

PRESS RELEASE

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GARDENS, RIVERS AND MARSHES: **WATERLOO FESTIVAL TO CELEBRATE** **HERITAGE, ARTS AND COMMUNITY**

Waterloo Festival, an annual celebration of arts, community and heritage hosted and produced by St John's Waterloo, will return over a busy weekend of events between **Thursday, 11th and Monday 15th July 2024**.



The theme of this year's Waterloo Festival is "Gardens, Rivers, and Marshes," celebrating Waterloo and North Lambeth's history as a **marshland** before 1824. Unlike Vauxhall to the south and Blackfriars to the east, this now urban neighbourhood developed into a dense area only in the early 19th century. Known for its pleasure gardens like Cuper's Gardens, Belvedere, Apollo, and Astley's Circus, the first modern circus, it was originally home to **fields, marshes, and wharves**.

St John's Waterloo (Charity no. 1132457) and The Bridge At Waterloo (Charity no. 1167768)
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The Festival will not only highlight Waterloo's pre-19th-century past but also its current role as a **vibrant urban centre**. It will celebrate **green spaces**, reflect on **environmental challenges**, and set the stage for St John's 200th anniversary in the autumn.

Further drawing inspiration from our local neighbourhood, Waterloo Festival will spotlight community diversity. Waterloo Festival Artistic Director **Euchar Gravina** explained:

"At the heart of this year's edition are local artists, organisations, and our projects participants and volunteers. Together with long-term partners, we are coming together for a highly creative summer celebration inspired by our shared local heritage!"



The London Group at Waterloo Festival

Highlights include:

Exhibitions

We're delighted to present a diverse array of exhibitions at St John's:

- The **London Group** returns with a [garden sculpture show](#) interrogating the Festival's theme, alongside sculpture, textiles and printmaking pieces by **Morley College** students.
- An exhibition featuring [works by artists connected to Waterloo](#) including paintings, drawings, photographs, and audio-visual installations, alongside research by the local heritage society.
- The [creative output](#) of **local art clubs** at St John's, Coin Street, and the Single Homeless Project's GreenHouse initiative.
- New paintings from the **Drummond Street Artists**, a collective of artists with lived experience of homelessness.

Music

Join us on [Friday evening](#) evening for a special celebration as **IKLECTIK** marks its 10th anniversary with a concert of ambient and electronic music by composer, multi-instrumentalist and improviser Oren Ambarchi and electro-acoustic composer and visual artist Félicia Atkinson.

On [Sunday afternoon](#), enjoy our luscious garden at the annual free outdoors **jazz and blues** gig, and [in the evening](#), come along for the festival debut of the **New London Chamber Choir**, renowned as one of the UK's most extraordinary vocal ensembles. The choral concert will showcase pieces by Cassandra Miller and John Cage, reflecting on both urban landscapes and the wonders of nature.



UMAT's jazz gig at St John's Churchyard

Literature and Stories

Experience the enchanting tales spun by the esteemed artists of **London Dreamtime** at a [free storytelling event](#) traversing the churchyard gardens on Saturday evening. [On Sunday afternoon](#), join us for a free reading event for the premiere of a **community poem** composed by our participants, alongside works by the local poet Anna Robinson.

On Friday, we will host the launch of **Canon Giles Goddard's latest book**, chronicling his journey as a gay priest and vicar in Waterloo.

Community and Workshops

And finally, plenty of opportunities to meet your neighbours and participate in the festival fun:

- [Bring-and-share lunch](#) on Sunday afternoon with St John's community and congregation.
- [Wildlife photography workshop](#) led by local photographer Rachel Wegh.
- A special and joyous Festival edition of the [Dragon Café](#) in partnership with our friends at the Mental Fight Club.
- Saturday workshops by Morley College London.



The Art Club at St John's Waterloo

Several events at the Festival are free, with others bookable online (or, depending on availability, at the door). Our events are open to anyone and the spaces are accessible. Do get in touch if you'd like to offer your time as a volunteer!

Outreach and Engagement Officer Abigail Tripp adds:

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“This year's Festival is another fantastic opportunity for us to celebrate and strengthen the community connections we've been building since reopening St John's doors in 2022. It comes at the end of a busy year of community projects and offers us the perfect occasion to welcome more new faces to St John's through the joy of music and the arts!”

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If you are not already subscribed, do [sign up](#) to the St John's Waterloo newsletter for Festival updates.

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For further press information, please contact:

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