

Being Human Festival 2023: A smorgasbord of the senses!

2 October 2023

Dive into cheese riots, explore artificial intelligence, unravel supernatural tales, and immerse yourself in some of the 220+ free events taking place during Being Human Festival 2023 this November. The full programme, unveiled today, includes a huge variety of eclectic experiences in venues including museums, libraries, converted fish factories and bombed-out churches across the UK from 9-18 November.

The underlying theme of this year's festival is "Rhyme or Reason," within which other themes are explored, including the culture of food, mental health, creative writing and water. The latter includes opportunities to [explore the marine environment of Plymouth's estuary by kayak](#); [write eco-poetry aboard a canal cruise](#) on the seldom-seen waterways of Sheffield; and [be entertained by the enterprising passengers of transatlantic ocean liner the 'Empress of Britain'](#) in Glasgow.

['Scoring Mental Health'](#) is a live performance of powerful and evocative music, co-created by people with experience of mental ill health and composer Gawain Hewitt, taking place at the Bethlem Museum of the Mind in the grounds of the Bethlem Hospital as part of a project led by King's College London. The process of composing the music was captured in a recent [BBC Radio 3 programme "Scoring Mental Health"](#), and during the day artists from the Bethlem Gallery will attend workshops to create visual responses to the music.

Another highlight of the 2023 festival is Brunel University London's ['On Language and Creativity'](#). At this event on 15 November authors Bernardine Evaristo, Daljit Nagra, Hannah Lowe, Helen Cullen and Claire Lynch discuss the role of language in representations of our diversity in contemporary literature.

Founded in 2014, Being Human Festival is a celebration of humanities research through public engagement, and invites academics and researchers to collaborate with artists, creative practitioners, theatre companies, community groups, charities, museums and more. The festival is led by the [School of Advanced Study](#) at the University of London.

Festival Director and Chair of Public Understanding of the Humanities at the School of Advanced Study, Professor Sarah Churchwell said:

"In a world that can often be confusing, the humanities are more relevant than ever. The festival is a timely celebration of all that is human. Whether your interests lie in food, history, heritage, migration, or popular culture, there's an event for everyone. So, sign up, get involved - and have fun!"

The festival is run in partnership with the [Arts and Humanities Research Council](#) and [the British Academy](#) to support humanities public engagement across the UK. This year 33 funding grants have been awarded to researchers and universities.

[Browse the full programme of events.](#)

AHRC Executive Chair Professor Christopher Smith said:

"The sheer variety of this year's Being Human Festival programme illustrates the importance of the humanities to us all, from the stories that shape us to facing the challenges of the present and future.

“AHRC is proud to continue to support the festival, which celebrates the diverse breadth of humanities research to bring it to new audiences.”

Professor Julia Black FBA, President of the British Academy, said:

“We are delighted to partner once again with the Being Human Festival, which provides so many wonderful opportunities to discover and engage with the humanities up and down the country. These subjects – including history and archaeology, languages, philosophy, classics and many more – remain eternally popular with the British public, and for good reason. Not only do they capture our imaginations, they also help us to make sense of our rapidly changing world and illuminate what it means to be human.”

ENDS

Notes to editors

For more details on Being Human and for interviews with event organisers, please contact Mark Piggott in the University of London press office – mark.piggott@london.ac.uk

Images from previous festivals can be found [here](#).

The full programme of events can be found [here](#).

About Being Human

Being Human is the UK’s national festival of the humanities. A celebration of humanities research through public engagement, it is led by the [School of Advanced Study](#) at the University of London, the UK’s national centre for the pursuit, support and promotion of research in the humanities. The festival works in partnership with the [Arts and Humanities Research Council](#) and [the British Academy](#) to support humanities public engagement across the UK.