

## Wednesday Lectures – Autumn term 2025

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**The 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 take place 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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### **8 October                      The Cambridgeshire crucifixion: Roman justice, indigenous practice or careless burial**

Speaker                      Corinne Duhig PhD FSA MCIfA.

Archaeologists investigating a previously unknown Roman settlement ahead of a new housing development in Cambridgeshire have discovered the remains of a man with a nail through his heel. A team including osteoarchaeologist Dr Corinne Duhig believe this may be the “best preserved” example of a Roman-era crucifixion anywhere in the world and shows inhabitants of even this small settlement at the edge of empire could not avoid Rome’s most barbaric punishment.

### **15 October                      Town v. Gown; City v. Village: A History of Cricket in Cambridge**

Speaker:                      Prof Tony Watts

Cambridge has had a rich cricket culture and tradition. Cambridgeshire could have been a first-class county. But Town and Gown never harnessed satisfactorily their joint resources. The University provided access to first-class cricket. There were strong city clubs, playing on high-quality college grounds run by dynasties of extraordinary groundsmen. This contrasted with the league cricket in the surrounding villages. This lecture, based on Tony Watts’s recent book, will celebrate Cambridge’s distinctive cricket tradition, analyse the changes, and describe the endeavours to sustain and develop local cricket in a new era.

### **22 October                      The Vital Message: The University of Cambridge and Adult Learning since 1945**

Speaker:                      Prof Mark Freeman

In the 1990s some 11,000 students were enrolled on courses run by the University of Cambridge’s Board of Extra-Mural Studies – around the same as the total undergraduate population of the university. They were participating in a tradition of adult learning at Cambridge that went back to the first “university extension” lectures in 1873 and flourished through the twentieth century. The Vital Message, commissioned for the 150th anniversary of this aspect of Cambridge life, focuses in particular on the development and decline of the large programme of non-vocational courses for adults in the East Anglia region.

**29 October                      From Raphael to Jean Michel-Basquiat – what Art can tell us about Love**

Speaker:                      Dr Nick Trend

What can or can't we learn from the way that artists over the ages have depicted their partners and lovers; how they have tried to express the frustrations, passions, disappointments and hopes aroused by the intensity of this most powerful and enigmatic of emotions. Nick examines mainly portraits but also landscapes and still lifes by artists as diverse as Raphael and Caravaggio, Rembrandt and Frida Kahlo, Peter Blake and Suzanne Valadon.

**5 November                      Canada, 1939-1945: Caught between Churchill and FDR**

Speaker:                      Dr Olivier Courteaux Historian on Franco-European relations

Between 1939 and 1945, Canada found itself diplomatically positioned between two global giants - Winston Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt. Prime Minister Mackenzie King sought to mediate and maintain harmony between them. Hosting the Quebec Conferences, Canada played a symbolic yet vital role in Allied cooperation. The unexpected collapse of France in the spring of 1940 presented unprecedented challenges, not least because Canadians were split on the issue of supporting either Vichy or the Free French. This period shaped Canada's identity as a middle power, highlighting its contributions to the war effort and its evolving independence from British imperial influence.

Note: This is the sixth of our International Canadian lectures.

**12 November                      Hereward the Wake: fact, fiction and romance**

Speaker:                      Mike Lynch

Hereward the Wake, hero of resistance to the Norman conquest in Ely and the fens, was a figure to which stories of romantic entanglements and even semi-magical powers quickly became attached. By 1866 however, Charles Kingsley found that very little of him 'was left standing out from beneath the dust of ages'. Kingsley re-created Hereward as 'the Last of the English' to suit the mood of the time, but by 2007 Mike Ripley depicted him as an arsonist, bigamist and drug-addict. Is his memory now fading? This lecture deals with our need to create legendary figures, and their subsequent fate.

**19 November                      What's the point of J.S. Bach's sacred cantatas?**

Speaker:                      Thelma Lovell

Designed to be part of Lutheran church services in eighteenth-century Leipzig, Bach's cantatas brought drama and colour to the beliefs and attitudes arising from a particular religious outlook. It is the music that still draws listeners worldwide, though Bach - genuinely devout - intended it to serve the message of the words. Living in a different world, three centuries later, how do we process the integration of art with faith that we find in the cantatas?

**26 November                      The art of laundry**

Speaker:                      Nick Higham, Journalist

Before the arrival of the washing machine, the tumble drier, modern water supply and efficient heaters, doing the laundry was one of the most arduous household tasks – almost always done by women. It was also essential for personal hygiene. Everywhere you looked you were likely to see laundrymaids and washerwomen – including in art. Former BBC arts correspondent Nick Higham surveys more than 400 years of paintings, prints and photographs of women who washed, and asks what they tell us about the artists who made them and the society they lived in.

**3 December      Atlantic Furies: The Women who risked everything to be the first to fly**

Speaker:              Midge Gillies

In the early 20th century, the dream of crossing the Atlantic by plane was as potent as putting a man on the moon would be 50 years later. But many people believed women too physically frail and emotionally vulnerable to endure the gruelling conditions of flying long distances. In *Atlantic Furies*, Midge Gillies uncovers the stories of six courageous, rule-breaking aviators who risked everything to prove that women could take to the air. They came from both sides of the Atlantic and three would lose their lives in a bid to conquer the ocean between.

**10 December      Life at the end of the Earth: the weird and wonderful adaptations of Antarctic marine animals**

Speaker:              Prof Lloyd Peck FRS BAS

Life in the seas around Antarctica is unexpectedly abundant and diverse. It contains unique biological attributes like giant sea spiders, worms and sponges, and the only animals with backbones that do not possess red blood cells. It also contains probably the slowest biology anywhere with some snail species taking up to 10 years to develop from fertilised eggs to hatching juveniles. This talk will describe the biodiversity, the adaptations and the constraints that have produced these unique biologies. It will also discuss some of the exciting new research that is giving us new insights into how life thrives at sub-zero temperatures.