we couldn't do it without you.



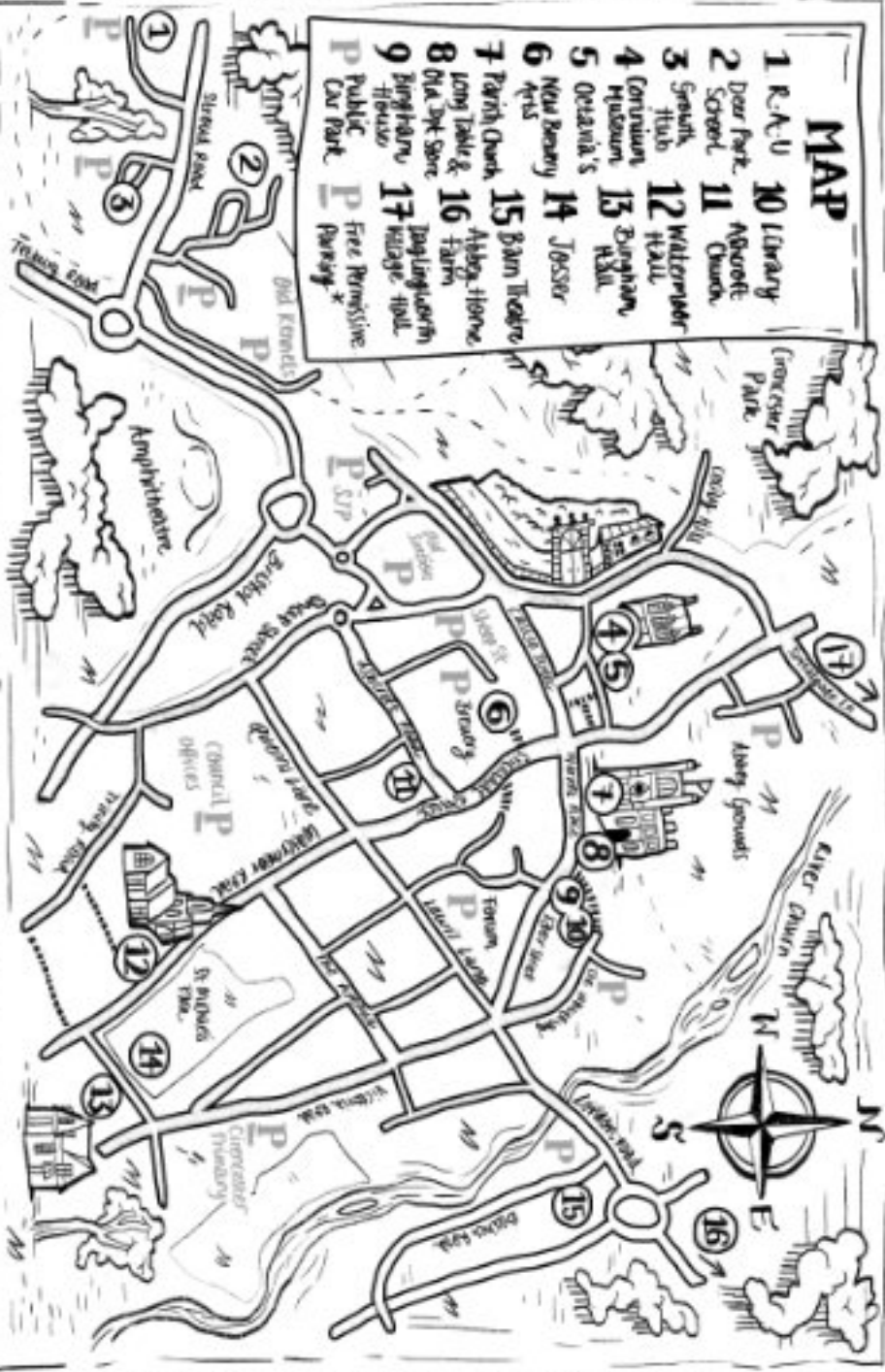
With special thanks to Gloucestershire Community Foundation, D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust, The Organic Farm Shop, Woodroffe Benton and Soroptimist International Cirencester & District for their support helping young people access the arts, culture and heritage.



This programme is printed using vegetable-based inks on FSC accredited paper from recycled and sustainable sources.

MAP

- 1 R.A.U
- 2 Deer Park
- 3 School
- 4 Growth Hub
- 5 Corvian Museum
- 6 Octavia's New Beauty Arts
- 7 Parish Church
- 8 Long Table & Old Art Store
- 9 Bingham House
- 10 Library
- 11 Abbot's Church
- 12 Watermill
- 13 Hall
- 14 Bingham Hall
- 15 Jossie
- 16 Barn Theatre
- 17 Abbey House
- 18 Juggling in the Village Hall
- 19 Free Permissive Car Park



* Restrictions Apply. See GREATFESTIVALS.FESTIVAL.ORG/VENTURES for details