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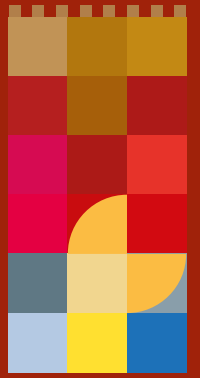
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www.tewkesburyhistoryfestival.co.uk



TEWKESBURY
HISTORY
FESTIVAL

entertaining • exploring • educating

18-21 JUNE

2026



- 1 Town Hall
- 2 Warders Alley
- 3 George Watson Hall
- 4 Methodist Church
- 5 John Moore Museum Merchant's House

Getting to Tewkesbury

Tewkesbury, located in Gloucestershire, is 12 miles from Gloucester and 9 miles from Cheltenham, with Birmingham and Bristol both less than 50 miles away. Accessed by car from J9 of the M5 motorway 2 miles east of the town or J1 of the M50 motorway 3 miles north. Car parking information: <https://tewkesbury.gov.uk/services/parking/cars/> Travelling by Bus: 41 & 42 for Cheltenham or bus 71 for Gloucester. Timetables are available at: www.stagecoachbus.com Travelling by Train: Ashchurch for Tewkesbury train station is located 2 miles east of the town centre <http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/>

Venues

The George Watson Hall: 65 Barton Street, GL20 5PX, [what3words ///smallest.laces.appealing](https://www.what3words.com/what3words///smallest.laces.appealing)
 Methodist Church: The Cross, GL20 5BB, [what3words ///puppets.laces.profile](https://www.what3words.com/what3words///puppets.laces.profile)

Welcome...

to the first Tewkesbury History Festival

From Thursday 18 June to Sunday 21 June 2026, our ancient streets will play host to a spectacular celebration of history and heritage, bringing together world-renowned historians, best-selling authors, and captivating storytellers to explore a world of incredible real-life stories from the past.

Whether you are fascinated by the strategy behind the Wars of the Roses, the cultural splendour of the Renaissance, or the hidden social histories found behind our own front doors, this year's festival programme offers a window into the defining moments of history.

We have curated a programme designed to inspire every generation, from deep-dive scholarly debates to family-friendly folklore and local house histories. We invite you to lose yourself in the stories of rebels, queens, and visionaries, and let the spirit of discovery lead you through our amazing and beautiful town.

Join us for an unforgettable journey through history, right here in the heart of Tewkesbury.



**Tewkesbury
Borough Council**

THE JOHN MOORE MUSEUM
NATURAL HISTORY | HERITAGE | LIVING VOICES

Booking available online at www.tewkesburyhistoryfestival.co.uk or in person at the Tourist Information Centre at 100 Church Street, Tewkesbury.

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The Human Cost of World War II

Kate Vigurs

11am. The Watson Hall. £20

This session focuses on the personal histories of those who served in wartime, particularly within the Special Operations Executive. It is a compelling and human exploration designed to ensure that the individual stories and sacrifices of the Second World War are never forgotten. Dr Kate Vigurs is a professional historian, researcher, and author who specialises in the history of the Special Operations Executive (SOE) and the lived experiences of women during wartime.



The Boleyn Secret

Alison Weir

1pm. The Watson Hall. £20

Discover the perilous world of the Tudor court with celebrated historian and novelist Alison Weir. This session explores the gripping narrative of *The Boleyn Secret*, delving into the dangerous secrets and shifting loyalties that defined the era of Henry VIII. As a leading authority on the Tudor dynasty, Alison brings her unmatched expertise to this discussion, weaving together historical fact and compelling storytelling to reveal the human drama behind one of England's most famous families. Join us for a fascinating look at the intrigue, ambition, and tragedy that haunted the corridors of power.



Stonehenge: The Story So Far...

Julian Richards

2:30pm. The Watson Hall. £18

Uncover the secrets of the world's most famous prehistoric monument. This session dives into the archaeology, myths and landscape of Stonehenge to explore how and why this massive stone circle was constructed. Led by renowned archaeologist and broadcaster Julian Richards, he brings a wealth of field experience and insight to one of history's greatest puzzles. Whether you're a seasoned history buff or curious newcomer, this event offers a compelling look at the ancient people who shaped our landscape and the enduring mysteries they left behind.



Uncrowned Queen

Nicola Tallis

4pm. The Watson Hall. £15

Uncover the relentless ambition and strategic brilliance behind the rise of the Tudor dynasty. This session focuses on Margaret Beaufort, the indomitable matriarch who navigated the treacherous waters of the Wars of the Roses to secure the English throne for her son, Henry VII.

Renowned historian and author Nicola Tallis provides a gripping account of survival and political manoeuvring, exploring the immense risks Margaret took in a world where one wrong move meant death. Drawing on her deep expertise in the 15th century, Nicola offers a fresh, scholarly perspective on a woman whose legacy shaped the course of British history for centuries to come.

Join us for a scintillating look at the woman who proved to be the ultimate survivor and kingmaker, transforming the battlefield of the 1400s into the foundation of a legendary royal house.



The First Lady of the Renaissance

Sarah Dunant


7:30pm. The Watson Hall. £20

Step into the glittering and dangerous world of the Italian Renaissance to explore the life of Isabella d'Este, the Marchesa of Mantua. Often described as the "First Lady of the Renaissance," Isabella was a woman of immense political power and a patron of the arts whose influence stretched across the great ducal courts of Europe.

Led by acclaimed novelist and historian Sarah Dunant, this session brings the 15th century to life with the vivid detail and narrative flair that has made her a household name. Sarah will delve into the heart of the Italian courts, examining how art and politics collided and how a woman of Isabella's stature navigated a landscape of shifting alliances and cultural transformation.

As a regular broadcaster and expert on the period, Sarah offers a scintillating look at a life of ambition and elegance, perfect for those captivated by beautifully woven historical narratives.




 **The Evolution of the English Home**
Piers Taylor

11am. The Watson Hall. £20

Using Tewkesbury as his case study, Piers explores the fascinating journey of domestic architecture and the social forces that shaped the way we live. From the grand manor houses of the medieval era to the radical innovations of modern design, this session examines how the English home has evolved to reflect our changing values, technology, and identity. Led by award-winning architect and broadcaster Piers Taylor, known for his work on the BBC's *The World's Most Extraordinary Homes*, the talk offers a unique perspective on the relationship between people and their environment.




 **The Aviary Gate Series**
In conversation with Katie Hickman

1pm. The Watson Hall. £12.50

Step into the opulent and dangerous world of the 16th-century Ottoman Empire. This captivating session features acclaimed historian and novelist Katie Hickman in conversation about her celebrated *Aviary Gate* series. Journey behind the closed doors of the Sultan's harem in Constantinople, where power, intrigue, and forbidden desire defined the lives of those trapped within its golden walls.

Drawing on her extensive research and travel, Katie brings to life the Venetian woman, the eunuchs, and the complex hierarchy of the imperial court.




 **The Viking Age: Conquest and Culture**
R.A.J. Waddingham

2:30pm. The Watson Hall. £15

Uncover the reality behind the legends of the Norsemen who once terrorised and transformed the British Isles. This session explores the dual nature of the Vikings – not just as fierce raiders and warriors, but as sophisticated traders, explorers, and settlers whose influence is still woven into the fabric of our language and landscape today. Led by historian R.A.J. Waddingham, the talk delves into the strategic brilliance of the Viking Age, examining how their seafaring technology allowed them to dominate the northern world.




 **The Knights Hospitaller and the Medieval World**
Rory MacLellan

4pm. The Watson Hall. £15

Learn about the complex and often misunderstood history of the medieval religious military orders. This session focuses on the rise and fall of the Knights Hospitaller, examining their dual role as devout monks and elite warriors who became some of the most powerful players in the medieval world. Led by historian Dr Rory MacLellan, an expert in the Crusades and the Hospitallers, the talk strips away the modern myths to reveal the historical reality of faith, warfare, and international finance in the Middle Ages. Rory brings his extensive research to life, exploring how these orders operated across Europe and the Holy Land and why their legacy continues to fascinate us centuries later.



 **An A-Z of English History**
Ian Mortimer

7:30pm. The Watson Hall. £20

Enjoy a whirlwind journey through the centuries with this innovative exploration of the English story, decoding our national DNA, highlighting the quirks, and key turning points that shaped the country from the medieval to modern times.

Led by the celebrated Dr Ian Mortimer, the talk focuses on the lived experience of the past. Renowned for his *Time Traveller's Guides*, Ian brings wit and scholarship to the stage, exploring how ordinary lives were transformed by extraordinary events. His talk promises to change your view of Britain's long and varied history – a provocative, enlightening look at the foundations of our society.



Tewkesbury Visitor and Heritage Centre

Discover the town's history with a visit to the Heritage Centre, get information to make more of your visit, or shop in our gift shop.

100 Church Street Tewkesbury GL20 5AB
T: 01684 855040 W: visittewkesbury.co.uk



Walks, Workshops, Demonstrations

Tewkesbury's Floods and Flood Meadows

Thursday 18 June at 10:30am. Starting location: The John Moore Museum. £5

Tewkesbury is world famous for its floods! Join us, as we walk around the historic part of the town to see the impact our converging rivers have had on it. View photographs from the past to the present, as we explain the importance of willow trees; why some of the town architecture has been updated; the meaning of the word Ham and so much more! This walk lasts approximately 75 minutes.

Alleyway Strolls

Thurs 18, Sat 20, Sun 21 June at 4pm. Starting location: Warders Alley, High St. £5

Explore Tewkesbury's Social Heritage with a walk around the lanes and alleys. Hear about the people who lived here and the buildings they lived in. Three different walks: High Street alleys (18th), Barton Street alleys (20th), Church Street alleys (21st). The walks lasts around 2 hours.

Historic Highlights of Prior's Park

Thursday 18 June at 2pm. Starting location: Watson Hall, Barton St. Suggested donation £5

Diving deep into the fascinating social history of Priors Park, we uncover why this development began and how it mirrored a massive, history-making reform across the entire UK. Witness how the post-war "Housing for All" revolution transformed the welfare state, trading wartime destruction and slum conditions for secure, high-quality, and affordable homes. The walk lasts approximately 2 hours.

Living History Re-enactors by The Packwood Household

Friday 19 June to Sunday 21 June. Location: Merchant's House, Church Street. Included in admission to the John Moore Museum

The Merchant's House on Church Street is brought to life by Medieval re-enactors. Discover what it was like to work and live in the early 15th century. Our spice merchant, Annabelle Burton, has prepared her shop and is ready to answer your questions. What exotic spices and ingredients did they have? What trade routes did people travel? How comfortable is woollen fashion in the summer heat? She will even show you the "sophisticated" en-suite toilets!

John Moore's Elmbury Walk

Friday 19 June at 7pm. Starting location: The Crescent on Church Street. £5

This literary walk takes you through Elmbury, the fictional name for John Moore's home town of Tewkesbury, between the wars. Explore the places and characters that inspired him to pick up his pen, as we share readings on Tewkesbury Abbey, the Severn Hamm, and the notorious character, Black Sal, to name just a few! This walk lasts approximately 75 minutes.

A Journey into Colour: Natural Dyeing Workshop

Saturday 20 June. 10am. Tewkesbury Methodist Church Hall. £60

Step away from the synthetic world and rediscover the ancient, slow art of extracting vibrant colour from the earth. Long before the invention of chemical dyes, our ancestors looked to the hedgerows, meadows, and forests to tint their world. In this hands-on workshop, you will learn how to harness the hidden pigments found in common plants, roots and barks to create a unique, sustainable palette of your own.

Archery & Armour demonstrations by The House of Hound & Falcon

Sat 20 June and Sun 21 June. 11am-3pm. Location: Abbey Lawn. Free of charge

Archers from the House of Hound and Falcon will be demonstrating the deadly effectiveness of a medieval English longbow. Watch the arrows fly through the air and the impact on their targets! What armour did knights wear to protect themselves? This is the perfect opportunity to learn more.

Tewkesbury Battlefield Walk

Sunday 21 June at 10am. Starting Location: short stay car park in Gander Lane.£5

The "Wars of the Roses" came to a head at Tewkesbury in 1471, a clash between the great houses of Lancaster and York, each fighting for the crown of England. The determined Yorkist king, Edward IV, who had regained his throne only weeks earlier faced the Lancastrians led by Edward, Prince of Wales, the teenage son of Henry VI and Queen Margaret of Anjou, fighting to restore his father's cause and secure his own destiny as a future King of England. The walk takes you into the battlefield explaining the positions, commanders and tactics of both sides, examining "ambush" tactics employed by both before returning to the town exploring the influence of the topography on the rout that followed, ending at Tewkesbury Abbey. The walk lasts approximately 2 hours and covers around 2 miles on well-trodden paths.

TEWKESBURY MUSEUM



Discover Tewkesbury's rich heritage from Roman remains to wartime austerity in a beautiful 17th century building

64 Barton Street Tewkesbury GL20 5PX T: 01684 292901 W: tewkesburymuseum.org

 **The Survival of the Princes in the Tower**
Matt Lewis

11am. The Watson Hall. £20

The fate of the Princes in the Tower remains one of history's most enduring and hotly debated mysteries. Traditionally, the story ends with their murder at the hands of their uncle, Richard III. However, historian and History Hit presenter Matt Lewis invites you to examine a more radical possibility: what if they weren't murdered at all?

As the co-host of the Gone Medieval podcast, Matt brings his deep expertise of the 15th century to the stage, challenging Shakespearean myths and offering a fresh perspective on a cold case that has fascinated the world for over five centuries.



 **House Histories: The Secrets Behind Your Front Door**

Melanie Backe-Hansen

1pm. The Watson Hall. £15

Every house has a story to tell, but how do you begin to unlock the secrets hidden within its walls? This session takes you on a journey through the archives to discover the social history of the buildings we inhabit.

The session is led by leading house historian Melanie Backe-Hansen, the research consultant for the BBC's A House Through Time and author of Historic Streets and Squares. Melanie will share expert tips on navigating key sources and archive materials, and reveals some fascinating and unexpected stories she has uncovered throughout her career.



 **The Golden Thread: How Fabric Changed History**

Kassia St Clair

2:30pm. The Watson Hall. £12.50

Discover the extraordinary and often overlooked story of how textiles have woven the fabric of human civilisation. From silken dragon robes of Imperial China to high-tech space suits, fabric has been a silent witness and a driving force behind global trade, social status, and technological survival. This session, led by acclaimed author and journalist Kassia St Clair, explores the fascinating narratives found in her best-selling book The Golden Thread.



 **Owain Glyndwr: Rebel, Prince, Visionary**
Nathen Amin

4pm. The Watson Hall. £20

Owain Glyndŵr is one of the most revered and misunderstood figures in Welsh and British history. A national hero to many and a rebel to others, Glyndŵr's vision for an independent Wales sparked one of the most explosive uprisings against the English crown in the early 15th century.

But who was the man behind the legend? As a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society and a leading expert on the Tudor period, Nathen brings passion and deep archival knowledge to the stage. He sets the context for Owain: born into a conquered Wales, yet with an English wife and having fought on the side of the English crown. So how does Owain come to be regarded as the father of Welsh nationalism and the leader a disunited group of former Welsh kingdoms have been searching for?



 **A Galloping Catastrophe: Sex and History**

Kate Lister

7:30pm. The Watson Hall. £20

Prepare for a frank, witty, and unapologetically honest journey through the social history of the female body. This session strips away centuries of stigma and misconception to explore how society has viewed, policed, and misunderstood the female anatomy throughout the ages.

Led by the brilliant Dr Kate Lister, a historian at Leeds Trinity University and the creator of the world-renowned Whores of Yore project, this talk is a masterclass in uncovering the deliberately hidden parts of the female past. Kate brings her trademark humour and academic rigour to a subject that is often whispered about but rarely discussed with such refreshing clarity.



 **Family Session – Fables and Folklore**

Tom Phillips

11am. The Watson Hall. £8 child, £2.50 adult

Bring the whole family along for an enchanting morning as we dive into the weird and wonderful world of traditional storytelling. This session moves away from the history books and into the realm of legend, exploring the tall tales, mythical beasts, and curious fables that have been passed down through generations.

Led by the versatile and witty Tom Phillips, this interactive session is designed to captivate younger history fans and adults alike. Perfect for curious minds aged 7 to 107!



 **Women Who Ruled the World: 5,000 Years of Female Monarchy**

Elizabeth Norton

1pm. The Watson Hall. £15

From Cleopatra to Catherine the Great, Boudicca to Elizabeth I, ancient Japan to 19th century Madagascar, female kings have always been a rarity, an oddity, or an undesirable outcome. In almost all places on the globe a male ruler was preferred to a woman, with female inheritance vanishingly rare and frequently disputed. In spite of this, women have secured crowns – or fought for them – over several millennia.

Acclaimed historian Elizabeth Norton tells the scintillating story of the female kings: women who risked everything, sometimes unwillingly, to find a place in a man's world.



 **Mothers-in-War: The Women of the Wars of the Roses**

Annie Garthwaite

2:30pm. The Watson Hall. £15

The Wars of the Roses was not just a conflict of soldiers and battlefields, but a chess match played by the most formidable women of the 15th century. At the centre of it all stood Cecily Neville, Duchess of York, mother to two kings. In this session, we delve into the life of a woman who was the architect of the Yorkist dynasty and a survivor of the most turbulent era in English history. Led by acclaimed historical novelist Annie Garthwaite, this event explores the research and passion behind her celebrated novel *The King's Mother*.




 **Depravity Art**

Daisy Dixon

4pm. The Watson Hall. £12.50

Dr Daisy Dixon, author of *Depraved: The Story of Dangerous Art*, presents a journey through some of the most volatile and contentious works of art ever produced throughout history – from prehistoric sculpture to extreme metal music, Renaissance paintings to videogames – revealing how beautiful art can sometimes be the most insidious, and why the greatest threat might lie in our own judgements about the art we censor or condemn.



 **Witchcraft and the Witch Trials**

Suzannah Lipscomb

6pm. The Watson Hall. £22.50

Persecuted, prosecuted, and executed: witchcraft beliefs have been around for thousands of years, but at one moment in history witches were perceived to be especially dangerous. In Europe between 1450 and 1750, large numbers of people were executed for being witches.

Led by the brilliant Professor Suzannah Lipscomb, an award-winning historian, author, and broadcaster, this talk brings the past to life with unparalleled clarity and wit. As the host of the *Not Just the Tudors* podcast and a regular face on TV, Suzannah is a master at uncovering the human stories behind the grand historical records. In this talk, she delves into the complexities of power and gender, examining just why this happened.



Tewkesbury Medieval Festival

Battle re-enactment • Medieval market
Living history displays • Cider, mead & ale bars

www.tewkesburymedievalfestival.co.uk

11/12 July 2026 Free admission – donations requested





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The John Moore Museum

Natural History Museum
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Merchant's House
16th Century Tudor home with original features

Old Baptist Chapel
15th Century building with 18th century chapel conversion

Open Thursday 18th - Sunday 21st June
10am - 5pm (last entry 4.30pm)

01684 297174
johnmooremuseum.org

THE JOHN MOORE MUSEUM
NATURAL HISTORY HERITAGE LIVING VOICES

Whats on at the WATSON HALL

May 2026 **01684 - 638666**

Repunk'd - Live Punk Band 23/5/26

June 2026

OPEN MIC NIGHT 2/6/26

The Greatest Musicals Disco 12/6/26

Tewkesbury Town Band Concert 13/6/26

Tewkesbury History Festival 18/6/26 - 21/6/26

July 2026

Old Mill Theatre Co. Production 4/7/26

OPEN MIC NIGHT 7/7/26

Reimagined: The Music of Radiohead 17/7/26

Viva Morrissey 18/7/26

TEWKESBURY LIVE 24/7/26 - 26/7/26

Fitz & Giggles: Cabaret & Burlesque 31/7/26

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