

TICKETS FOR THE CHELSEA HISTORY FESTIVAL 2026 NOW ON SALE

The 2026 edition explores World History, with acclaimed broadcaster and veteran foreign correspondent John Simpson as Guest Curator

Chelsea Heritage Quarter is pleased to announce the eighth edition of Chelsea History Festival, taking place from Thursday 1 to Sunday 4 October 2026. The annual celebration of history and heritage brings the past to life through an immersive programme of talks, performances, concerts, walking tours, exhibitions and family activities staged in the Heritage Quarter's fantastic historic venues. Tickets are now on sale at www.chelseaheritagequarter.co.uk.

The 2026 Chelsea History Festival explores the theme of World History, examining the people, events and ideas that have shaped societies across the globe. Through a programme of around 100 events, the Festival will bring history to life across Chelsea, expanding into an exciting network of historic and cultural venues. Alongside Chelsea Physic Garden, the National Army Museum and Royal Hospital Chelsea, this year's Festival will also feature events at Chelsea Old Church, Chelsea Theatre, Royal Court Theatre and Garrison Chapel.

Chelsea Heritage Quarter is also delighted to announce acclaimed broadcaster and journalist John Simpson as Guest Curator for Chelsea History Festival 2026. One of Britain's most respected foreign correspondents, Simpson has spent more than five decades reporting from around the world, documenting many of the defining moments of modern history. A long-time Chelsea resident and President of The Chelsea Society, he brings a unique perspective to this year's World History theme.

The 2026 headline speakers and events include:

- **John Simpson**, The Chelsea History Festival Guest Curator and BBC World Affairs editor speaks on World History.
- Award-winning, bestselling historian **Andrew Roberts**, tells the story of Napoleon and the elite generals who built him up and ultimately led to his ruin.
- Broadcaster and explorer **Monty Halls** explores the untold true story of the pioneering military academy that provided the model for Special Forces training used by the SAS.
- Historian **Anna Whitelock** discusses James I and the dawn of a global Britain.
- Historian Professor **Jonathan Fennell** tells the global story of the Second World War through exciting new sources that explore what it really meant to live through this violent time.
- Author **Paul French** discusses the extraordinary life of Puyi, the Last Emperor of China.
- Governor of the Royal Hospital Chelsea, **General Sir Adrian Bradshaw** KCB OBE DL, discusses Defence and Security Challenges to the UK and NATO, and how we can preserve peace in Western Europe.
- Historian Professor **Matthew Worley** celebrates 50 years of punk - a fashion, a musical form, an attitude and an aesthetic.
- The Last Bantam, **Michael Hughes'** acclaimed one-man play, tells the remarkable true story of Britain's smallest soldiers.

- A special performance of **Dido and Aeneas** at Chelsea Old Church, celebrating one of the earliest landmarks in the history of English opera.
- A concert of music by **Dowland and Purcell**, bringing the sounds of the seventeenth century to life in Chelsea.
- **Hex in the Garden: Healers, Harmers and the Witch Craze**, A haunting evening of after-dark storytelling, history and performance exploring women herbalists, cunning folk and the Witch Craze.
- **Five Soldiers**, the premiere of dance documentary, based on the critically acclaimed stage production. Through dance and testimony, the film explores the human cost of military service.
- **Family-friendly trails, workshops, performances, walking tours and activities** taking place across the Festival weekend

John Simpson, Chelsea History Festival Guest Curator, said: *"The Chelsea History Festival is an essential part of the Chelsea calendar, and I'm delighted to support this year's Festival as Guest Curator. It's often said news is the first draft of history so I'm looking forward to exploring the Festival's World History theme and sharing my top tips of what to see from the Festival programme. I'll look forward to seeing you there!"*

Gill Webber, Director of Chelsea Heritage Quarter, said: *"Chelsea History Festival continues to grow each year, bringing together exceptional speakers, performers and storytellers to explore the people and events that have shaped our world. We are particularly delighted to welcome John Simpson as Guest Curator for 2026 and to expand the Festival into new venues across Chelsea. Whether your interests lie in global conflict, royal history, the fascinating history of plants and gardens, literature, music or local stories, there is something for everyone in this year's programme."*

Hugh Seaborn, CEO of Cadogan, commented: *"The Chelsea History Festival captures something quintessential about our neighbourhood — a deep appreciation of heritage alongside a constant spirit of curiosity and reinvention. With Cadogan's 300-year stewardship of Chelsea, we're delighted to support a festival that brings together world-class voices and opens up new ways of seeing the past."*

Chelsea History Festival is presented by Chelsea Heritage Quarter, London's most storied heritage destination. Through year-round events, exhibitions and learning programmes, the Quarter tells a unique story of London and Britain from 1660 to the present day, celebrating the people, places and ideas that have shaped Chelsea and beyond.

Chelsea History Festival is delighted to partner with the **Chelsea Citizen** as this year's media partner.

Notes to Editors:

Press Contact:

For further information, to arrange interviews, request press tickets and high-resolution images please contact:

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Listings

Festival Dates:

1-4 October 2026

Box office: 0131 226 0014

Book tickets to three or more different events across the festival and you can save 20%. Tickets must be purchased in the same transaction and the discount will automatically be applied within the basket (some events, including free events and walking tours, are excluded from this offer).

Website:

www.chelseaheritagequarter.co.uk

#ChelseaHistoryFest

#ChelseaHeritageQuarter

Twitter: @ChelseaHeritage

Facebook: @Chelsea Heritage Quarter

Instagram: @chelseaheritagequarter

Locations:

- Chelsea Physic Garden
- National Army Museum
- Royal Hospital Chelsea
- Chelsea Old Church
- Chelsea Theatre
- Royal Court Theatre
- Garrison Chapel

Chelsea History Festival

Founded in 2019, the Chelsea History Festival is a partnership between the National Army Museum, the Royal Hospital Chelsea and Chelsea Physic Garden. Its aim is to entertain, educate and inspire through local, national and global history. Every year, the Chelsea History Festival brings the past to life through a programme of events, featuring a brilliant blend of storytellers and performers from different walks of life. The Festival creates a stage in Chelsea, along the historic Royal Hospital Road, for world class speakers and authors to celebrate history.

National Army Museum

The National Army Museum shares the history and heritage of our soldiers and their service in the Army, across the globe and down the centuries. Through our collections and research, we explore the history of the Army from its origins to the present day. We aim to engage and inspire everyone with the stories of our soldiers and how their service shapes our world; past present and future.

nam.ac.uk

Royal Hospital Chelsea

The Royal Hospital Chelsea is the home of the iconic veterans of the British Army, the Chelsea Pensioners. We offer excellent accommodation, comradeship and the highest standards of care in recognition of their loyal service to the nation. Any former soldier of the British Army of state pension age, who is facing spending their advanced years alone, can apply for residence as a Chelsea Pensioner. Some 300 army veterans live at the Royal Hospital today, including those who have served in Korea, the Falkland Islands, Cyprus, Northern Ireland and World War II. Others may not have served in campaigns, but all understand what it means to be a soldier and the potential sacrifice that it entails. The Royal Hospital is a Grade I and II listed site, a beautiful architectural legacy left to us by Charles II and Sir Christopher Wren. Maintenance of the site continues today with ongoing restoration work to ensure that this legacy lives on into the future.

chelsea-pensioners.co.uk

Chelsea Physic Garden

Chelsea Physic Garden is London's oldest botanic garden. Founded in 1673, it turned 350 in 2023. It has been a teaching garden for all of these 350 years and the core principles of discovery, learning and wellbeing are still realised today through its charitable activities. Within the Garden visitors can find over 4500 species of edible, useful and medicinal plants that help to tell the story of humanity's relationship with plants. The Garden is an independent charity which relies on public support to ensure it can achieve its purpose of education and public access. Chelsea Physic Garden offers a year-round programme of educational activities, walks, talks, tours and workshops.
chelseaphysicgarden.co.uk

About Cadogan

Cadogan is a family business, property manager, investor, and developer with a 300-year history that informs its dynamic estate management approach today. As custodians of over 90 acres of Chelsea and Knightsbridge, their long-term stewardship aims to enrich the area's unique character and community, while safeguarding its future vitality.
www.cadogan.co.uk

Chelsea Heritage Quarter

The Chelsea Heritage Quarter is London's new heritage destination and brings together four remarkable institutions to tell a unique story of London and Britain from 1660 to the present day. Including magnificent architecture, military history and London's oldest botanic garden all situated in the heart of historic and picturesque Chelsea, the Quarter presents a fascinating and wide-ranging experience for those interested in exploring Britain's history.
chelseaheritagequarter.co.uk/

Chelsea Citizen

[The Chelsea Citizen](#) is a dynamic hyper-local newspaper serving Chelsea and neighbouring areas.