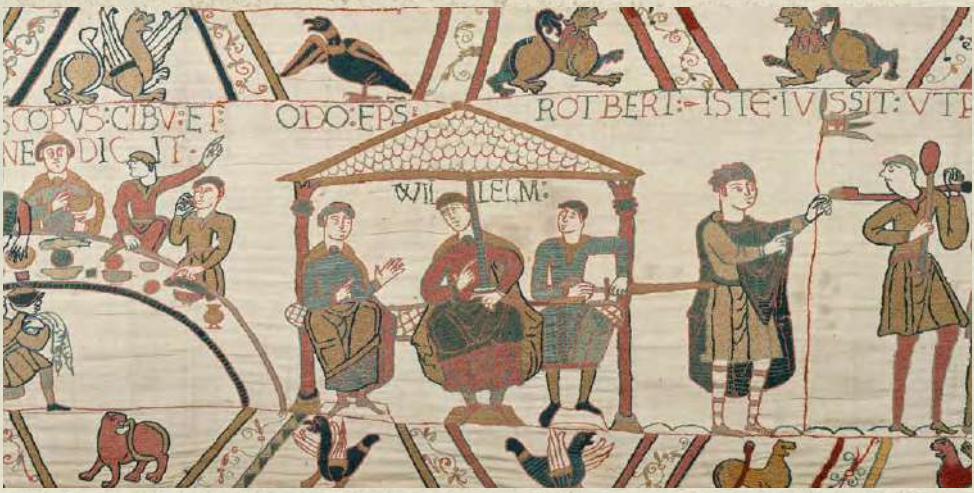


Beyond Bayeux

Stories from the Middle Ages

October 2026 – July 2027

INSTITUT FRANÇAIS
Royaume-Uni

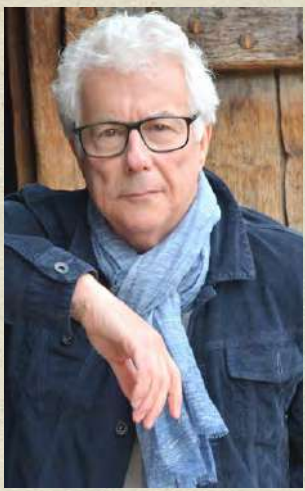


The French Institute in London presents *Beyond Bayeux: Stories from the Middle Ages*, a ten-month season celebrating the landmark Bayeux Tapestry exhibition at the British Museum and exploring the many lesser-known stories and mysteries of the medieval era.

From the Norman Conquest to the story behind the Tapestry's loan, from *la chanson de geste* to *l'amour courtois*, we will revisit the grand narrative of history and unravel a thousand and one stories.

Historians, writers, artists, singers, musicians, dancers, storytellers and troubadours will take us back to the fascinating medieval world and the intertwined histories of Britain, France and the wider European continent.

Bayeux Tapestry pictures: La Fabrique de patrimoines en Normandie © A.Cazin, CC by-nc-sa





Weaving History: Ken Follett – the Bayeux Tapestry

Talk

Internationally bestselling author **Ken Follett** will reflect on the links between his novel *The Evening and the Morning* and the Bayeux Tapestry. Drawing on the remarkable medieval masterpiece that inspired part of his novel, Follett will explore how history, storytelling and visual narrative intertwine, evoking the world of eleventh-century Europe.

A prequel to *The Pillars of the Earth*, *The Evening and the Morning* (Pan Macmillan, 2020) is set in England in 997 CE, with the country under attack from Welsh and Viking raiders. A young boatbuilder, a Norman noblewoman and an ambitious monk see their lives collide as they come into conflict with a ruthless bishop, in an origin story that ends where Kingsbridge, and *The Pillars of the Earth*, begin.

Wed 14 Oct, 19.00

£20, members & concessions £18, students £15



The Bayeux Tapestry: Between Myth & History

Talk

Join **Michael Lewis**, lead curator of the British Museum's Bayeux Tapestry exhibition, and **Leonie Hicks**, Professor of Medieval Studies at Canterbury Christ Church University, for a conversation on the significance of 1066 for the English and why the Bayeux Tapestry is such an important record of the Norman Conquest of England.

They will not only examine the political circumstances depicted and described in the Tapestry, but also what purpose the embroidery might have had for those who created it.

Wed 4 Nov, 19.00

£20, members & concessions £18, students £15

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Hastings Wasn't Everything: Rethinking 1066 with Peter Frankopan

Talk

What if Hastings was not the most important thing the Normans did in 1066?

Taking the Bayeux Tapestry as a starting point, historian **Peter Frankopan** looks beyond the familiar story of conquest to place 1066 in the wider world of the eleventh century.

From northern Europe to the Mediterranean and beyond, this conversation will explore the shifting networks of power, trade, faith and ambition that were reshaping the medieval world.

Tue 19 Jan, 19.00

£20, members & concessions £18, students £15

Picture: al-Idrisi map © Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford



Behind the Scenes: Bringing the Bayeux Tapestry to London

Talk

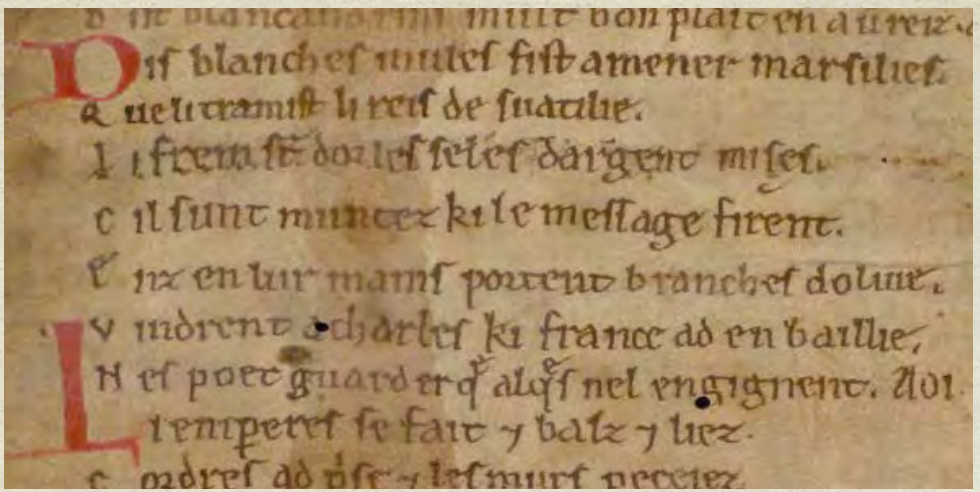
How do you bring a nearly 1,000-year-old masterpiece across the Channel?

As part of the **Night of Ideas**, the Institut français invites audiences to discover the extraordinary story behind the historic loan of the Bayeux Tapestry to the British Museum. From the first diplomatic discussions to the scientific assessments, conservation challenges and intricate logistics involved in moving such a fragile treasure, key figures from both sides of the Channel will share their first-hand accounts of the making of this landmark Franco-British collaboration.

Thu 4 Feb

Free

Unveiling of the Bayeux Tapestry on 17 July 2026 at the British Museum in the presence of French Minister of Culture Catherine Pégard, former Chancellor and British Museum Chair George Osborne and Caroline Eude-Devaux, Conservatrice des Monuments historiques – DRAC Normandie.



Roland, Turoldus & the Bayeux Tapestry: Storytelling in the World of 1066

Talk

The Oxford *Chanson de Roland*, preserved in a unique manuscript written in Anglo-Norman and held in the Bodleian Library, is a heroic tale of warfare, loyalty and moral anguish whose poetry and emotional power continue to resonate today. According to tradition, the poem was sung to William the Conqueror's Norman army at the Battle of Hastings in 1066. Intriguingly, among the many figures depicted on the Bayeux Tapestry is a small figure named **Turold**, a characteristically Norman name that also appears at the end of the *Chanson de Roland: Ci falt la geste que Turoldus declinet* ("Here ends the story which Turoldus makes known").

Taking this tantalising connection as its starting point, **Sophie Marnette**, Professor of Medieval French Studies, and **Helen Swift**, Professor of Medieval French Literature at the University of Oxford, will explore the origins and oral style of the *Chanson de Roland*, the distinctive voice of its narrator, its ideological values, and how it shapes iconic figures out of its characters.

Thu 25 Feb, 19.00

£10, members & conc. £8, students £5

Picture: *La Chanson de Roland* © Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford



The Colours of the Bayeux Tapestry

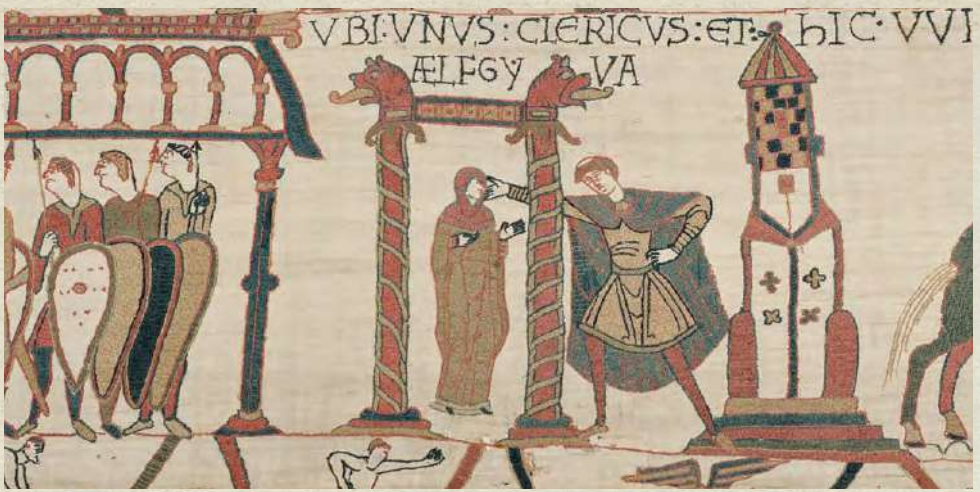
Talk

What can colours reveal about the Bayeux Tapestry? Renowned historian **Michel Pastoureau**, a leading specialist in the history of colours, offers a fascinating new perspective on this medieval masterpiece.

Looking closely at the Tapestry's distinctive palette, he will explore how its colours were made, how they are distributed throughout the embroidery, and what meanings they may have carried. An invitation to rediscover an iconic work through an essential yet surprisingly little-explored aspect of its visual language.

Spring 2027, 19.00

£20, members & concessions £18, students £15



The Bayeux Tapestry & Medieval Women

Talk

The presence of only six women in the Bayeux Tapestry raises questions about women's role in times of war and conquest. **Elisabeth Van Houts**, Honorary Professor of European Medieval History at the University of Cambridge, will discuss what the Bayeux Tapestry can tell us about women in the Middle Ages.

She will also address the embroidery as an object in relation to its production and the question of women as its designers and embroiderers. Elisabeth Van Houts will then lead us to wider issues of the work of lay and monastic women and their patronage of tapestries and textiles.

Tue 18 May, 19.00

£10, members & concessions £8, students £5



The Bayeux Tapestry Reimagined

Talk

French artist **Hélène Delprat** will be presenting the missing piece of the Bayeux Tapestry, which she has created at the Cité internationale de la tapisserie in Aubusson. This 25m² panel will first be exhibited at Westminster Abbey, where William was crowned King of England on 25 December 1066, before taking its place at the Château de Falaise in Normandy, the putative birthplace of William the Conqueror.

Meet her at the French Institute and hear about this incredible artistic adventure.

Spring 2027, 19.00

£10, members & concessions £8, students £5

Picture above: *Work in progress* © Pierre Galliot
Picture opposite: *Très Riches Heures du duc de Berry : mois de mai* © Frères Limbourg, Bibliothèque et Archives du Château de Chantilly



Medieval Ball

Fancy Dress Medieval Party

Hear ye, hear ye! On the fourth day of December, in the year 2026, the French invite you to a grand medieval ball in their little fiefdom of South Kensington.

Knights and ladies, minstrels and magicians, noblemen and commoners are invited to cross the Channel — and the centuries — for an evening of music, dancing and revelry. No conquest intended.

Come dressed in your finest medieval attire and compete for the title of best-dressed guest. Lancelot or Morgan le Fay, Robin Hood or Richard the Lionheart, Esmeralda or Eleanor of Aquitaine: the choice is yours!

An extraordinary gathering of performers will bring the festivities to life. Meet **Jax the Jester**, a wandering juggler or **Sidonie the Witch**, who will read your tarot cards and reveal what the future holds.

Fresh from a performance at the Royal Albert Hall, **French singer IRIS**, a finalist on The Voice France in 2024, will enchant guests with medieval songs. British-Burundian **bard Muco**, accompanied by his inanga, will breathe new life into traditional songs and ballads in Middle and Old English.

Dancer and choreographer Emma Poyer, currently touring internationally with Marina Abramović's *Balkan Erotic Epic*, will lead a special workshop introducing guests to the steps of la carole, a medieval communal dance.

As the evening unfolds, the Middle Ages will give way to more contemporary rhythms. **DJ Florian Sailer** will take to the decks, while **VJ Kelly Budges** transforms the walls of the French Institute with spectacular visuals.

Fri 4 Dec, 19.00 – 00.30 | £30, members £25, students £15 | + £15 for dance workshop (limited capacity)



The Art of Medieval Illumination

Workshop

Step into the world of medieval illuminators with **Florence Aseult**, a graduate of the Institut Supérieur Européen de l'Enluminure and finalist for the 2024 *Prix des Artisanes de France*.

During this full-day workshop, discover traditional medieval techniques and materials, working on genuine goatskin parchment to create your own illumination. From preparing colours to mastering delicate decorative details, experience the meticulous craftsmanship behind illuminated manuscripts and take home a unique piece inspired by centuries of artistic tradition.

Sat 19 June, 10.00 – 18.00, including a one-hour lunch break | ages 15+

£70 - members & concessions £60

Picture: © Artwork by Florence Aseult



Embroidery Workshop: Stitching the Middle Ages

Workshop

Spend a day discovering embroidery through the world of the Bayeux Tapestry with expert tutors from the Royal School of Needlework. Inspired by the Tapestry's figures, animals and decorative motifs, participants will explore traditional techniques and create their own embroidered piece.

Two full-day workshops will be offered: one in English at the French Institute's listed reading room, and one in French at the Centre Molière, with French-language support for participants wishing to practise their French while stitching. Beginners welcome!

Sat 16 Jan – in English at the Cultural Centre

Sat 24 Apr – in French at the Centre Molière

10.00 – 16.00, including a one-hour lunch break | ages 15+

£160, members & concessions £130





Echoes of the Middle Ages

Concert

Step into the musical world of the Middle Ages with vocal trio **Les Itinérantes** and violinist **Théotime Langlois de Swarte**.

Bringing together voices and strings, this special concert will explore music inspired by the medieval world and its enduring echoes across the centuries. Through an imaginative dialogue between vocal and instrumental traditions, these exceptional performers invite audiences on a musical journey connecting past and present, and offering another way to experience the world surrounding the Bayeux Tapestry.

Wed 28 Apr, 19.00

£20, members & concessions £18, students £15

Picture left: *Les Itinérantes* © Isabelle Banco
Picture right: *Théotime Langlois de Swarte* © Marco Borggreve



Sing in French: Songs Through the Ages

Singing workshop

Step back in time and sing your way through French history! Join us for a special Sing in French session celebrating the Bayeux Tapestry's historic visit to London.

We'll warm up with a selection of easy, lively historical songs, before travelling further back to the Middle Ages to work together on a medieval French song - accompanied live by pianist **Elise Lefay** and lutenist **Eligio Luis Quinteiro**. No musical experience or perfect French required: just bring your voice and join in!

Fri 19 March, 18.15

£10, members & concessions £8, students £5

Picture: Cover of book *The Troubadours* by Linda M. Paterson © origin: Cantigas de Santa Maria



South Ken Kids Festival

Children will journey back to the Middle Ages at the South Ken Kids Festival.

They will dance the day away at a **medieval costumed ball**, unleash their creativity in **a workshop with award winning illustrator Nina Chakrabarti**, and help bring a giant participative scroll inspired by the Bayeux Tapestry to life.

A week of history, imagination and family fun awaits!

8 – 14 March 2027

Gaming at the Library: Pentiment, a Journey into the Medieval World

Visit the French Institute's Library to discover ***Pentiment***, a narrative role-playing game set in Bavaria towards the end of the Middle Ages. Step into the shoes of artist Andreas Maler and investigate a murder in a visually striking world inspired by medieval manuscripts, woodcuts and early printed books.

Jan – June 2027

Picture: Illustrations from back cover of book *History of The Bayeux Tapestry* by Libby Walden & Nina Chakrabarti © The British Museum



William & Harold: The Story of 1066

Theatre

Two men, one crown and a story that would change England forever! Travel back to 1066 and meet William of Normandy and Harold of England in a lively dance and theatre adventure by choreographer **Gaëlle Bourges**, inspired by the events depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry.

Bringing history to life through performance, storytelling and imagination, this family show introduces younger audiences to the rivalries, promises and extraordinary characters behind the Norman Conquest. An entertaining way to discover the story woven into one of the world's greatest medieval treasures.

Spring 2027 | ages 6+

£14, members & concessions £12

Picture: Still (detail), from *William & Harold* © Agathe Poupeney



Middle Ages on Screen

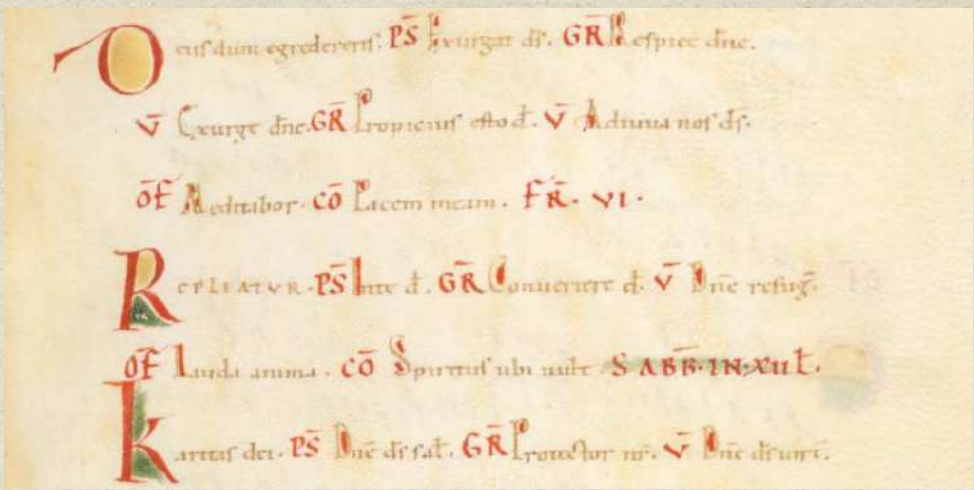
Screenings

Knights, legends, quests and conquests: Ciné Lumière journeys into the Middle Ages through cinema.

From historical drama to comedy and animation, this special programme explores the many ways filmmakers have imagined, reconstructed and reinvented the medieval world for the screen. Designed for adults and families alike, the season will travel between history and legend, epic tales and playful reinterpretations, revealing how the Middle Ages continue to inspire filmmakers – and our collective imagination – today.

Feb – June 2027

Picture: Still (detail) from *Les Visiteurs du Soir* © André Paulvé



Medieval Music: Treasures from the Collections

Let's rediscover the French Institute library's music collections through a medieval lens. Explore a selection of works celebrating the music, voices and sounds of the Middle Ages, which you will be able to listen to directly on the library's dedicated music station. Alongside them, discover facsimiles of remarkable medieval scores and manuscripts from the collections of the Bibliothèque nationale de France and the British Library, bringing together music, history and heritage.

March – June - Free access at La Médiathèque during regular opening hours

Explore the Bayeux Tapestry Up Close

Throughout the Bayeux Season, discover the Tapestry in remarkable detail on our interactive touchscreen. Explore the high-resolution digital version created by the DRAC Haute-Normandie: zoom in on individual scenes, examine the embroidery up close and move freely along the Tapestry at your own pace.

Free access at La Médiathèque during regular opening hours

Picture: *Graduale et prosarium ad usum Cluniacensem*, page 72 © Gallica

Beyond Bayeux

Stories from the Middle Ages

October 2026 – July 2027



Info & Bookings

www.institut-francais.org.uk

Box office: 020 7871 3515

Tapisserie de BAYEUX Tapestry
2026 • 2027

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