

Gloucester History Festival

25th-27th April 2025



gloucesterhistoryfestival.co.uk

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The Gloucester History Festival

Spring Weekend



Welcome to the Spring Weekend 2025

This Spring more than ever, I can't wait to see you again at Blackfriars Priory. A gathering of Britain's finest historians open to debate, keen to hear your thoughts and looking forward to taking stock of where we are right now couldn't be more welcome.

Exile and Belonging is our theme this year as we journey back into the past and across the globe. And with all events now live-streamed, you can join us in the medieval splendour of Blackfriars Priory wherever you are!

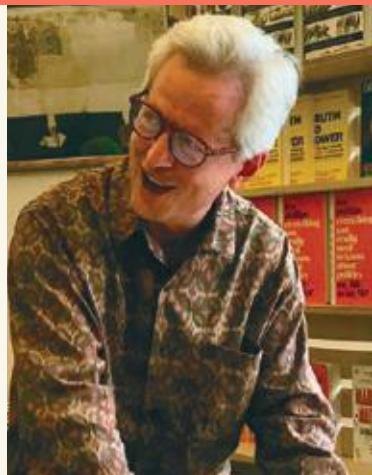
Prof Janina Ramirez
History Festival President

Hot on the heels of our successful first Winter Warmer Digital Festival, our Spring Weekend returns to Blackfriars. In 2025 we explore history both here in Gloucestershire and across the world through extraordinary people and stories, past and present. So whether your interest is in Vikings and the River Severn or what happens to the international rule of law do book now at gloucesterhistoryfestival.co.uk

and don't forget to save the dates for this year's Gloucester History Festival: 6th-21st September.

Now let's first discover together history ancient and modern in Gloucester this Spring!

Richard Graham CMG
Chair of the Gloucester
History Trust



Visiting the Festival



Join us for a feast of compelling events in the magical medieval setting of Blackfriars Priory.

New this Spring both livestream and in-person tickets are available!

Michael Heseltine



Hallie Rubenhold



Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen



Ian Mortimer



How to Book

Book tickets: gloucesterhistoryfestival.co.uk

Book by phone: 07834 406228

Tickets available in person at:

Museum of Gloucester, Brunswick Road, Gloucester. Tuesday to Saturday 10am-5pm, Sunday 11am-4pm (closed Mondays). There is a Box Office on site at Blackfriars Priory open 9.30am-8pm daily during the Festival.

Livestream tickets: all livestream tickets are £6 and appear next to the in-person price

Reservable seating: you can now choose and book specific seats.

Book signings: take place at the Waterstones Festival Bookshop after each event.



Livestream Programme

All Spring Weekend events are now live-streamed. Viewing links are sent out two days before each event. You can then watch events on demand until Sunday 25 May 2025.

More at: gloucesterhistoryfestival.co.uk/digital

Book a Festival Pass

Quench your curiosity and enjoy one of our great value Festival Passes. Be quick as they often sell out.

Spring Festival Pass

£155 offers in person entry to all 18 events, Festival lanyard and the same reserved seat throughout saving 25%.

Digital Festival Pass

£38 allowing access to three days of livestream events. Watch again until 25 May.

Blackfriars Talks Friday 25th April

The Birth of the Gloucester & Berkeley Canal

Tony Conder 10-11am £10 / £6 Livestreamed



This weekend marks the anniversary of the Grand Opening of the Gloucester and Berkeley Canal. Planned in 1792, Gloucester expected much from its canal link to the sea. For 34 years the city endured frustration, financial stress and the promise of a new economic future while a series of engineers failed to live up to promised opening dates. Using eyewitness accounts and glorious illustrations **Tony Conder**, one of Britain's leading experts on canals and waterways, tells the story of the frantic preparations and dizzy excitement of the opening day as Gloucester became 'the emporium of the West'.

King Offa & The Triumph of the Anglo-Saxons

Max Adams 12-1pm £10 / £6 Livestreamed



Battered by the Vikings, succeeded by King Alfred, the great Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Mercia (AD 630-918) encompassed today's Gloucestershire and powered the rise of England. Bestselling archaeologist and historian **Max Adams** explores the golden age of Mercia – its landscapes, peoples, conflicts and power struggles. He tells the thrilling story of King Offa, described by Alfred as 'the vigorous king who terrified all neighbouring kings', explores the building of his great Dyke and reveals the equal status Offa afforded his wife Cynethryth, making them the first real power couple of early Medieval England.

James I: The Life and Loves of Britain's First King

Lucy Hughes-Hallett & Gareth Russell 2-3pm £12 / £6 Livestreamed



This year marks the 400th anniversary of the death of James I. Beginning with the mysterious murder of his father in 1567, his life encompassed kidnapping, witchcraft trials, his mother's beheading, poison, espionage, brothels and a passionate love affair with the Duke of Buckingham. James I biographer **Gareth Russell** discusses his extraordinary life and loves with historian **Lucy Hughes-Hallett** author of the dazzling and acclaimed biography of Buckingham, The Scapegoat. Chaired by Jo Durrant.



Hallie Rubenhold

Story of A Murder 4-5pm £12 / £6 Livestreamed



Hallie Rubenhold's bestselling *The Five* explored the lives of Jack the Ripper's unknown Victorian victims. Now she joins us for an epic re-examination of the historical true-crime story of infamous wife-murderer Dr Crippen in Edwardian England, brought to justice by an extraordinary group of strong women. Chaired by HistoryExtra Content

Director David Musgrove.

"A unique combination of sleuthing, storytelling and compassion."
(Lucy Worsley).

Andrew Ziminski

Church Going: A Stonemason's Guide to British Churches 6-7pm £12 / £6 Livestreamed



Master stonemason **Andrew Ziminski** has worked on the greatest Cathedrals in the land from Salisbury to St Paul's. *Church Going*, his bestselling handbook to Britain's glorious medieval parish churches has become a phenomenon, described by Tony Robinson as 'joyous and illuminating.' Grab this rare opportunity as he shares the compelling

stories of some of our greatest church art and architecture including the medieval wall paintings at Kempley and the grotesques and gargoyles at Winchcombe.

"Ziminski is a rare and wonderful voice." (Rory Stewart).

The Fake Death of Edward II

Ian Mortimer 8-9pm £12 / £6 Livestreamed



We all know Edward II was murdered at Berkeley Castle in 1327 and buried in Gloucester Cathedral – or was he? Leading historian and bestselling author of *The Time Traveller's Guide to Medieval England*, **Ian Mortimer** is undertaking exciting new research on the faked death of Edward II. In this unique event he reveals what really happened

to Edward II during that fateful visit to Gloucestershire and whether he does in fact lie in a tomb in Gloucester Cathedral.

Blackfriars Talks Saturday 26th April

Maverdine Lane: England's Greatest Tudor Façade

Janina Ramirez, Phil Moss & Chris Miners 10-11am £12 / £6 Livestreamed



The Old Judges House on Maverdine Lane (26 Westgate St) is the finest Tudor facade in the entire country. It revealed its amazing secrets for the first time during recent restoration work. Festival President **Janina Ramirez** was lucky enough to climb the scaffolding for a rare and exclusive glimpse of its splendours and took a film crew with her! Today she reveals what she saw and shares the filmed footage for the very first time. She's joined by top Historic England Architect **Chris Miners** and leading local historian **Phil Moss** to tell the intriguing story of this beautiful ancient gem. Chaired by the BBC's Vernon Harwood.

Bendor Grosvenor

The Invention of British Art 12 - 1pm £10 / £6 Livestreamed



Celebrated art historian **Bendor Grosvenor**, co-presenter of the BBC's Britain's Lost Masterpieces and Fake or Fortune? joins us for an outspoken reappraisal of the history of British Art. This country has produced some of the world's most famous artists and paintings but what made British art 'great'? Was it the individual genius of artists like Hogarth, Turner and Constable or were their careers shaped by a distinctly 'British' society, culture and history? In a dazzling illustrated talk he offers some radical new answers.

Law and Politics: Has the Rule of Law Broken Down?

Alex Chalk & Richard Graham 2-3pm £12 / £6 Livestreamed



Full prisons, long court case waiting lists, increased fraud and shoplifting, overturned Post Office convictions and an overwhelmed immigration system. Has trust in the rule of law at home broken down? And is it being replaced internationally by a new norm: 'might is right'? Former Lord Chancellor and Justice Secretary **Alex Chalk**, now a barrister again, joins former Gloucester MP **Richard Graham**

for a frank discussion, spilling the beans about the realities of Westminster decision-making and the shortcomings we face. Introduced by **Mark Cummings**.

Trump and Putin: A New World Order?

David Omand, Jade McGlynn & Sinclair McKay 4-5pm £12 / £6 Livestreamed



How has the world changed since Trump came to power? What are the security implications of a new relationship between America and Russia? And what useful parallels can we draw from 20th century history? **David Omand** is Britain's

top intelligence guru, former Head of GCHQ and Home Office Permanent Secretary. Russia and Ukraine expert **Jade McGlynn** is a Fellow of King's College London's War Studies Department and historian **Sinclair McKay**, author of St Petersburg, is an expert on the history of 20th century Europe. They join the BBC's Vernon Harwood to assess current events, reflect on how we've got here and what the future may bring.

Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen

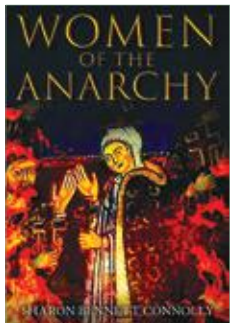
In conversation with Janina Ramirez 6-7pm £14 / £6 Livestreamed



Famed for his extravagant style, celebrity interior designer **Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen** has always taken inspiration from the art, architecture and gardens of 18th century Rococo and Baroque. He joins **Janina Ramirez** for a hugely entertaining hour exploring the highs and lows of a life lived to the max. They celebrate the Rococo love of hedonism, pleasure and gorgeousness sharing some brilliant design ideas we can take from the past and use today.

Empress Matilda: Medieval Cousins at War

Sharon Bennett Connolly 8-9pm £12 / £6 Livestreamed



In 1135 Stephen of Blois usurped the throne sparking the Anarchy, a bitter 19-year Civil War. On the one side was Empress Matilda, daughter of Henry I and rightful heir to the throne, on the other Matilda of Boulogne wife of Stephen and fighting to see her own son inherit the English crown.

Join leading medieval historian **Sharon Bennett Connolly**, author of *Women of the Anarchy*, for the dazzling tale of two extraordinary cousins who shaped the English monarchy, and the intriguing role of Robert of Gloucester.

Blackfriars Talks Sunday 27th April

Palestinians & Israelis: From The Balfour Declaration to Gaza

Michael Scott-Baumann 10-11am £10 / £6 Livestreamed



The ongoing struggle between Israel and Palestine is one of the world's most bitter conflicts. But what's the history behind it? Middle East expert **Michael Scott-Baumann** explores its origins from the Ottoman Empire to the present day. He examines the key flash points, the early involvement of the British, the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, the Six-Day War of 1967 and Trump's peace plan, pitched as "the deal of the century". He explores why efforts to restore peace have continually failed and what it might take to succeed. An indispensable event for anyone seeking to understand the context behind today's headlines.

Eleanor of Provence & Medieval Gloucester

Andrew Armstrong, Sharon Bennett Connolly & Dean Irwin

12-1pm £12 / £6 Livestreamed



Eleanor of Provence, Queen of England, wife of Henry III and mother of Edward I, often visited medieval Gloucester and after Henry's death was responsible for the expulsion of Gloucester's Jewish community from the city in the dramatic events of January 1275. Historian of medieval queens, **Sharon Bennett Connolly**, medieval Jewish history expert **Dean Irwin** and City Archaeologist **Andrew Armstrong** tell her story, and explore life in 13th century Gloucester when the lamprey-loving Royal Court came to town. Chaired by Jo Durrant.

Michael Heseltine

In conversation 2-3pm £12 / £6 Livestreamed



Michael Heseltine is one of our last great statesmen and has been at the forefront of British politics for 60 years. The former Deputy Prime Minister explores his stellar political career and shares new revelations about his time in Margaret Thatcher's cabinet in the '80s, John Major's government in the '90s and more recently when David Cameron returned him to the corridors of power. He offers a damning assessment of what he considers the grievous self-harm inflicted by Brexit and offers an urgent agenda to rebuild Britain. Chaired by the BBC's Vernon Harwood.



My Home is My Castle

Charles Berkeley, Roger Head & Caroline Lowsley-Williams

4-5pm £12 / £6 Livestreamed



Does the reality of living in a stately home live up to the dream? Berkeley Castle, Highnam Court and Chavenage House are three of Gloucestershire's great country houses in private ownership. **Charles Berkeley** of Berkeley Castle, **Roger Head** of Highnam and

Caroline Lowsley-Williams chatelaine of Chavenage join Richard Graham to go behind the scenes for a frank discussion of the pains and pleasures of living and working in a historic home.

Motherland: A Journey Through 500,000 Years of African History

Luke Pepera 6-7pm £10 / £6 Livestreamed



"We have a warped understanding of Africa's past. The last 300 years encompassing the transatlantic slave trade and colonialism are magnified at the expense of everything that came before". Leading historian and BBC broadcaster **Luke Pepera** takes us back to explore fascinating figures from African history including Mansa Musa, the wealthiest man who ever lived, and Kandake Queen Amanirenas, who defeated the Romans in Nubia. Through their lives he offers a revelatory new exploration of African culture and identity.

"A masterful achievement." (Tom Holland)

Gloucestershire's Hidden Vikings

Mark Horton 7.30-8.30pm £12 / £6 Livestreamed



Top historian, BBC Coast presenter and one of Britain's leading archaeologists **Mark Horton** made some extraordinary new discoveries last summer which change our view of the activities of Viking settlements in Gloucestershire and beyond. Join him as he reveals the very latest research and the ground-breaking discovery of a major new Viking Fort on the banks of the Severn.



Gloucester History Festival

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Enjoy a special early booking period, advance programme information and join President Janina Ramirez at the annual Friends Breakfast. **Donation: £30**

Become a Patron

Choose your seats first with an exclusive early booking telephone hotline, enjoy the Patron's gathering, VIP access to the Festival Writers' Room and a whole host of special benefits. **Donation: £500**

Become a Sponsor

Support our mission by joining our growing number of Festival sponsors, large and small, who enjoy a range of bespoke benefits tailored to their requirements.

“ I'm so proud to be part of the Gloucester History Festival. We have big ambitions and our supporters are at the heart of making change happen. Join us on our journey! ”

Professor Janina Ramirez,
Festival President



More details: www.gloucesterhistoryfestival.co.uk/support-us/



**THREE CHOIRS
FESTIVAL 2025**
HEREFORD 26 JUL - 2 AUG

**MORE INFORMATION
AND TICKETS AVAILABLE AT:**
3choirs.org 01452 768928 @ThreeChoirs

*Tickets available April 2025

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Thank you



to everyone who has helped make the Spring Weekend a success.

And particular thanks to Andrew Pitt whose especially generous financial and strategic support has again been integral to our success.

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We acknowledge all of our Patrons ahead of each Blackfriars Talk and also on our website.





Gloucester History Festival

6th-21st September 2025

**Britain's best-loved historians and broadcasters
speak under the medieval beams of Blackfriars Priory.**



Programme out in July Join the mailing list now
[gloucesterhistoryfestival.co.uk](https://www.gloucesterhistoryfestival.co.uk)