

## Wednesday Lectures – Autumn term 2023

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All lectures this term are being run as hybrid events, giving members the opportunity to attend either via Zoom, or apply for a limited number of pre-booked places to attend in person. The talks will be in the Pink room here at Bridge Street. Places can be booked 7 days before each lecture. Please contact the Office to book, giving your name and membership number. Zoom links are on the website and will be included in the Bulletin each Wednesday on the day of the lecture. Lectures will start at 2.15pm. No entry to the Pink room before 2.00pm.

Any last-minute changes to the programme will be publicised in the weekly Bulletin.

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### **11 October      The possibilities and limits of forgiveness**

Speaker              Rev Dr Stephen Cherry

Over the last four decades, the idea and practice of forgiveness has attracted more attention than previously with personal stories of forgiveness being told in the media and written up as memoirs. In addition, psychologists have explored different ways in which people might be helped to forgive, and philosophers have asked questions, such as: ‘was Dryden right in saying that “forgiveness to the victim doth belong”?’ In this talk Stephen will explore these important issues. Although he finds much to admire when people forgive, he also wants to question whether there are limits to forgiveness – and, if so, what lies beyond them?

Stephen Cherry is Dean of Chapel at King’s College, Cambridge, and Fellow and Director of Studies in Theology. He has written a number of books including *Healing Agony* and *Unforgivable? Exploring the Limits of Forgiveness* due out early in 2024.

### **18 October      Drawing in the Dark: Henry Moore’s Coalmining Commission**

Speaker              Dr Chris Owen

Henry Moore was acclaimed as one of the World’s leading sculptors of the C20th, most famous for his stone and bronze depictions of the female form, and abstract sculptures, which still grace the plazas of many major cities. He was also a renowned draughtsman. He made highly expressive drawings of Londoners sheltering from the Blitz, and, less well-known, he spent two weeks sketching underground at Wheldale Colliery in Castleford, Yorkshire, where his father had worked as a miner. This illustrated talk is based on Owen’s recently published book, *Drawing in the Dark: Henry Moore’s Coalmining Commission*, and the accompanying exhibition, held at St Albans Museum and Gallery, and The Danum, Doncaster.

Chris Owen studied History of Art at Cambridge before a career in education. From 2011-19, he was Head of Cambridge School of Art at Anglia Ruskin University, and recently published *Drawing in the Dark: Henry Moore’s Coalmining Commission*.

## **25 October      Is an unwritten constitution still a good idea?**

Speaker                      Lord Wilson of Dinton (Richard Wilson)

This talk will discuss why, unlike most countries, we don't have a written constitution in the UK; what it's like in practice working without one; and, what the arguments for and against having one are. It will argue that, although we are in the middle of a period of major constitutional change, it would be better not to try to set out all our constitutional principles, rules, and laws in one document. It would run contrary to our history, it would lose us flexibility in public affairs, and it would open up enormous arguments - for instance about whether we should abolish the monarchy - which would take up a lot of time and be impossible to resolve. It also argues that the British people are not very interested in constitutional matters.

Richard Wilson attends the House of Lords as a cross bencher, and is a Life Fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge. After entering the Civil Service in the Board of Trade in 1966, he became Secretary of the Cabinet and Head of the Home Civil Service in 1998. In 2002 he received a peerage and was elected Master of Emmanuel College.

## **1 November      Fenrir's Fetter and the Power of Stories**

Speaker                      Katherine Langrish

As a writer of fantasies for children, and academic essays and books for adults on fairy tales and folklore, Katherine has long been interested in the power of stories to influence us for both good and ill. In this talk, she will look at legends and fairy tales, the gruesome urban myths children tell one another at sleepovers, and those stories handed down in families, communities and nations which confer a sense of common identity and pride – sometimes at the cost of excluding others. Such stories have the power to change our perceptions of ourselves and others, and of the world around us.

Katherine Langrish is an author and the creator of the award-winning blog Seven Miles of Steel Thistles and collection of essays of the same name. Her books for children include Dark Angels, and most recently From Spare Oom to War Drobe: Travels in Narnia with my nine year-old self.

## **8 November      NOTE CHANGE OF TOPIC & SPEAKER**

### **The Rhodesian Bush War 1965 - 1979**

Speaker                      Tim Ewbank

Zimbabwe won its independence after a largely forgotten civil war which pitched the government of Ian Smith against the nationalist forces of Robert Mugabe & Joshua Nkomo. This talk follows the progress of the war from its modest beginning to full scale civil war. The international forces that lead to the eventual settlement and its aftermath will be examined. It will conclude with a comparison with the American experience in Vietnam, which was contemporaneous.

Tim Ewbank grew up in Rhodesia and was directly involved in the civil war. He continues to have connections with the country; consequently has witnessed its sad decline into its being a failed state.

## **15 November      Anglesey Abbey: The Life of Lord Fairhaven**

Speaker                      Helen Ackroyd

Helen's talk will take a look at the history of the Priory (N.B. it wasn't actually an Abbey) from 1135 until 1536, and then as a private house, from 1609 until 1966. However, the main part of her talk will cover the family history of Lord Fairhaven, especially the source of his wealth, and will present a 'virtual tour' of the House, punctuated with stories of how Lord Fairhaven used the rooms and designed the famous gardens.

Helen Ackroyd has been a volunteer in the House at Anglesey Abbey for more than 14 years, and also a Tour Guide, both inside and outside the House. She has been presenting talks about Anglesey Abbey for the National Trust for over six years.

## **22 November    Participatory film and gender justice in postcolonial Africa**

Speaker                      Professor Lucy Delap (with Dr Dominique Chadwick)

This talk explores practices of participatory film making, which grew in popularity in the 1990s and 2000s, inspired by critical pedagogy, newly affordable technologies and commitments to decolonising 'development' initiatives in the global South. This collaborative investigation by historian, Lucy Delap, and film director, Dominique Chadwick, outlines the practical and ethical concerns of feminist film-making as 'action research', and locates it within the mediascape of the turn of the millennium, as well as the context of the HIV-AIDS epidemic.

Prof Lucy Delap teaches history at Cambridge and is a Fellow of Murray Edwards College. She has published widely on the history of feminism, gender, labour and religion, including *The Feminist Avant-Garde: Transatlantic Encounters of the early twentieth century*.

Dr Dominique Chadwick is an independent film consultant, reporting on humanitarian issues in over 40 countries.

## **29 November    Darwins and Wedgwoods: A Creative Legacy Beyond Charles**

Speaker                      Dr Emma Darwin

Books about Emma's great-great-grandparents, Charles and Emma Darwin, are legion, but when she agreed to write a novel about her family, she looked for the stories less often told: as well as polymath Erasmus Darwin, there was Thomas Wedgwood, pioneer of photographic processes; novelist and historian, Julia Wedgwood; composer Ralph Vaughan Williams; engraver Gwen Raverat; poet Frances Cornford; and her son, the radical poet, John Cornford, the first Briton killed in the Spanish Civil War. Join Emma on this illustrated journey through the Darwin-Wedgwood-Galton clan, as seen through the lens of her creative struggle to write fiction about them.

Dr Emma Darwin is a writer and teacher. Her first novel, *The Mathematics of Love*, was shortlisted for the Commonwealth Writers' award while her best-selling *A Secret Alchemy* earned her a PhD. Her latest book is *This is Not a Book About Charles Darwin*.

## **6 December      Before Evolutionary Theory and the Dinosaurs: Adam Sedgwick's Geological Museum of the 1840s and what Queen Victoria thought of it all**

Speaker                      Dr Douglas Palmer

By the 1840s, Woodwardian Professor Adam Sedgwick's collection of fossils had grown so large that the University allocated space in the new Cockerell Building for a Museum of Geology. So, what were the prize museum exhibits of the time before evolutionary theory and the 'invention' of the dinosaurs? And which specimens did Queen Victoria take an especial interest in when she visited the Museum with Prince Albert in 1847?

Dr Douglas Palmer is a Cambridge-based earth science writer and lecturer who works part-time for the Sedgwick Museum of Earth Sciences. Most recently he has contributed to *Timelines of Science*, DK 2023, and *Strata: William Smith's Geological Maps*, T&H 2020.

**13 December      The Box with the Sunflower Clasp – the story of a Jewish family who escaped Hitler by fleeing Vienna for the unlikely haven of Shanghai**

Speaker                  Rachel E. Meller

Rachel's Aunt Lisbeth was always a reserved, uncommunicative woman, who never spoke about her childhood in Vienna, or her experiences in Shanghai. Lisbeth and her mother (Rachel's grandmother) fled to the Chinese port in 1940, to join Rachel's grandfather, who had escaped Austria the previous year. Decades later, Lisbeth unexpectedly bequeathed Rachel a box containing a collection of documents and photographs. In this talk, Rachel will discuss how she embarked on putting together the pieces of her silent aunt's life, using the contents of the box together with her own research. She will also describe a little-known chapter of World War II history: the story of the 20,000 European Jews whose lives were saved from the Nazi threat by their flight to the challenging and complex destination of Japanese-run Shanghai.

After studying Neurobiology at Sussex and research at Cambridge, Rachel became a writer in a local communication consultancy. Her book *The Box with the Sunflower Clasp* came out in May 2023 and has been well reviewed in various publications.