

CHALKE FESTIVAL FOR SCHOOLS 2026

The Chalke History Festival for Schools combines inspiring talks, live-action displays, and hands-on experiences to help your students to see, hear, and feel the past in unforgettable ways. Discover our current programme below.

TALKS AND EVENTS

Our programme of talks and events is designed to engage and entertain students, whilst enriching their curriculum knowledge. Make sure you head to the talks tent in plenty of time to get seated before the talk starts!

MOOT	FORUM	HENGE
<p>10:00-10:30 1. WW2 IN 30 MINUTES James Holland Discover the Second World War in 30 minutes. What's not to like?</p>	<p>10:00-10:30 2. DRESSING TOMMY Kate Vigurs Discover the kit and equipment of the Great War soldier as he prepares for battle in 1916.</p>	<p>10:00-10:30 3. HOVER THROUGH THE FOGGE AND FILITHIE AYRE Studying Shakespeare, it's easy to overlook the physicality of performance. Join Emma Bown from On Cue Theatre for an active, creative learning experience which will explore the development of character by getting pupils on their feet. Exercises will explore multi-sensory imagery and the use of rhythm to create characters and perform lines from the opening scene of Macbeth.</p>
<p>11:00-11:30 4. MYTHICAL MAYHEM Maz Evans Come and create some mythical mayhem with Maz Evans, author of the Who Let the Gods Out series. Epic adventures, legendary tales, and heroic games will abound in the outrageously fun odyssey through the worlds of Maz's</p>	<p>11:00-11:30 5. THE CRAZY WORLD OF THE VICTORIANS Foreign Field Step into the peculiar world of the Victorian era. Join Paul Bavill as he unravels crazy facts, blending laughter and astonishment. The world's most disturbing children's book, politicians</p>	<p>11:00-11:30 6. HOVER THROUGH THE FOGGE AND FILITHIE AYRE Studying Shakespeare, it's easy to overlook the physicality of performance. Join Emma Bown from On Cue Theatre for an active, creative learning experience which will explore the development of character by getting pupils on their feet.</p>

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<p>books. Calling all the GodSquad – this will be one for the ages...</p>	<p>pelted with dead cats and the mass exportation of stoats, this one-man show is a journey through the eccentricities that defined the enigmatic Victorian period.</p>	<p>Exercises will explore multi-sensory imagery and the use of rhythm to create characters and perform lines from the opening scene of Macbeth.</p>
<p>12:00-12:30 7. JOURNEYS: STORIES OF MIGRATION IN BRITAIN Dan Lyndon Cohen What do a weaver from France, a trumpet player from Africa, a writer from the Caribbean and a refugee from Germany have in common? Over the last 1,000 years, along with many others, they all migrated from their own countries and settled in Britain. In this talk, you will travel back in time and step inside the stories of some of these inspiring people. You will find out why they migrated, experience what life was like for them, and celebrate how they have helped to make Britain such a thriving and vibrant place to live.</p>	<p>12:00-12:30 8. DIVE INTO HISTORY Visit Malta Malta's seabed reflects thousands of years of history. From a 700BC Phoenician Shipwreck to World War 2 ships, planes and submarines – both the variety and quality of these sites make Malta's Underwater Cultural Heritage an important resource that is global in nature. Come 'Dive into History' and find out how the team behind Heritage Malta's Underwater Cultural Heritage Unit discovers, records and shares these incredible historic sites.</p>	<p>12:00-12:30 9. MYTHBUSTING MEDIEVAL WOMEN: HOW POWERFUL WERE THEY? Natasha Hodgson, Ellie Woodacre, Jonathan Phillips (Teaching Medieval Women project) Medieval history is filled with stories of knights, monks, and kings. But what role did women play in the medieval world? And how powerful were they? Join the co-founders of the Teaching Medieval Women project and investigate how women shaped the medieval world.</p>
<p>13:15-13:45 10. ROMAN BRITAIN: FACT AND FICTION Ben Kane Did the Romans really improve people's lives when they invaded this island? Dr Ben Kane will answer this and other questions as he delves deep into our ancient history. Learn about British tribes and the invasion of AD 43, the</p>	<p>13:15-13:45 11. UNCOVER THE SECRETS OF THE ARCHIVES The National Archives The National Archives hold an incredible treasure trove of over 11 million historical records, from photographs and maps to personal letters and government papers. But how do we decide which records are</p>	<p>13:15-13:45 12. HOVER THROUGH THE FOGGE AND FILITHIE AYRE Studying Shakespeare, it's easy to overlook the physicality of performance. Join Emma Bown from On Cue Theatre for an active, creative learning experience which will explore the development of character by getting pupils on their feet.</p>

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<p>Romanisation of Britain, the building of Hadrian's Wall and the day the legions departed forever.</p>	<p>important for us when we're researching the past?</p> <p>Sharpen your detective skills with Rosie Morris from The National Archives and track down those special documents you need to uncover the secrets of the past.</p>	<p>Exercises will explore multi-sensory imagery and the use of rhythm to create characters and perform lines from the opening scene of Macbeth.</p>
<p>14:15-14:45 13. HISTORY'S MOST EPIC FAILS Athena Kugblenu History is full of daring deeds, mighty heroes and incredible inventions. But it's also full of humongous FAILS! Athena Kugblenu - comedian and writer on CBBC's <i>Horrible Histories</i> - explores them all, whether it be the silly mishaps that changed the course of history or the mistakes that did us all a favour.</p> <p>From the <i>Titanic</i> lookout who forgot his binoculars or the astronaut who taped over the Moon landings, to the famous inventors who failed THOUSANDS of times before getting something right, the amazing scientists who ACCIDENTALLY invented life-saving medicines and the businesses that went bust and bounced back better - take a riotous ride through history and discover the epic fails that changed the world.</p>		

WIZZO'S RIP-ROARING HISTORY

Wizzo's Rip-Roaring History is an old-time circus sideshow where the stars are the props and extraordinary stories. Abs 'Wizzo' Wisdom brings his excitement for history front and centre to you! Think Heath Robinson meets Chitty Chitty Bang Bang and throw in a generous helping of audience participation and Crystal Maze eccentricity. Colourful? Yes. Educational? Certainly. Rip-roaring? Absolutely!

10:45-11:30	COLONEL BLOOD'S BIG BLAG Colonel Blood is the original bad guy of the 17th century. Blamed for everything from kidnap to starting the Great Fire of London, Wizzo takes you through his plans for the most audacious robbery of all times. Wizzo can't say too much but the words Crown, Jewels and Stealing might give you an idea!
12:45-13:30	HERE BE DINOSAURS! The Victorian age gave us steam ships, railways and... dinosaurs! Join Wizzo as he lifts the lid on the paleontological puzzle locked in rock and the brilliant minds that found the fossils.

LIVING HISTORY

Visit our living history encampments throughout the day, where our expert living historians will be demonstrating the tools, skills, and lifestyles of societies from the Neolithic age to the Second World War. Drop-in activities will start on the hour during the day. Please be aware, some activities must be booked in advance. Once you have requested your bookings, you will receive a schedule with your booked activities for the day.

THE IRON AGE CHARIOT Remaking History	Join our Remaking History team as they work together to reconstruct an Iron Age Romano-British chariot, combining archaeological evidence with practical craftsmanship.
NEOLITHIC AND BRONZE AGE Prehistory to Present	Step into prehistory and discover what life was like from the Palaeolithic to the Bronze Age, from clothing and food to flintknapping and shelters. Students will have the chance to get stuck into a range of interactive activities, including creating a gold sun disk, grinding grain, making cordage, and trying on Stone Age clothing.

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<p>MUSIC THROUGH HISTORY Here Be Flagons</p>	<p>Explore the role of music across history, from musical language to the evolution of musical instruments and their importance in ancient and modern culture. Students will have the chance the feel the textures and materials of the instruments, as well as getting hands on in an interactive drumming circle.</p>
<p>RAMESES' KITCHEN NIGHTMARES Hearth of Science <i>(must be pre-booked)</i></p>	<p>Discover how archaeologists use texts, art and science to understand how food shaped ancient Egyptian life, from daily staples to feasts and festival treats.</p>
<p>LIFE IN THE IRON AGE Pario Gallico</p>	<p>Step into our Iron Age village and meet artisans, farmers, and dwellers going about their daily lives. Students will have the chance to get stuck into a range of activities, including learning how pots were made and fired, discovering Iron Age food, and helping to make a wattle and chalk daub wall. This interactive session offers a unique insight into how people dressed, ate, worked, played, and lived before the Romans arrived in Britain.</p>
<p>THE IRON AGE FORGE Heritage Blades</p>	<p>Join our Iron Age blacksmith in his traditional pit forge as he investigates a simple but important question: why did prehistoric people move from bronze to iron? Discover how metals were made and used, what differences this made to everyday life in prehistoric Britain, and how technology affected farming, warfare, and trade. By seeing, touching, and questioning the technology, students are encouraged to think critically and make up their own minds about whether bronze or iron was the better choice.</p>

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<p>TIME TRAVELLERS KITCHEN</p>	<p>Explore the history of Pompeii through its food, trade, and entertainment, brought to life with cooking demonstrations and interactive discussions.</p>
<p>ROMAN ENCAMPMENT Legio Secunda Augusta (must be pre-booked)</p>	<p>Step into a Roman military encampment and discover what life was like in the Roman military, from training to engineering. Plus, learn to be a Roman soldier with interactive drills and formations.</p>
<p>LIFE AFTER THE NORMAN CONQUEST Chanz des Reis (must be pre-booked)</p>	<p>In 1066, Duke William of Normandy invaded England and claimed the English throne after defeating King Harold and his army at the Battle of Hastings. Join Chanz des Reis to discover what life was like in the aftermath of the Norman Conquest, from military training to civilian life.</p>
<p>THE ENGLISH ARCHER Nowstrike Archery (must be pre-booked)</p>	<p>Experience life from the perspective of a working-class archer in the 14th century. How did they train, compete, and get selected into the king's armies? Discover how professional military archers turned the feudal system upside-down as they stood shoulder to shoulder with kings, changing the face of warfare to come.</p>
<p>THE HISTORICAL SAILMAKER (must be pre-booked)</p>	<p>Without sails, history would be vastly different. Being able to travel across the sea using wind power has given rise to exploration, trading, wars and travel. Meet the Historical Sailmaker and discover what it was like to live and work as a sailmaker in the 17th century. Students will have the chance to get hands on with interactive activities including reefing a sail, sewing seams, designing symbols, and learning to tie knots.</p>
<p>NELSON'S NAVY</p>	<p>Discover how the Georgian Navy became a leading maritime power, what it was really like to be onboard a Ship of the Line, and how developments in seafaring impacted society more broadly. Students will have the chance to get hands-on with an interactive cutlass drill.</p>

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<p>JANE'S HISTORICAL KITCHEN (must be pre-booked)</p>	<p>Discover the history of chocolate through time, from its Aztec roots to the Georgian chocolate house.</p>
<p>WIMBORNE MILITIA (must be pre-booked)</p>	<p>Step into a 17th-century harbour town and meet its inhabitants, stall holders, and military defenders. Students will stop in at the Quartermaster, who will check their papers, the Customs office to learn their trade and pay their duty and the gentleman's quarters to meet the Governor. Visit the tavern to hear live music of the period, enjoy the aromas of the coffee house and spice traders, before finally a tour of the harbour defences and cannon where students will learn the training and skill required to be a soldier in his Majesty's Port Garrison.</p>
<p>THE HISTORY MAKER (must be pre-booked)</p>	<p>Discover the amazing, true story of the daring British raid on Taranto harbour, based on interviews with Lieutenant Commander John Wellham D.S.C., Pilot of Swordfish E5H of 824 Squadron, Fleet Air Arm.</p> <p>In late 1940, Italy had the largest, most modern fleet in the world, moored in Taranto harbour, the largest, most heavily defended harbour in the world. Taranto provided an excellent base for the Italian Navy to hide whilst still being able to attack crucial and vulnerable shipping supply routes. How could the British neutralise the Italian fleet? Taranto harbour was too shallow for a submarine attack, too well protected for close bombardment by the Royal Navy and too far from any airfields for the RAF to be able to bomb. The only option was an attack from aircraft carriers by the Fleet Air Arm. The only aircraft capable at the time, was an antiquated bi-plane, the Fairey Swordfish.</p>
<p>THE TRENCH EXPERIENCE (must be pre-booked)</p>	<p>Step back in time and experience the sights, sounds, and smells of the Second World War.</p> <p>Cassel is a town perched on a rare hill in Flanders and from its summit one can see hundreds of towns and villages and on a clear day all the way back to the coast and Dunkirk. It was also the same hill the Grand Old Duke of York marched up and down back in the 18th</p>

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	<p>Century. But on 27-29 May 1940, this was where the Ox & Bucks and Gloucesters made a defiant stand, holding off the German onslaught and buying time while more British troops fell back to Dunkirk and were evacuated to England. It was a heroic stand, in which most of the 145th Brigade were lost - either killed, wounded or captured. Some, though, did manage to escape but only a few.</p> <p>This year, our trench re-enacts a scene from this vital battle. The first German attacks have been repelled but the defenders know the time will come when ammunition will run low and the sheer weight of enemy numbers will overwhelm them. It's the shortest of straws they've drawn but all know that they have a vital role to play: with every passing hour and day, more men of the BEF will be able to get to Dunkirk and then be safely lifted home. And if that happens, the British Army can live to fight another day and not all will be lost.</p> <p>Please be aware, there will be smoke, loud noises and the sound of gunfire during the experience.</p>
SOE TRAINING CAMP (must be pre-booked)	<p>Our hugely popular SOE Training Camp is back for 2026! This unique experience is the perfect opportunity for students to learn the skills and techniques of espionage from the Second World War. During the camp, they will be put through their paces as they learn self defence, codes and signals, explosives training, and weapons handling.</p>
HISTORIC GAMES Thimblorig Games (must be pre-booked)	<p>Discover the history of games in this fun and fascinating workshop with Thimblorig Games. From the Roman tactical game Three Men's Morris to the medieval dice game Riffa, students will have the chance to learn and play a selection of historical games.</p>

<p>DIVE INTO HISTORY 360 (must be pre-booked)</p>	<p>Malta's seabed reflects thousands of years of history. From a 700BC Phoenician Shipwreck to World War 2 ships, planes and submarines, both the variety and quality of these sites make Malta's Underwater Cultural Heritage an important cultural resource that is global in nature. Many of the sites are considered inaccessible - mainly due to their depth, often lying deeper than 55m and only accessible to specialised technical divers. The Underwater Cultural Heritage Unit of Heritage Malta makes these sites accessible using Virtual Reality headsets. In the Dive into History 360 experience, the Virtual Reality headsets are used to show 3-to-5-minute 360° videos of Malta's underwater heritage sites.</p>
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