



SPRING
2025

ROYAL OAK PROGRAMS



Primary underwriting provided by
Mark Pigott KBE

PROGRAMS INFORMATION

SPRING 2025 PROGRAMS

Royal Oak's Spring 2025 Programming will be a mix of online and in-person events. Please check the website for updates.

Support for Lectures

For the Spring 2025 season, primary underwriting provided by Mark Pigott KBE.

We are thankful to loyal Royal Oak members for generously providing critical funding for lectures this season, including: Linda Pedro, Lynne R. Pickens, Stephen and Karen Tyler, In Memory of Graham Watkins, Roberta and Robert Young, and an anonymous donor. We also gratefully acknowledge the support of the The Joseph and Robert Cornell Memorial Foundation; Marian Meaker Apteckar Foundation; and The Neilsen Family Trust.

Register for Zoom & In-Person Lectures & Tours

Some lectures & tours will be held via Zoom. After registering on our website, you will receive an email with a link to the Zoom webinar or meeting. A reminder with the same link will be sent one hour before the lecture. We strongly recommend joining the Zoom at least 10 minutes before the lecture to check for screen and sound issues. A virtual waiting room is open starting 30 minutes before the lecture.

Registration for Zoom Lecture & Tour Rentals

Most lectures & tours will be recorded and available to rent. The link to the recording will be emailed to you at 12 p.m. (ET) the day after the live lecture or tour and will expire at 11:59 p.m. (ET) on the date listed. **It will not be available after that date and time.** The video is available for streaming only, not for download. Copyright is held by the speaker.

In-Person Events & Safety Guidelines

The Royal Oak Foundation follows local health guidelines required **at the time of in-person event**. Royal Oak is not responsible for venue policies or requirements.

Fees & Refunds

Royal Oak members receive a discount on **all** lectures. You must be signed into the website to receive the discount. We are not able to give refunds if you can no longer attend the live lecture or view the rental in the allotted time, but we can turn your ticket into a tax deductible donation if you email us at least 48 hours before the lecture at zoom@royal-oak.org. **Royal Oak is not responsible for attendees' technology issues regarding viewing live or recorded lectures.**

How to Register

Please register online at www.royal-oak.org/events. If you have questions, please email us at zoom@royal-oak.org for the fastest response.

All programs are subject to change or cancellation. Visit our website for updates.

Cover: Concrete greenhouse at Llanerchaeron, Ceredigion
Credit: ©National Trust Images/James Dobson

Dear Royal Oak Members and Friends,

We are delighted to share a vibrant Spring season of lectures and tours, bringing British history, art and architecture, and landscapes to Royal Oak audiences. Most of our programs continue to be available digitally, ensuring all Royal Oak members and friends can take part, no matter their location. Additionally, we welcome you to in-person events in New York, Charleston, Philadelphia, and, for the first time in several decades, Dallas.

We will examine the scenes of our favorite British films—Georgian architecture playing a starring role—as Dr. Amy Boyington explores the backdrop of popular historical films. Architectural historian Jeremy Musson delves deeper into the Georgian world to examine the work of architect James Wyatt.

NT Paintings and Sculpture Curator, John Chu will illuminate J.M.W. Turner's deep connections to Petworth and his NT paintings while *Country Life's* Architectural Editor, John Goodall, will trace the rise and fall of Britain's historic glasshouses and orangeries. Mr. Goodall's lecture accompanies Royal Oak's important 2025 National Trust fundraising campaign to rebuild the historic Trelissick's walled garden in Cornwall—for more information see page 11.

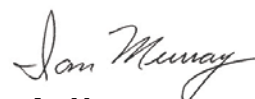
The 20th century is included as historian Victoria Kastner will reveal how Fred Astaire's years on the London stage shaped his development into a Hollywood legend. Also, author Sinclair McKay will honor the code breaking heroes of WWII and discuss the history of Bletchley Park.

If you are not traveling to England, Royal Oak's digital tours visually will lead you into stunning landscapes and National Trust houses. We will discover the wonderful houses in Devon and also investigate Essex's stunning scenery—including ancient forests and salt marshes—and the county's link to New England's history.

We invite you to explore, learn, and connect with Royal Oak—whether through watching a lecture or a tour, or by joining our efforts to aid the National Trust's important work. We remain grateful for your continued interest and support of our educational programs.

I also want to say that everyone at Royal Oak is thinking about our California members and friends who are affected by the devastating fires. Royal Oak is planning the return of CA lectures in Fall 2025.

With warm regards,



Ian Murray
Executive Director



The Solarium at Trelissick Garden, Cornwall

©National Trust Images/Anna Kilcooley

AT-A-GLANCE Please check your local time zone.

MARCH

18 6:00 p.m. ET Lady Henrietta Spencer-Churchill Charleston, SC In-Person

APRIL

1 5:00 p.m. ET *Treason & Tragedy: Death on Tower Hill* Zoom Live Stream or Rent
10 6:15 p.m. ET Hugo Vickers NYC In-Person or Rent
15 6:00 p.m. ET Troy Scott Smith Charleston, SC In-Person
17 6:15 p.m. ET Ellen Harris NYC In-Person or Rent
29 2:00 p.m. ET Jeremy Musson Zoom Live Stream or Rent
30 2:00 p.m. ET *Discovering Devon: National Trust Treasures* Zoom Live Stream or Rent

MAY

6 2:00 p.m. ET John Goodall Zoom Live Stream or Rent
12 6:15 p.m. ET Dr. John Chu NYC In-Person
15 6:00 p.m. ET Victoria Kastner Zoom Live Stream or Rent
20 2:00 p.m. ET Sinclair McKay Zoom Live Stream or Rent
22 2:00 p.m. ET Dr. Amy Boyington Zoom Live Stream or Rent
28 5:00 p.m. ET *Essex: England's Quiet Corner* Zoom Live Stream or Rent
31 2:00 p.m. ET *Printing at Bowne* NYC In-Person

JUNE

5 6:00 p.m. Patrick Monahan Dallas, TX In-Person

TBA

6:15 p.m. ET India Hicks Philadelphia, PA In-Person



Plas Newydd House and Garden, Anglesey

©National Trust Images/Annapurna Mellor

PUBLIC LECTURES

Please note start times vary. Please check your local time zone.
 For full descriptions and speaker bios, please visit www.royal-oak.org/events

ZOOM LECTURES & IN-PERSON NEW YORK CITY



Coronation Portrait of Queen Mary of Teck, William Llewellyn circa 1911

The Quest for Queen Mary

Hugo Vickers

Author, Lecturer and Broadcaster

Thursday, April 10

6:15 p.m. (ET)

RECEPTION FOLLOWING

The General Society Library,
 20 W. 44th Street, NYC
 (Bet. 5th and 6th)

In-Person: \$35 Members;
 \$45 Non-Members and Guests

Zoom Recording: \$20 Members;
 \$30 Non-Members and Guests

George Frideric Handel at Home

Ellen Harris

Professor Emeritus and Author

Thursday, April 17

6:15 p.m. (ET)

RECEPTION FOLLOWING

The General Society Library,
 20 W. 44th Street, NYC
 (Bet. 5th and 6th)

*Co-Sponsor: Handel House
 Foundation of America*

In-Person: \$35 Members;
 \$45 Non-Members and Guests

Zoom Recording: \$20 Members;
 \$30 Non-Members and Guests



Handel House, Brook Street

©Andrew Hasson / Alamy

ZOOM LECTURES & IN-PERSON NEW YORK CITY



The south front of Newark Park, Gloucestershire

Country Houses of James Wyatt: (1746 –1813)

Jeremy Musson
Architectural Historian and Author

Tuesday, April 29
2:00 p.m. (ET)

Zoom Webinar (Live or Rent)

Zoom Recording:
\$15 members;
\$25 non-members and guests



Victorian Conservatory at Wentworth Castle Gardens, South Yorkshire

Gardens of Glass

John Goodall
Architectural Editor
at *Country Life* and Author

Tuesday, May 6
2:00 p.m. (ET)

Zoom Webinar (Live or Rent)

Zoom Recording:
\$15 members;
\$25 non-members and guests

ZOOM LECTURES & IN-PERSON NEW YORK CITY

J.M.W. Turner at Petworth: An Artist's Inspiration

Dr. John Chu, Senior Curator, Paintings & Sculptures, NT

Monday, May 12 | 6:15 p.m. (ET) RECEPTION FOLLOWING

Mount Vernon Hotel Museum & Garden Auditorium, 421 East 61st Street
Co-Sponsor: Colonial Dames of America

In-Person: \$35 Members; \$45 Non-Members and Guests
Zoom Recording: \$20 Members; \$30 Non-Members and Guests



The Carved Room with Turner painting, at Petworth House and Park, West Sussex



A still from *The Gay Divorcee*, 1934,
Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers

Fred Astaire in London

Victoria Kastner
Architectural Historian and Author

Thursday, May 15
6:00 p.m. (ET)

Zoom Webinar (Live or Rent)

Zoom Recording:
\$15 members;
\$25 non-members and guests

ZOOM LECTURES & IN-PERSON NEW YORK CITY

The Lost World of Bletchley Park

Sinclair McKay
Best-selling Author

Tuesday, May 20
2:00 p.m. (ET)

Zoom Webinar
(Live or Rent)

Zoom Recording:
\$15 members;
\$25 non-members
and guests



©Bletchley Park Trust

Wrens billeted at Wavedon Manor near Bletchley Park



©National Trust/Paul Barker

The Blue State Drawing Room, Kedleston Hall, Derbyshire

Behind the Scenes: Georgian Buildings in TV and Film

Dr. Amy Boyington
Social Historian and Author

Thursday, May 22
2:00 p.m. (ET)

Zoom Webinar
(Live or Rent)

Zoom Recording:
\$15 members;
\$25 non-members
and guests

CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

Blenheim 300: Years of life in a Palace

Lady Henrietta Spencer-Churchill,

Tuesday, March 18 | 6:00 p.m. (ET)

Lecture is preceded by 5:30 p.m. reception and book-signing
Location: Charleston Library Society, 164 King Street, Charleston

Lecture, Reception, & Book-signing: \$35 Members; \$45 Non-Members and guests



Blenheim Dining Room

Sissinghurst Garden

Troy Scott Smith

NT Head Gardener, Sissinghurst

Tuesday, April 15 | 6:00 p.m. (ET)

Lecture is preceded by
5:30 p.m. reception and book-signing

Location: Charleston Library Society
164 King Street, Charleston

Lecture, Reception, and Book-signing:
\$25 Members; \$35 Non-Members and
guests. Registration with the CLS.



©National Trust Images/Andrew Butler

Iris at Sissinghurst Garden, Kent

DALLAS, TEXAS

Flaming June: The Making of an Icon

Patrick Monahan, Writer and
Independent Art Advisor

Thursday, June 5
6:00 p.m. (CT)

Location:
Meadows Museum at SMU
5900 Bishop Blvd

Exhibition runs from Feb–June 22



Free to ROF and Meadows
Members; \$15 for non-members



©Museo de Arte de Ponce, Puerto Rico

Flaming June, 1895, by Sir Frederic Leighton

PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

Lady Pamela: My Mother's Extraordinary Life

India Hicks
British designer, Author, and Humanitarian

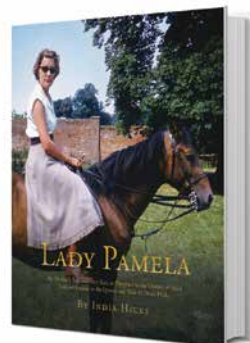
TBA | 6:15 p.m. (ET)
Reception following

More information forthcoming



Tom Frissell Photograph Collection/Library of Congress

Diaries, postcards, photos, and telegrams
from 1940s. Book of Common Prayer given by
Queen Victoria to Pamela's grandmother.



Artist rendering (right): Helen Thomas Cookson & Tickner.

HELP US RESTORE TRELISSICK'S GLASSHOUSE

Royal Oak is raising \$300,000 to recreate the glasshouse in Trellissick's historic walled garden, reviving this once-thriving space. Your support will help restore the garden, bringing back the exquisite peaches and nectarines for which Trellissick was once famed, while showcasing sustainable gardening practices.

Join us in transforming this historic and important garden
into a vibrant hub of horticulture for generations to come!

www.Royal-Oak.org/Trellissick | 212-480-2889 ext. 200



ROYAL OAK MEMBER TOURS

Digital tours are presented live and our guides will give an illustrated presentation with an accompanying talk. Some tours will be recorded and available for a limited period. In-Person Tours are not recorded. Please note start times vary and are all listed in Eastern time.

ONLINE WALKING TOUR

Treason & Tragedy: Death on Tower Hill

Zoom Meeting (Live or Rent)

Tuesday, April 1 | 5:00 p.m. ET

While the Tower of London may be infamous for its executions, the majority of beheadings actually took place just beyond its walls, on Tower Hill—a site steeped in political turmoil, betrayal, and bloody justice. In this gripping tour, Rob Smith will unravel the dramatic stories of those who met their fate on this notorious execution ground. Tower Hill became the final stage for some of the most high-profile figures in British history, many of whom had once wielded great power, who found themselves condemned as traitors. We will explore the fate of Simon of Sudbury, the Archbishop of Canterbury, who was dragged from the Tower and beheaded by enraged Poll Tax rebels in 1381. Another infamous figure to fall on Tower Hill was Thomas Cromwell, Henry VIII's once-trusted advisor and architect of the English Reformation. The site also witnessed the beheading of Lord Lovat (Simon Fraser) in 1747—the last man to be publicly executed on Tower Hill. His execution, witnessed by a large crowd, marked the end of an era. This virtual tour will bring to life the gripping stories of those who faced the executioner's axe—tales of ambition, treachery, courage, and vengeance—while also exploring the historical significance of Tower Hill. Hear about the shadowy events that shaped British history.

TICKETS: \$30 Members; \$40 Non-Members



The Execution of Lady Jane Grey, Paul Delarouche, 1834. This nine-day Queen was executed inside the tower on Tower Green.

The National Gallery, London

ONLINE WALKING TOUR

Discovering Devon: National Trust Treasures

Zoom Meeting (Live or Rent)

Wednesday, April 30 | 2:00 p.m. ET

Journey through some of Devon's most captivating National Trust properties, each with its own unique story. From grand estates to hidden collections, history comes to life at every turn. Stephen Benton leads this virtual

continued



A la Ronde, Devon, octagon room with chairs.

©National Trust Images/David Garner / Nicola Shreeve



©National Trust Images/James Beck

18thc Georgian-style Killerton House, Devon

collections in England. Finally, we will step inside the granite walls of Castle Drogo, a unique early 20th-century house designed by renowned architect Sir Edwin Lutyens. We will end our tour with a look at a world of feathers and shells featured at A la Ronde, a 16-sided 1790s house.

TICKETS: \$30 Members; \$40 Non-Members

ONLINE WALKING TOUR

Essex: England's Quiet Corner

Zoom Meeting (Live or Rent)

Wednesday, May 28 | 5:00 p.m. ET

Join Royal Oak for a captivating digital tour of Essex, a county rich in history, natural beauty, and architectural treasures. Led by tour guide Rob Smith, we will explore this southern, low-lying region, home to one of England's longest coastlines, ancient forests, and charming villages. We will explore Colchester, Britain's oldest recorded town, where significant Roman ruins—including a Roman wall—offer a glimpse into the past. Nearby, picturesque Bourne Mill, originally built as a fishing lodge, was later transformed into a 72-bucket watermill that produced the high-quality woolen cloth for which 17th-century Essex was famous. Just a short walk away, visitors will find some of the area's most celebrated inns and pubs. We will venture to Paycocke's House, a stunning Tudor merchant's home adorned with intricate woodcarvings and paneling—an enduring testament to the wealth generated by Essex's prosperous cloth trade. However, no area

continued



Bourne Mill, Essex

©National Trust Images/Megan Taylor



The saltmarsh at Northey Island, Essex. A remote island in the Blackwater Estuary and cut off at high tide.

highlights the outstanding natural beauty of Essex as Blackwater Estuary. This important coastal area is the oldest recorded battlefield in England. Copt Hall Marshes are a remote producing farm along the estuary with an incredible breeding area for birds and waterfowl. Northey Island, a remote tidal island—the single largest block of saltmarsh in Blackwater—is the closest you will get to true Essex wilderness and home to many protected bird species. Travel with us digitally as we explore this quiet county, highlighting incredible areas of natural beauty.

TICKETS: \$30 Members; \$40 Non-Members

IN-PERSON PRIVATE TOUR

Printing Presses at Bowne

In-Person (not recorded)

Saturday, May 31 | 1:00 p.m. ET

Step back in time as we visit Bowne & Co., a unique New York gem that brings the art of letterpress printing to life. Located at the South Street Seaport Museum, this historic print shop continues the centuries-old tradition of small-batch printing, using original equipment from the museum's collection. Printing was central to the economy as every business and transaction required receipts, bills, advertisements, and certificates, and printers like Bowne & Co. filled those needs. Established in 1775, the original Bowne & Co., Inc. was one of the city's oldest printing firms. Today, its namesake carries on this legacy, producing beautifully crafted letterpress prints visiting authentic 19th-century techniques. During our visit, a Bowne & Co. designer will demonstrate the process of setting and locking up limited-edition designs, highlighting some of the more eccentric pieces from the museum's printing and graphic arts collection. The experience includes a look at the museum's collection of historic printing equipment in action, culminating in the chance to print your own creation to take home.



Bewick's Press Room at Cherryburn, Northumberland

MEETING PLACE: Bowne & Co. Stationers, 211 Water St, New York, NY 10038

TICKETS: TBA

Please check the Programs web page at royal-oak.org/event/ for any updates and any additional events added after the time of print.

Kindly add your name to our email list to receive Programs eblasts about upcoming events, special additions, and information about co-sponsored events with like-minded organizations. To add your email, email zoom@royal-oak.org or call 212-480-2889 ext. 200

ROYAL OAK LECTURES



Dr. Amy Boyington, is a social and architectural historian who attained her PhD in architectural history from the University of Cambridge. Dr. Boyington has worked in a curatorial capacity at Holkham Hall, Goodwood House and Woburn Abbey. She has worked as a research consultant for the National Trust at Stowe Landscape Gardens and for Historic Royal Palaces at Kensington Palace. She was recently a Senior Properties Historian for English Heritage. Her debut book is *Hidden Patrons: Women and Architectural Patronage in Georgian Britain* (Bloomsbury, 2023). She is now working on her second book *Decadence & Display* (Yale University Press) which focuses on the 18thc country house dining room. Dr. Boyington is a popular historian on social media (@history_with_amy) with over 1.4 million followers.

BEHIND THE SCENES: GEORGIAN BUILDINGS IN TV AND FILM

Britain's grand Georgian buildings have not only stood as architectural masterpieces for centuries, but they have also played a starring role in some of the most beloved English period dramas. Among the finest NT examples, Lyme Park, Cheshire, exemplifies the Georgian country house's Palladian style; its grand façade and formal gardens make it the perfect choice for Mr. Darcy's Pemberley in BBC's *Pride & Prejudice* (1995). Kedleston Hall, designed by Robert Adam, showcases the height of Neoclassical design—the Kedleston state rooms provide a magnificent setting for the film *The Duchess* (2008). The Temple of Apollo at Stourhead set the scene for Mr. Darcy's dramatic first proposal to Elizabeth Bennet in the later *Pride & Prejudice* (2005) film, while Stourhead's Palladian bridge and gardens are highlighted in the background. Meanwhile, Saltram, an elegant Georgian mansion in Devon, lent its interiors to *Sense and Sensibility* (1995), offering an authentic glimpse into 18th-century refinement and taste. Social and architectural historian, Dr. Amy Boyington will explore the histories of these treasures as she traces the development of Georgian architecture and its relationship to 18th-century aristocratic life. She will illustrate gorgeous examples used in period film and television. She will also explore how these houses, as portrayed in film, impacts how we visualize the Georgian period. Identifying these locations in period dramas is not only a delight for viewers (and Royal Oak Foundation members), but their on-screen presence also shapes how we understand and envision the past, influencing our connection to the hallmarks of Georgian architectural style.



John Chu was appointed Senior Curator of Pictures and Sculpture for Midlands at the National Trust, UK in 2021. He joined the NT in 2015 as Assistant Curator of Pictures and Sculpture and worked on exhibitions at Osterley, Powis Castle, and Basildon Park among other properties. He also worked on permanent re-displays of state rooms at The Vyne, Hampshire and Knole, Kent. He graduated from Cambridge University and received a Master of Arts and Ph.D. from Courtauld Institute of Art, London University. He was a visiting lecturer from University of Reading and an Associate Lecturer at Courtauld Institute of Art. He was a Post-Doctoral Fellow at The Paul Mellon Center for Studies in British Art.

J.M.W. TURNER AT PETWORTH: AN ARTIST'S INSPIRATION

The year 2025 marks the 250th anniversary of the birth of Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775–1851), one of the most admired and influential British artists. J.M.W. Turner had a unique relationship with George O'Brien Wyndham, the 3rd Earl of Egremont, who inherited Petworth House and Park, West Sussex, in 1763—now an NT property. The artist was a frequent house guest and was free to explore the house and estate, drawing great inspiration from the beauty of Petworth's interiors, collections, and landscape. As a collector of British art, the 3rd Earl was a great patron and host to many contemporary artists such as Turner, John Constable, and C.R. Leslie. By the late 1820s, Turner

produced drawings of Petworth's interiors and inhabitants. He was also commissioned by Lord Egremont for four paintings to be placed within the Grinling Gibbons wall carvings in Petworth's magnificent Carved Room. Turner's extraordinary talent, combined with the unique opportunity to work at Petworth, allowed him to produce detailed pictorial descriptions of the great house and estate. These masterpieces can be seen at Petworth in the original devised for them after being reinstated in the early 2000s. Join Dr. John Chu, NT Senior Curator of Pictures and Sculpture, as he examines Turner's works which illustrate what life was like at Petworth almost 200 years ago. He will talk about the upcoming NT exhibition *Turner's Vision at Petworth* (June 21–November 16, 2025) which will include 10 views of the house's landscape and paintings and works on loan from the Tate Museum. Finally, he will discuss the artist's relationship with the Earl and demonstrate the impact this extraordinary house and landscape had on one of Britain's celebrated artists.



John Goodall, has been architectural editor at *Country Life* since 2007 and has contributed to CL since 1994. He is the author of several books, including *English House Style: From the Archives of Country Life* and *The English Castle* (2011). *English Castle* received numerous accolades: the 2011 Alice Davis Hitchcock Medallion and the 2013 Historians of British Art Book Prize (pre-1800). The work also received the G. T. Clark Prize for 2007–2012. He read history at Durham University and took an MA and Ph.D. in architectural history from the Courtauld Institute of Art. In 2003 he joined English Heritage as a senior properties historian. He had written several guidebooks for both English Heritage and the National Trust. He acted in 2007 as series consultant for the BBC 1 series *How We Built Britain*. Other projects include contributions to the photographic book *The English Cathedral* by Peter Marlow. He was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London in 2001. Goodall is a patron of the Castle Studies Trust, a UK registered charity founded in 2012.

GARDENS OF GLASS

With the global expansion of 17th-century European trade networks, plant collecting became a matter of both economic and intellectual interest in Britain. Exotic fruits and flowers were prized as prestigious displays of wealth and refinement, fueling an obsession with horticulture among the elite. The fascination began with pineapples and soon extended to citrus trees; a trend particularly championed by King William III. By the late 18th century, a glass house or 'greenhouse' was an architectural mark of a gentleman's garden, even if it was only to grow delicate fruits such as apricots or peaches. John Goodall, Architectural Editor at *Country Life*, will explore the history and development of glass houses at the English country house. Writer John Evelyn described a conservatory in 1650, and by 1700, stone examples were created such as the Orangery at Kensington Palace, and the one built at Dyrham Park in 1701. Keeping exotic and tender plants alive in Britain's cool climate was a challenge—leading to the development of lighter building materials to allow the use – to maximize light. Mr. Goodall will illustrate the Regency period change from separate glass houses outside the main residence to conservatories linked into English country house interiors. There, it was possible for homeowner and guests to enjoy the 'outdoors' and the exotic plants regardless of the weather. Conservatory architecture became more ambitious during the 19th century, such as the Victorian conservatory created at Wentworth Castle, South Yorkshire. Innovations in construction allowed designer Joseph Paxton to create the Great Exhibition of 1851. It featured the largest area of glass used in a building and astonished visitors with its clear walls and ceilings that did not require interior lights. By the late Victorian and Edwardian period, extravagant conservatories were created, mimicking the Great Exhibition. However, the high cost of heating and maintenance led to the structures' decline in the 20th century with many being demolished, including Tyntesfield's grand conservatory in 1916. Mr. Goodall will trace the rise, fall, and revival of Britain's historic glasshouses, exploring their cultural significance and the renewed interest in their restoration today.



Ellen T. Harris is Class of 1949 Professor Emerita at MIT and Visiting Professor at The Juilliard School. Her work includes the award-winning books *George Frideric Handel: A Life with Friends* (Norton, 2014) and *Handel as Orpheus: Voice and Desire in the Chamber Cantatas* (Harvard, 2001). Her research on Handel's finances won the Westrup Prize in 2004. She has performed with John Williams and the Boston Pops and sung the National Anthem at Fenway Park. She is currently preparing a book on performing Handel's operas.

GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL AT HOME

In 1723, the composer George Frideric Handel moved into a new built house on Brook Street in Mayfair, London. He would live there for 36 years, dying in his own bed at the age of 74. From 1723, all of his music, beginning with the opera *Giulio Cesare* and including *Messiah* and all his great oratorios, was composed in this house. Handel rehearsed his singers in his upstairs music room, attracting friends and neighbors who listened. The *maestro* even sold his music from his front parlor. Besides being a nexus for his compositions, Handel also hosted dinners at Brook Street and musicales—reciprocating evenings in the homes of his friends—and displayed his art collection in his home. Professor Emeritus (MIT) Ellen Harris will trace George Frideric Handel's footsteps and activities during his life on Brook Street in London.



India Hicks, a humanitarian, designer, and author, has led an unexpected life. Growing up as the daughter of decorator David Hicks and goddaughter of King Charles, she comes from both British and design royalty. She has authored four design books and consults with fashion, home and lifestyle brands. India has lived in the Bahamas for the past 27 years, where she raised her five children. She now works on the fringes of fashion and in the front lines of disaster relief. She partnered with the disaster relief agency "Global Empowerment Mission" in the aftermath of Hurricane Dorian. She joined GEM's Executive Board in 2020, traveling to the Ukraine to aid with refugee relief and provide emergency supplies. She also is a patron for The Prince's Trust and works to help young women who face disadvantages transform their lives.

LADY PAMELA: MY MOTHER'S EXTRAORDINARY LIFE

For years, British designer and author India Hicks has been sharing anecdotes about the life of her mother, Lady Pamela Hicks. Join Royal Oak as Hicks chronicles the life of 'Lady P' (as she is affectionately known), the daughter of the 1st Earl Mountbatten of Burma, the last viceroy of India. Lady Pamela was a first cousin to Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, and served as a bridesmaid and lady-in-waiting to Queen Elizabeth II, before marrying legendary interior designer David Hicks. Sifting through her parents' archives, India has uncovered a new trove of material about her mother, including letters from the Queen; images of the houses and gardens in which she lived; details of her work during Indian independence; stories about her marriage to David Hicks and the houses he designed; and details of her father's assassination in Ireland. India will also speak about the lessons she has learned from her mother while offering a tribute to Lady Pamela's extraordinary life for lovers of history, royal watchers, and all style enthusiasts.



Victoria Kastner, is the leading scholar and author about the architect Julia Morgan as well as about Hearst Castle, where she worked for 30 yrs as historian. She is the author of *Hearst Castle: The Biography of a Country House*, published by Harry N. Abrams in 2000; *Hearst's San Simeon: The Gardens and the Land*, May 2009; and *Hearst Ranch: Family, Land and Legacy*. She co-authored *The Beverly Hills Hotel: The First 100 years* with Robert Anderson. In 2022, Victoria published; *Julia Morgan: An Intimate Biography* of the trailblazing architect. Ms. Kastner has lectured extensively on Julia Morgan, Hearst's art collection, and the history of collecting for many museums and groups: including at the

Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; the American Museum in Britain in Bath; and the Palace of the Legion of Honor in San Francisco. She has also written for *The London Telegraph*, the American Institute of Architects, Oxford University's *Journal of the History of Collections*, and *The Magazine Antiques*.

FRED ASTAIRE IN LONDON

Though born in Omaha, Nebraska, and raised in New York City, dancer Fred Astaire spent a significant portion of his early career in the United Kingdom. From 1922 to 1932, he and his sister Adele captivated London audiences in three wildly popular West End musicals, sparking a sensation so intense that critics dubbed it “Astairia.” During his time in London, Astaire immersed himself in British culture; he studied music theory at London’s Guildhall School of Music alongside Noël Coward and socialized with the aristocracy. The pair’s decade of dancing and performing in London had a profound effect on Fred. Adele retired from the stage to marry Lord Charles Cavendish, the second son of the Duke of Devonshire, and moved to Lismore Castle in Ireland. With his new dance partner, Claire Luce, Astaire expanded his repertoire, incorporating sweeping, romantic movements as well as an English sense of style. His impeccable fashion sense, effortless charm, and refined elegance—central to his dance films of the 1930s through the 1950s—were deeply influenced by the customs and style he observed while mingling with British high society and even the royal family. Victoria Kastner will explore the profound impact of Astaire’s years in the UK, revealing how his time on the London stage helped shape the dancer, actor, and icon the world came to adore.



Sinclair McKay writes for the *Daily Telegraph*, *the Mail on Sunday* and *The Spectator*. He is a literary critic for the *Telegraph* and the *Spectator*. He has published extensively on Bletchley Park and codebreakers in his books, *The Secret Life of Bletchley Park*, *The Secret Listeners*, and *Bletchley Park Brainteasers*. Among his other books include *Dresden: The Fire and the Darkness* (2020) and *Meeting Churchill: A Life in 90 Encounters* (2023). His upcoming book *St. Petersburg: Sacrifice and Redemption in the City That Defied Hitler*, is due to be released in October 2025. He lives in London’s East End and can – in theory – walk along the Grand Union canal towpath without interruption to Bletchley Park some 48 miles north.

THE LOST WORLD OF BLETCHLEY PARK

At a casual glance, Bletchley Park in Buckinghamshire resembles any other sprawling country Victorian house that might have been owned by a wealthy businessman: in this case stockbroker Sir Herbert Leon. When Bletchley was purchased in 1938 by the Head of Secret Intelligence Service, the estate quickly went from being a hubbub of weekend parties and outdoor country pursuits, to become the nerve centre of Britain’s war: the top-secret headquarters for Britain’s Government Code and Cypher School. Bletchley quickly developed into a place where the nation’s most brilliant mathematical minds—including Alan Turing, whose Bletchley discoveries would fuel the birth of modern computing—toiled alongside cryptographers, debutantes, dons, and factory workers on complex problems with world-wide resonance. Historian Sinclair McKay will describe the cheerfully chaotic life at this code breaking center after its transformation by the British government. He will reveal the day-to-day life at Bletchley, and the activities of the extraordinary men and women who toiled in secret on the estate—secrets they kept for the following decades. Winston Churchill told them proudly, on a visit to the Park in 1941, that they were “the geese that laid the golden eggs and never cackled.” Based on first-hand interviews of surviving code-breakers, Mr. McKay will also describe the entertainments and furtive Bletchley romances that helped ease the pressures faced by operatives as they worked to decipher German coded messages. Finally, he will chronicle how the estate was abandoned, nearly demolished, and almost became a supermarket, before being heroically saved as a museum.



Patrick Monahan, is a writer and independent art advisor, specializing in British paintings, drawings, and sculpture from the eighteenth century to the present. A native New Yorker, he is consulted by collectors and museums on both sides of the Atlantic, including the Museo de Arte de Ponce, Puerto Rico. His written work appears in *Country Life* and *Vanity Fair*, as well as in the exhibition catalogue “Flaming June: the making of an Icon,” Leighton House, London, 2016. He holds an Mphil from the University of Cambridge as well as a BA from the University of Chicago. He lives and works in New York City, with regular visits to London.

FLAMING JUNE: THE MAKING OF AN ICON

Lord Leighton’s painting *Flaming June*, on view at the Meadows Museum in TX, is heralded as a masterpiece of Victorian painting. Yet, its path to recognition was far from straightforward. Created in 1895, during the twilight of the Victorian era, the painting quickly fell into obscurity. By the mid-20th century, it had vanished from public view—until its astonishing rediscovery in 1964, hidden behind a fireplace in a Clapham house set for demolition. Through a most unexpected sequence of events, the painting’s fame was rekindled, and today it is a highlight of the collection of the Museo de Arte de Ponce, Puerto Rico, known as the “Mona Lisa of the Southern Hemisphere.” Join Patrick Monahan—advisor to the Museo de Arte de Ponce, and contributor to *Country Life* and *Vanity Fair*—as he unravels the extraordinary transatlantic journey of this iconic painting, from forgotten relic to one of the world’s most beloved artworks.



Jeremy Musson, LLB Hons, M.Phil, FSA, is an architectural historian and heritage consultant. Born in London, he was educated at UCL and the Warburg Institute, and worked for the Victorian Society and the National Trust, before joining *Country Life*, in 1995, where he was Architectural Editor in 1998-2007. He continues to contribute to *Country Life*; and he is the author of several books, and co-wrote and presented BBC 2’s *The Curious House Guest* series. A Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, and an affiliate lecturer of Cambridge University’s department of architecture, he is also Chairman of the Historic Houses Foundation. As a heritage consultant since 2007, he has worked on major historic sites including St Paul’s Cathedral, Ickworth Park, Suffolk, and Hardwick Hall, Derbyshire.

THE COUNTRY HOUSES OF JAMES WYATT (1746 –1813)

Talented, urbane, and highly influential, James Wyatt, RA, was one of the great designers of his age. Architect to King George III, his designs shaped some of Britain’s most remarkable country houses and royal residences. Wyatt trained in Italy (1762–68) and was a master of Neoclassicism, making him a formidable rival to Robert Adam in the 1770s. He designed works for the royal family at Kew and Frogmore, further cementing his reputation as favored architect of the monarchy. His Neoclassical country houses—such as Heaton Hall in Manchester, Dodington Park in Gloucestershire, and Castle Coole County Fermanagh—are among the finest of their kind. He also transformed existing estates, reimagining Plas Newydd in Anglesey and Goodwood House in Sussex, while designing exquisite interiors for properties such as Burton Constable Hall in Yorkshire. Beyond his classical style, Wyatt was a pioneer of the Gothic Revival, designing romantic, medieval-inspired masterpieces such as Fonthill Abbey in Wiltshire and Ashridge in Hertfordshire. He also worked on several cathedrals and redesigned the Bishop of Durham’s grand residence, Auckland Castle. Wyatt’s contributions also include work on Christ Church, Magdalen, Oriel, and Worcester Colleges, Oxford. In this lecture, historian and British country house expert Jeremy Musson explores the life and principal works of James Wyatt, shedding light on one of the most versatile and accomplished architects of the Georgian age.



Troy Scott Smith was born in Yorkshire into a family of committed naturalists. He spent his childhood exploring the geology and flora of the National Parks of England. He began his gardening at a young age, quickly developing a style of relaxed planting that mixed native wildings together with exotics. In 1990, after a total of five years studying horticulture and garden design, Troy joined the National Trust. In the years since, Troy has led the gardens at The Courts, Bodnant and Sissinghurst, where he has been Head Gardener since 2013. Troy combines his work at Sissinghurst with design and consultancy, writing, teaching and lecturing. He has recently taken on a small farm in his home county of Yorkshire, where he continues to experiment, laying down sustainable planting for the future.

SISSINGHURST

In 1930, writer Vita Sackville-West and diplomat Harold Nicolson transformed a neglected Elizabethan farmstead in Kent into Sissinghurst Castle Garden—now one of the world’s most celebrated gardens. Known for its intimate “garden rooms,” lush plantings, and internationally renowned collection of old roses, Sissinghurst remains a masterpiece of 20th-century garden design. As the garden approaches its centenary in 2030, join head gardener Troy Scott Smith for an in-depth look at its past, present, and future. He will share insights into the enduring legacy of Sackville-West and Nicolson’s vision, the challenges of conservation in a changing climate, and the ongoing efforts to keep Sissinghurst vibrant while preserving its historic charm. From the famed White Garden to the exquisite Rose Garden, this lecture offers a rare glimpse into the artistry and dedication behind one of England’s most treasured landscapes and explores the enduring magic of Sissinghurst.



Lady Henrietta Spencer-Churchill is an interior designer, founder of Woodstock Designs, and author of multiple books on design and historic styles, including *The Life of the House*, *Blenheim and the Churchill Family*, and *Classic English Interiors*. Her latest book is *Blenheim: 300 Years of Life as a Palace* published by Rizzoli 2024. Though Lady Henrietta no longer lives at Blenheim, she still spends ample time at the palace, which is the official residence of her older brother, Charles, the 12th Duke of Marlborough. Lady Henrietta lectures widely on the history of interiors and design in the U.K. and abroad. She maintains an active interior design practice working all over the world.

BLENHEIM: 300 YEARS OF LIFE IN A PALACE

Regarded as perhaps the greatest of the stately homes and the finest example of Baroque architecture in Great Britain, Blenheim, in Woodstock, Oxfordshire, is a one of England’s treasure houses. Designed by John Vanbrugh and Nicholas Hawksmoor in the early 1700s for the Duke of Marlborough, Blenheim is filled with artistic treasures crafted by the best talents of the age. Fine furniture and magnificent tapestries highlight incredible paintings from notable artists such as Joshua Reynolds and John Singer Sargent. The lavish rooms provide a window into the history of collecting, changing styles of English interiors, and reflects on England’s own history—as well as the history of the Spencer-Churchill family. Lady Henrietta Spencer-Churchill, the 12th generation of the family, will give us an illustrated private tour of the palace. In addition to the gilded staterooms full of priceless *objet d’arts*, Lady Henrietta will show the family’s private apartments, and take us behind-the-scenes into secret corridors and the “downstairs” staff area. She will also share her first-hand experience as one of the palace’s stewards, and explain the importance of Blenheim’s restoration, bringing the estate into the 21st century.



Hugo Vickers, is well known as a biographer, lecturer and broadcaster, and is an acknowledged expert on the Royal Family. He has covered events from the first wedding of the Prince of Wales and other royal weddings; the funerals of Diana, the Queen Mother, Prince Philip, the State Funeral and Committal of The Queen; and the Coronation of Charles III. *The Financial Times* recently described him as: ‘the most knowledgeable royal biographer on the planet.’ He has written many biographies of 20th-century figures, including Cecil Beaton, Vivien Leigh, the Duchess of Windsor, Princess Andrew of Greece, and the Queen Mother. His first biography, about Gladys Deacon, Duchess of Marlborough (1881-1977) was based on his interviews with her before her death. In 2022, he published a book with HRH The Duke of Kent, entitled *A Royal Life*. In 2024, Mr. Vickers published a novel *Pining in Paradise* and his biography of Clarissa, Countess of Avon (widow of PM Anthony Eden). When not writing, he travels through the Commonwealth and Overseas Territories, establishing Commonwealth Walkways. Mr. Vickers is a Deputy Lieutenant for the Royal County of Berkshire and Captain of the Lay Stewards of St George’s Chapel, Windsor Castle.

THE QUEST FOR QUEEN MARY

Mary of Teck was Queen of the United Kingdom, the Dominions, and Empress of India from 1910-1936. The daughter of a German nobleman and granddaughter of George III, she was always destined to become Queen. First, being betrothed to the eldest son of the Prince of Wales, and after his unexpected death, then being married to his younger brother who later became King-Emperor George V. But what do we know about Queen Mary besides her role as mother and wife in the Royal Family, her role during WWI, and her support for her second son after the abdication of his brother? Some biographies, films and television portray her as a rigid and cold figure in pearls, constantly visiting country houses where she coveted small treasures like a magpie. Certainly, she was aware of her place in royal history as wife of the King. She was also a mother and grandmother—whose grandchildren said she loved the moments when they could be “a small family and do small things”. The late Queen Elizabeth II invited author James Pope-Hennessy to write the official biography of her grandmother. Rather than relying only on the Royal Archives, he set off between 1955 and 1958 to interview Queen Mary’s surviving relatives, and traveled all over Europe as well as to Sandringham and Balmoral. His hilarious descriptions of his interviews with the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester—and the story of his stay with the Duke and Duchess of Windsor—brings to life not only their memories of Queen Mary, but explains what he saw as life in the royal family. He also had humorous encounters with Princess Pauline of Wied; Duke Philipp of Württemberg and his monkish brother, Dom Odo; and the *schnapps* drinking Prince Axel of Denmark. Royal historian Mr. Hugo Vickers brings all of these characters to life in this sparkling lecture about Queen Mary. He will regale us with funny tales from Pope-Hennessy’s notes, and also tell the other stories that he has heard from members of the British Royal Family. Finally, he will describe his own research into the life of the Queen-Empress, contradicting many of her popular depictions such as in *The Crown*. He will bring to life the Queen who was a witness to two world wars, a bystander to a scandal that rocked the monarchy, and a monarch who experienced the changes of British society from the beginning of the 20th century until the 1950s.



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A Treatise on the Ananas or Pineapples by Adam Taylor, 1769, in the library at Durham Massey. Growing pineapples in Britain was considered an exotic novelty and challenge for British gardeners.

SPRING 2025 PROGRAMS