

Open Cambridge 2023: Report





ABOUT US

Open Cambridge (OC) is an annual festival of events celebrating culture and heritage throughout the county. Run in conjunction with the national Heritage Open Days festival, OC provides an inclusive platform to highlight extraordinary spaces, places, and people. Taking place over ten days, the festival aims to bring together the Cambridge community to celebrate, discover and explore across the city.



OVERVIEW

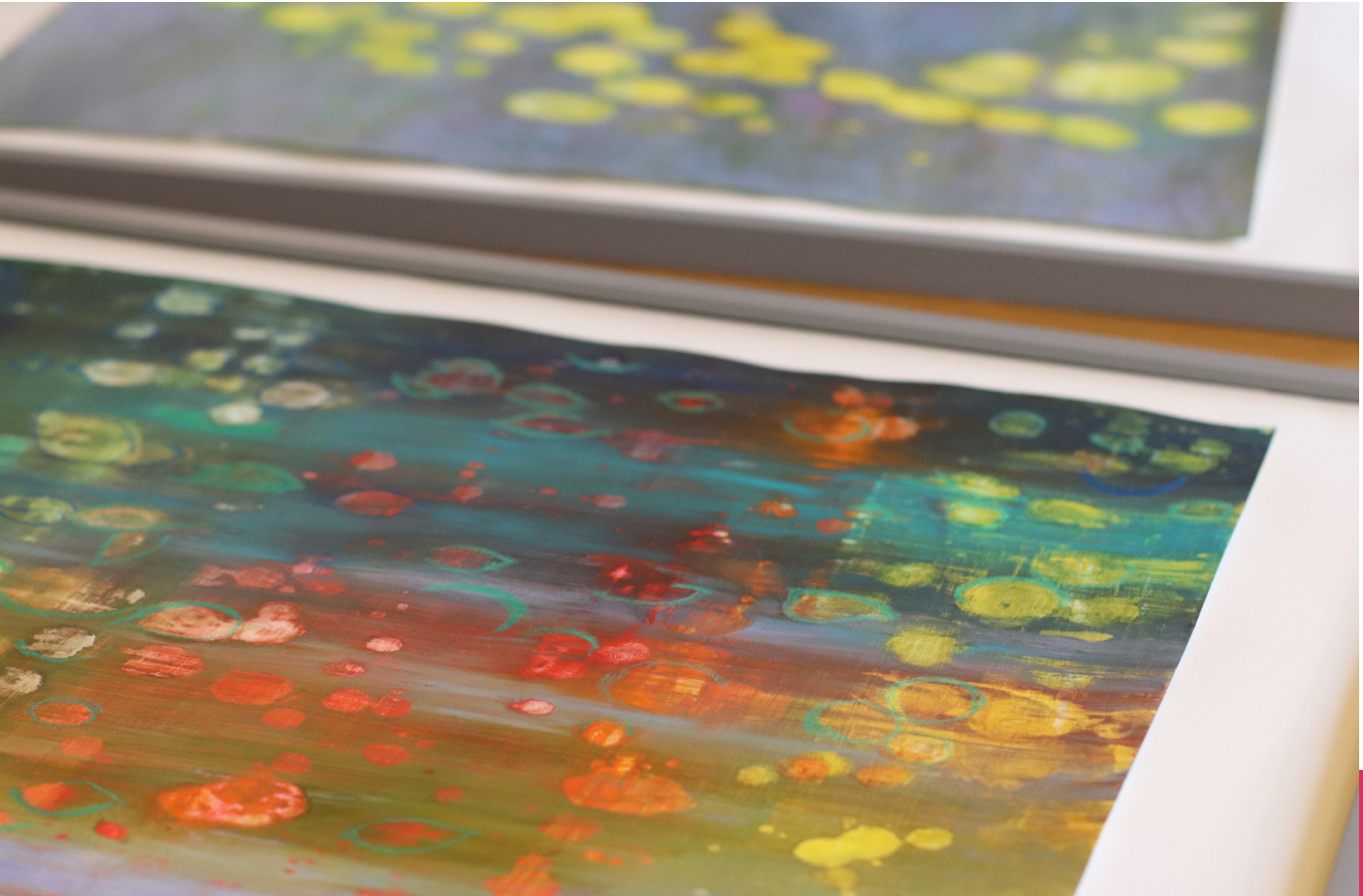


This year's Open Cambridge ran from Friday 8th – Sunday 17 September 2023 and comprised of 82 individual events which ranged from exhibitions, film screenings, talks, performances, walking tours, garden tours and open sites with a mixture of in-person and online events.

Within the collegiate university 15 Colleges* and 13 University departments/institutions** took part this year. Open Cambridge also enables us to build and nurture relationships with civic and community organisations. This year, 20 external groups took part†, including Mill Road History Society, Cambridge City Council and the Wildlife Trust. We thank everyone who contributed to the festival this year.

Thanks to the support of the University of Cambridge and the generosity of our sponsors Cambridge BID.

IN NUMBERS



This year the programme included 82 events. Number of events remain consistent to previous years and for the second consecutive year, we have seen the number of events return to pre-pandemic levels:

2023: 82 events

2022: 84 events

2021: 59 events (hybrid, 31 in-person, 28 online)

2020: 31 events (all online)

2019: 87 events

2018: 86 events



We are continuing to see consistent participation from the Colleges and University departments/institutions and are seeing new community partners interested in taking part year on year:

2023: 28 University + College, 20 external contributors

2022: 31 University + College, 25 external contributors

2019: 30 University + College, 17 external contributors

2018: 31 University + College, 12 external contributors



Open Cambridge 2023 received >11,000 public visits. It is hard to get an exact figure given the number of drop-in events and we rely on event coordinators collecting attendance numbers and asking people to fill out evaluation surveys.

We are really pleased that numbers are now back to pre-pandemic event delivery numbers.

2022: >10,000

2019: >14,000 (higher attendance was driven by a large event at Eddington)

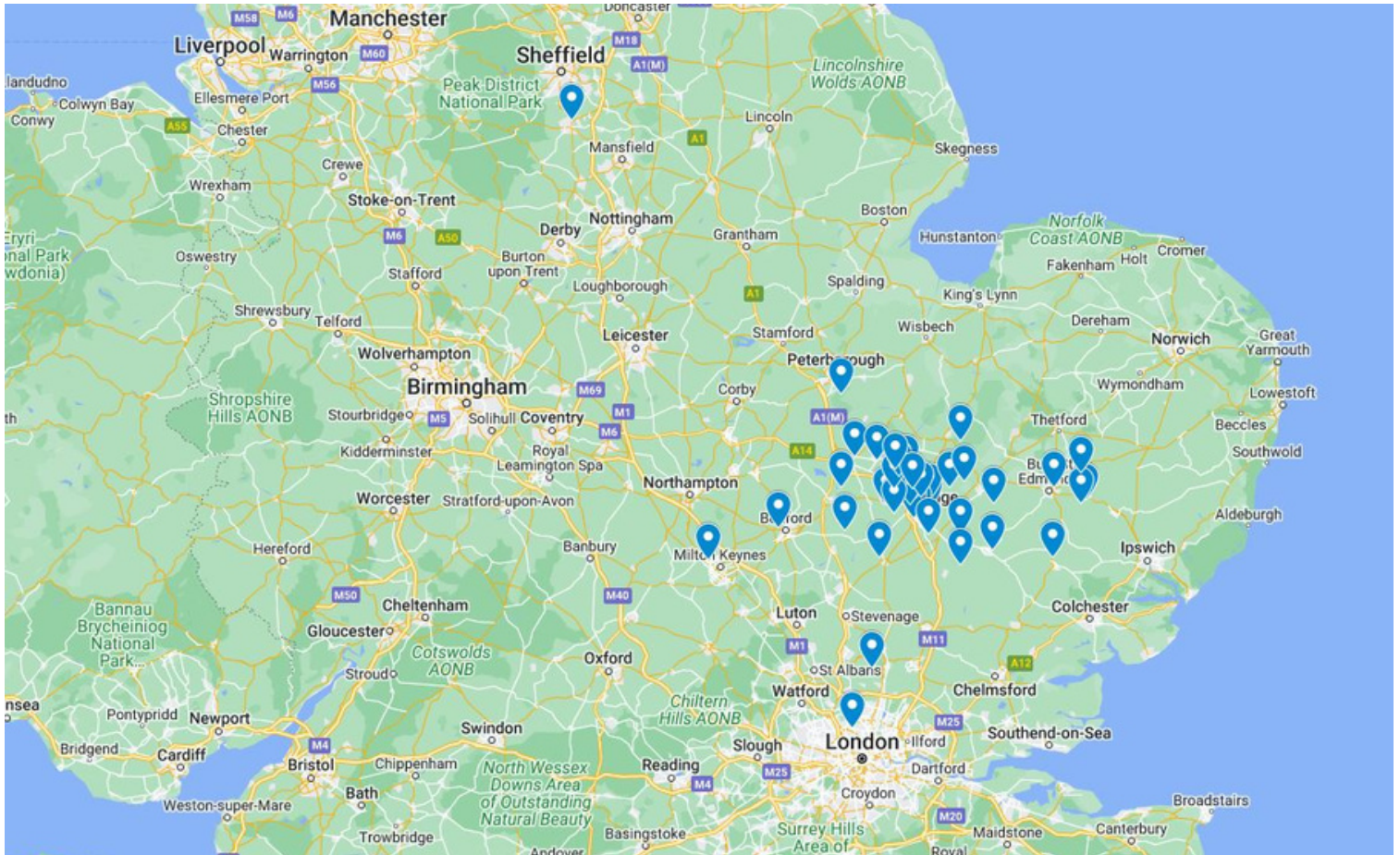
2018: >10,000

WHAT DID OUR AUDIENCES THINK?



We carried out visitor evaluation via an online survey sent out to those attending festival events. To date, we have had 259 responses which is in line with the 10% margin of error generally accepted to determine a valid sample size.

Over 93% of people thought the event they attended exceeded or met their expectations and over 86% of people would recommend an Open Cambridge event to a friend.



We asked people to indicate their location. This enables us to engage our local engagement in relation to further afield.

We had people travel from as far out as Sheffield, Milton Keynes and North London. Closer to home, people travelled from Bedford, Bury St Edmunds, Peterborough, Hertford and Huntingdon.

MARKETING AND PR



There has not been an Open Cambridge printed programme since 2019. This year we decided to pilot a downloadable PDF programme which would allow audiences to print this at home if they wish.

Of those who completed the survey: 36% of people said they used the programme, 34% said they did not and 30% were not aware one was available. As this was new for this year, these numbers are not surprising but also encouraging. A third of people are chose to use the PDF programme and we have gained some positive and useful comments to reflect and improve on moving forward.

We used our social media channels as our main point of advertising. 305 posts were sent in total across [X](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

Impressions across the booking and engagement period (14 August – 17 September) grew from 2022 from 350,000 to over 440,000 (an increase of over 22%). Engagements more than doubled from 8,000 in 2022 to over 17,000 (an increase of over 94%). Link clicks also increased by over 34% to just under 6,000. Our engagement rate per post also improved, from 2.5% to 3.9%. According to [Hootsuite](#), any engagement rate between 1-5% is considered “good”.

We undertook paid advertising on Facebook and Instagram. Over 4,000 engagements came via paid advertising.

We were able to post eight posts on the main University of Cambridge channels (3x Facebook and X and 1x Instagram and LinkedIn. These gain over 150,000 impressions and over 6,300 engagements.

This year, 45 stories about Open Cambridge appeared in regional and local newspapers, magazines, online and via broadcast outlets. Additionally, OC had some national coverage in NME, BBC news online, and a TV package with ITV Anglia.

BBC NEWS

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Oppenheimer bomb test notes on display at Cambridge open heritage events

By Katy Prickett
BBC News, Cambridge

4 September 2023



WHAT PEOPLE SAID



“As ever a joy and a privilege to access.”

“This event makes us feel being part of where we live and be extremely proud.”

“This is a brilliant opportunity to allow people to see the treasures Cambridge has.”

“I think Open Cambridge do a great job, and it is fantastic to live in a city with so much on offer. I love it.”

“The university is quite often a mystery to outsiders. Opening in this way is very good for public relations in general and for townspeople in particular”

“It is a wonderful scheme!”

FULL LIST OF ORGANISATIONS

*The Colleges that took part are Corpus Christi, Downing, Emmanuel, Fitzwilliam, Girton, Homerton, King's, Murray Edwards, Pembroke, Selwyn, Sidney Sussex, St John's, Trinity, Robinson, Wolfson

**The University departments/institutions that took part are the Centre for the Study of Existential Risk, Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership, Cambridge Archaeological Unit, Eddington, Observatory, Sainsbury Laboratory, Sports Centre, Senate House, West Hub, Whipple Library, University Farm and Museum of Zoology

†External organisations and groups that took part include Cambridge Museum of Technology, Cambridge Quakers, Cambridgeshire Collection at Cambridge Central Library, Cambridge Tourist Guides, All Saints Church Cambridge, Cambridge Arts Theatre, Cambridge American Cemetery, Cambridge Past Present and Future, City Council Events, Beth Shalom Reform Synagogue, Wildlife Trust, Town End Nature Reserve, Mill Road History Society, All Saints Church Cottenham, Cambridge Buddhist Centre, Bottisham Air Museum, David Parr House, Abbey House, Ancient India and Iran Trust, Westminster College.

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