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Media release
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Joséphine Bowes, Countess of Montalbo (1850), Antoine Dury (1819 - after 1877)
© The Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle

The Bowes Museum celebrates its founder's 200th birthday with gifts of complimentary tickets for local residents.

On Saturday 26 April The Bowes Museum marks the 200th birthday of its co-founder Joséphine Bowes with a day of indoor and outdoor activities including talks, tours and hands-on experiences for all ages to enjoy, and two special free entry initiatives.

The museum's programme this year is centred around Joséphine's pioneering vision and legacy. She was the driving force behind the creation of The Bowes Museum as an artist, collector and patron of the arts.

In celebration, visitors to the County Durham museum can enjoy a small piece of delicious birthday cake on arrival and there are two one-off, special initiatives that could allow them to enjoy their visit for free.

On Saturday, the first 200 people to visit with a DL12 postcode (residents of Barnard Castle and Middleton-in-Teesdale) receive a voucher giving free day entry to the museum that can be redeemed on the day or on another occasion, up to 6 months later. Joséphine Bowes' vision when founding the museum was to share art and culture with the people of Teesdale, so people from the local community can take advantage of this gesture in her honour.

Over the weekend, Saturday 26 and Sunday 27, women sharing Josephine's name, or with modern-day variants such Jo or Joanne, receive free day entry to the museum. Proof of address or name is required to claim free entry.

The ever-popular **Spotlight Tours** at 11:00 and 2:30 will be centred around Joséphine, there'll be a performance of the **Silver Swan** at 11:45, and 2:00, with a special happy birthday sing-along afterwards.

Families can create party hats, decorated with their own unique, colourful patchwork design in **Artist Makers: Patchwork Party Hats**. Artist Betty Brown will be in the Create Space between 1:00 – 3:00.

To support the museum's green initiative and to encourage biodiversity in the parkland, there'll be drop-in **Snowdrop Bulb Planting** in the grounds between 11:00 – 2:00. Meet at the West Lodge (to the left of the gates when entering the grounds via the main entrance), a £1.00 donation is suggested to take part.

Kathy Raine, Volunteer Guide is leading a 30-minute **Outdoor Guided Tour** (weather permitting) from 12:30, covering the unique French influence behind museum's exterior architecture, the development of the grounds, and the remarkable story behind the formation of Joséphine and John's museum. Booking is encouraged due to limited space, however, there may be availability on the day. Meet on the terrace by the flagpoles.

There's an insightful talk at 2:30, **Joséphine's Family and Friends** by the museum's Honorary Archivist, Dr. Judith Philips. Gain insight into Joséphine Bowes' personal life – her family, friends, and other influential figures in her circle that helped shape her to become the remarkable woman she was.

The museum is launching a new fundraising appeal in celebration of Josephine Bowes' 200th birthday and in support of a special project to upgrade lighting in the galleries and public spaces to energy-efficient LEDs. Visitors can find out more and donate via the website, or in person at reception or by using the contactless donation boxes on site.

Alongside the two exhibitions that focus on Joséphine's exceptional taste as a collector and profound knowledge of artist trends, there's a new **Conversation Wall** display centred around Joséphine's artist skill in the entrance hall. The display features three works by Joséphine that were previously in store, one showing a small dog that may have been her pet, Pallete and two landscape studies. Visitors can draw a picture or write a birthday message for Joséphine, or a wish for the future of her museum, on a postcard and hang it on the wall.

The Bowes Museum is open daily, 10:00 – 5:00. All activities taking place on Saturday, 26 April and the exhibitions are included in day admission and membership. Curate your own itinerary from the exciting programme and enjoy a fun-filled day at the museum with family and friends.

Notes to editors and picture desks:

For film and photography requests, or further information, please contact our Marketing & Communications Coordinators:

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About *From Joséphine Bowes: Trendsetters and Trailblazers*

8 February – 29 June 2025

A landmark exhibition celebrating the 200th anniversary of museum co-founder Joséphine Bowes, showcasing three centuries of art and creativity. Featuring works from the Bowes' collection alongside international loans, expect to see an eclectic mix of paintings, sculptures, textiles and ceramics from world-renowned artists including Pablo Picasso and Sir Grayson Perry CBE and emerging contemporary artists like Joy Labinjo and Lucy Waters. The exhibition highlights Joséphine's visionary approach to collecting and offers a glimpse into how her remarkable artistic insight might have shaped The Bowes Museum's collection today.

About *Joséphine: A Woman of Taste and Fashion*

22 March 2025 – 1 March 2026

A special display in the Fashion & Textile Gallery, showcasing the variety and breadth of Joséphine and John Bowes' acquisitions of textiles, and highlighting Joséphine's interest in contemporary fashion. This exhibition presents historical textiles including embroideries, lace, and items purchased for the museum at the Exposition Universelle of 1867, rare surviving items from Joséphine's wardrobe, and historic and contemporary examples of French fashion, including pieces by iconic twentieth-century designers including Elsa Schiaparelli, Jacques Fath and Yves Saint Laurent. *A Woman of Taste and Fashion* complements the larger *From Joséphine Bowes: Trendsetters and Trailblazers* exhibition, celebrating the legacy of Joséphine Bowes in what would have been her 200th year.

About The Bowes Museum

The Bowes Museum is a charity managing a Grade 1 listed accredited Museum and Grade 2 listed parkland in Barnard Castle. Founded by Joséphine & John Bowes 150+ years ago, this purpose-built Museum brings together an extraordinary, Designated collection of European fine and decorative art as a cultural resource for the people of Northern England, where today we celebrate artists, designers and makers.

The Bowes Museum receives funding from Durham County Council and, as a National Portfolio Organisation, receives support from Arts Council England. Arts Council England is the national development body for arts and culture across England, working to enrich people's lives. [artscouncil.org.uk](https://www.artscouncil.org.uk)

The Bowes Museum is a member of the Discover Durham partnership of attractions, whose commitment is to promote Durham as an exciting and vibrant group travel destination and to provide the travel trade with a professional and knowledgeable service. [discoverdurham.co.uk](https://www.discoverdurham.co.uk)

Admission to The Bowes Museum is £17.70 for local members (residents of County Durham and Darlington), £20.00 for members (residents elsewhere), £19.50 for a day ticket, £21.45 for a day ticket including gift aid. Under 18s, full time students and carers are free.

As a registered charity (number 1079639) The Bowes Museum needs to generate more than half of its income each year to care for the historic collection, buildings and parkland. Your donations are vital to that work. Visit thebowesmuseum.org.uk/support for more information.



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