



Being Human festival 2019: Discoveries & Secrets

UK's national festival of the humanities returns with funding announcement!

From trawling for treasures in archives to discovering secret lives and overlooked histories, the annual Being Human festival is back. And it's on a mission to bring the latest humanities research to life in fun, inspiring and socially relevant ways.

It is the UK's only national celebration of the humanities, and takes place from 14 to 23 November.

Now in its sixth year, Being Human is led by the School of Advanced Study, University of London, in partnership with the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the British Academy. It specialises in making cutting-edge humanities research accessible to communities outside academia.

Following a national funding competition, awards have been made to 34 universities and research organisations, enabling free public events to take place across the UK over ten days in November. Applicants had to successfully demonstrate the relevance of their research to society, culture and everyday life – coming up with events and activities that throw new light on social issues, explore new discoveries and uncover new sides to seemingly familiar towns and cities across the UK.

Small grants of up to £1500 will allow researchers to share their work with new audiences and the general public. Events will respond to this year's festival theme of Discoveries & Secrets, and include a recreation of the Victorian fern craze at Sefton Park Palm House in Liverpool, the uncovering of intriguing historical queer dating ads at The National Archives, and a look at how music shapes Bangladeshi cultural identity in Manchester. Researchers in Wolverhampton will be mounting a multisensory exploration of the sights, sounds and smells of one of the nation's most overlooked cities, while in Oxford, a series of 'anti-walking tours' will confront the city's 'uncomfortable' histories of race, gender and class.

Professor Sarah Churchwell, festival Director, said: "*The Being Human festival is about democratising knowledge, breaking down boundaries that stop people accessing the newest ideas and discoveries in the humanities. So much humanities research is deeply relevant to people's everyday lives; our goal is to make that research as approachable as possible. We want our festival to be open, fun and meaningful to people from different backgrounds and with different interests. That's why I'm delighted that we've been able to fund such a broad selection of activities up and down the UK that help to demonstrate some of the many ways that humanities research enriches the lives of communities and society at large.*"

To further extend the reach of the festival, a number of universities have also been awarded extra funding to become festival 'hubs' in Sheffield, Swansea, Lincoln, Dundee and London.

Hub visitors will be invited to:

- Immerse themselves in a theatrical Jacobean banquet and be inspired by mythological, allegorical journeys as part of the **University of Sheffield's** 'Myth, dream and love' programme.
- Dig for buried treasure and embark on adventures across land and sea with **Swansea University** in its 'Rediscovering Swansea' series.
- Discover 'worlds of words' through beat-making with London-based Moroccan rapper Dizzy DROS, and follow a treasure trail of lost translations with **Queen Mary, University of London** and **King's College London**.
- Uncover the dark and eerie history of the River Tay in 'The Aquatic City' at the **University of Dundee**.
- Take part in an archaeological dig on a council estate, and a magical lantern parade through the **University of Lincoln's** series on 'Lives Lived Differently'.

Other exciting emerging themes in this year's festival include a 'secret city' series that will uncover hidden lives and places in Wolverhampton, Margate, Nottingham and Oxford. Many more events, including those from our exciting international partnerships, will join the festival in the coming months through its open call, before the full programme is announced in early October.

Professor Andrew Thompson, Executive Chair of the Arts and Humanities Research Council, said: *"I'm delighted the Being Human festival has once again showcased the range and quality of research produced by the arts and humanities. The Being Human festival brings the best of the humanities to diverse audiences, from across the country, and the festival this year encompasses a striking real breadth of research. I am looking forward to attending as many of the events sponsored by the festival as I can."*

Professor Sir David Cannadine, President of the British Academy, said: *"The humanities are a source of unparalleled fascination for the British public, showing us parts of ourselves and our communities that we have never encountered before. A recent poll commissioned by the Academy showed that subjects such as archaeology, history, languages and philosophy are some of the most popular among students and adults alike as they can inspire and enrich all of our everyday lives. Being Human provides a wonderful opportunity to all to discover the research in these subjects in new and creative ways."*

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Notes to Editors

1. Find out more about the festival at www.beinghumanfestival.org and on social media, Twitter at [@BeingHumanFest](https://twitter.com/BeingHumanFest) and Instagram [@BeingHumanFest](https://www.instagram.com/BeingHumanFest).
2. **For all enquiries**, please contact: Maureen McTaggart, Media and Public Relations Officer, SAS, University of London +44 (0)20 7862 8859 maureen.mctaggart@sas.ac.uk
3. **Being Human: the UK's only national festival of the humanities, 14–23 November 2019.** Led by the School of Advanced Study, University of London, in partnership with the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the British Academy, Being Human festival is a national forum for public engagement with humanities research. Established in 2014, the Being Human festival has quickly become a national presence, and since 2017, the festival has also begun to introduce international partnerships – with activities to date taking place in Singapore, Melbourne, Paris, Rome and Princeton. Every year the festival features around 300 events across the country, working with an average of around 80 universities and research organisations in 50 towns and cities each year. The

festival highlights the ways in which the humanities can inspire and enrich our everyday lives and aims to increase understanding of the relevance of the humanities to local and international issues. This year's festival theme is Discoveries & Secrets.

4. **The School of Advanced Study (SAS)**, University of London, is the UK's national centre for the promotion and support of research in the humanities. SAS and its member institutes offer unparalleled resources, facilities and academic opportunities across a wide range of subject areas for the benefit of the national and international scholarly community. Last year SAS welcomed 892 research fellows and associates, held 1,903 events highlighting the latest research in the humanities, received 25.9 million online visits to its research resources and platforms, and hosted 173,493 visits to its specialist libraries and collections. The School also leads Being Human, the UK's only nationwide festival of the humanities. Find out more at www.sas.ac.uk or follow SAS on Twitter at [@SASNews](https://twitter.com/SASNews).
5. **The Arts and Humanities Research Council** which is part of UK Research and Innovation, funds world-class, independent researchers in a wide range of subjects: history, archaeology, digital content, philosophy, languages, design, heritage, area studies, the creative and performing arts, and much more. This financial year the AHRC will spend approximately £98 million to fund research and postgraduate training, in collaboration with a number of partners. The quality and range of research supported by this investment of public funds not only provides social and cultural benefits and contributes to the economic success of the UK but also to the culture and welfare of societies around the globe. You can find out more information via ahrc.ukri.org or following us on Twitter at [@ahrcpress](https://twitter.com/ahrcpress), on Facebook at [@artsandhumanitiesresearchcouncil](https://www.facebook.com/artsandhumanitiesresearchcouncil), or Instagram at [@ahrcpress](https://www.instagram.com/ahrcpress).
6. **The British Academy** is the voice of the humanities and social sciences. The Academy is an independent fellowship of world-leading scholars and researchers; a funding body for research, nationally and internationally; and a forum for debate and engagement. For further information, please contact the British Academy press office on press@thebritishacademy.ac.uk or 020 7969 5273 / 07500 010 432. www.britishacademy.ac.uk. Twitter [@BritishAcademy](https://twitter.com/BritishAcademy)