

CHALKE FESTIVAL FOR SCHOOLS 2026

IMMERSIVE 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. 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.

<p>THE IRON AGE CHARIOT Remaking History</p>	<p>Join our Remaking History team as they work together to reconstruct an Iron Age Romano-British chariot, combining archaeological evidence with practical craftsmanship.</p>
<p>NEOLITHIC AND BRONZE AGE Prehistory to Present</p>	<p>Our team of expert archaeologists and interpreters will be returning to shed light on life from the Palaeolithic to the Bronze Age. Discover prehistoric food, clothing, shelter, adornment, and technology from our ancient past. The team will be sharing their current research projects, testing theories, and demonstrating craft skills from thousands of years ago.</p>
<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 to feel the textures and materials of the instruments, as well as getting hands on in an interactive drumming circle.</p>
<p>SCIENTIFIC APPROACHES TO HISTORY Hearth of Science</p>	<p>Our team from the University of Liverpool returns with more scientific approaches to history. Look beyond the texts and into the past with staff and students from the Department of Archaeology, Classics, and Egyptology, who will be experimenting with ancient materials, exploring ancient environments, techniques, and technologies from the past, and showing you how archaeologists study societies across the ancient world.</p>

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<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>
<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</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>VIKING CRAFTS Castle Hill Heritage Skills</p>	<p>Step back in time and experience the Viking world with Castle Hill Heritage Skills. Explore a traditional Viking home and see history in action, from cooking and dyeing over a firepit to producing textiles using traditional weaving looms. Get hands-on with history by testing your skills at board games, handling authentic weaponry, or trying your hand at traditional textiles.</p>

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<p>LIFE AFTER THE NORMAN CONQUEST Chanz des Reis</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>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.</p>
<p>JANE'S HISTORICAL KITCHEN</p>	<p>Discover the history of chocolate through time, from its Aztec roots to the Georgian chocolate house.</p>
<p>WIMBORNE MILITIA</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>

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<p>THE HISTORY MAKER</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>ROYAL NAVY BEACHHEAD COMMANDOS</p>	<p>Discover the history of the Royal Naval Commandos and their crucial role on the invasion beaches of the Second World War. Plus, get stuck into signalling with morse code lanterns and semaphore or get ready for action in original kit.</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 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>
<p>SOE TRAINING CAMP (must be pre-booked)</p>	<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>
<p>HISTORIC GAMES Thimblerig Games (must be pre-booked)</p>	<p>Discover the history of games in this fun and fascinating workshop with Thimblerig 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>

DIVE INTO HISTORY 360	<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>
COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES COMMISSION	<p>Discover the work of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission to remember those who died in both world wars through a range of exciting activities, including investigating and solving a missing soldier case, creating your own tributes and having a go at hand engraving with the stonemason team. There will be opportunity to explore their new Medicine on the Western Front resources and teachers can also learn all about their extensive educational offering.</p>

<p>SUTTON HOO SHIP'S COMPANY</p>	<p>Join the Sutton Hoo Ship's Company on an Anglo-Saxon journey back in time to 625AD, when the Anglo-Saxons dragged their 27.5m ship from the River Deben half a mile up to Sutton Hoo as a burial chamber for King Raedwald with treasure, weapons and coins. Discover how the 'grave ship' was found by Basil Brown at Sutton Hoo in 1939 on Edith Pretty's land, and how the Sutton Hoo Ship's Company is now reconstructing the Ship in Woodbridge, using replica tools that would have been used in 625AD. Students will be able to handle artefacts such as oak, rivets, replica axes and smell the caulking mixture as well as see the tools being used, such as the froe and spoon auger.</p>
<p>KING JOHN'S HOUSE AND MUSEUM</p>	<p>King John's House and Museum is the custodian of some of Romsey's oldest buildings, with this fascinating and complex site an important part of the town's rich heritage. Their architectural treasures include a medieval-era stone hall, a half-timbered Tudor cottage, and a brick-built Victorian house and shop, all a stone's throw from the splendour of Romsey Abbey. A registered charity, they are dedicated to preserving this eclectic range of buildings, along with our historic collections, for future generations, as well as sharing the remarkable stories of the people who lived and worked here.</p>

PROGRAMMED EVENTS

If you would prefer to watch a talk and demonstration, join one of our programmed events. Full event descriptions will be available via our [website](#) when the programme is released. Please be aware, these are open to the public as well as schools.

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Special Event

12:30-13:00

FALCONRY DEMONSTRATION

Paul Manning shares his extensive knowledge of the history, care and training of these magnificent birds. UNESCO has classed falconry as an example of intangible cultural heritage, as it was traditionally practiced all over the world by many different cultures. However, today it is seen as quintessentially British and has been enjoyed by some of the most powerful people in Britain, including King John, King Henry VIII and King James I.

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