SPECIAL INTEREST EVENT

PROGRESS & REFORM IN THE VICTORIAN AGE 2023

THURSDAY 30TH MARCH TO SUNDAY 2ND APRIL 2023
Britain was at the zenith of its global power in the Victorian era, the leading nation in Europe and the dominant geo-political actor of the age. It was a supremely confident nation politically, economically, religiously, scientifically, imperially, and culturally. Its political character was transformed by reform, beginning with the immediate impact of the ‘Great’ Reform Act in 1832, and ending with universal male suffrage and what was effectively democracy. Advocates of reform celebrated this, from Lord Grey to Gladstone, and even Tory critics of reform learned to use it to their own advantage, from Peel to Lord Salisbury. Progress was the order of the era. Declaring itself ‘The Workshop of the World’, industry was the crucible for the engineering triumphs of the age, from railroads to ironclads. But all of this came with a price, and the many voices of Victorian cultural prophets were raised against complacent champions of progress. Thomas Carlyle’s denunciation of materialism, John Ruskin’s ecological cries against industrialisation, and William Morris’ championing of the Arts and Crafts movement against mass production, were all eloquently raised against cultural complacency. Victorians simultaneously basked in socio-economic progress and worried publicly and consistently over the many inequalities that resulted in industrial and imperial Britain.

This conference will explore the rich variety of this culture, from Lord Macaulay’s celebration of English Exceptionalism to the socially critical comedy of Charles Dickens’ novels; from the celebratory poetry of Alfred, Lord Tennyson to the anarchist utopia that is William Morris’ News from Nowhere; from the religious doubts promoted by geology and Darwinian evolutionary theory to the Christian Socialism of Tractarian clergy; from the paintings of Turner and Constable to those of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (initially guided by Ruskin.)
THURSDAY 30TH MARCH

2.00 – 4.00PM Registration and Afternoon Tea
4.00PM Programme Welcome
4.15PM ‘The historical imagination of Thomas Babington Macaulay and the Victorian idea of progress’
  Dr Joshua Bennett
6.30PM Welcome Drinks Reception
7.30PM Dinner

FRIDAY 31ST MARCH

8.00 – 9.00AM Breakfast
9.15AM Tennyson and Progress
  Dr Michael J Sullivan
10.45 – 11.15AM Morning Refreshments
11.15AM Progress Abroad: Latin America and the Victorians
  Dr Alex Middleton
12.45 – 1.30PM Lunch
2.00PM Progress and Religion
  Professor Brian Young
3.30 – 4.00PM Afternoon Refreshments
4.00PM The Opposition: who resisted ‘progress’ and why?
  Professor Michael Bentley
6.00PM An opportunity to attend Evensong in The Cathedral
7.30PM Dinner

SATURDAY 1ST APRIL

8.00 – 9.00AM Breakfast
9.15AM Victorians and Numbers: The Data Revolution of the Nineteenth Century
  Professor Lawrence Goldman
10.45 – 11.15AM Morning Refreshments
11.15AM Charles Dodgson and Christ Church
  Dr Martin Grossel
12.45 – 1.30PM Lunch
2.00PM Optional activities
3.00 – 4.00PM Afternoon Refreshments
7.00PM Closing Drinks Reception
7.30PM Gala Banquet

SUNDAY 2ND APRIL

8.00 – 9.00AM Breakfast
9.30AM Pioneering collectors of Early Italian Paintings
  Jacqueline Thalmann
10.45 – 11.15AM Morning Refreshments
11.15AM Transport Failures and Steamy Romance
  Professor Sophie Ratcliffe
12.45PM Lunch
2.00PM Depart
HOW TO BOOK

The programme fee is £615 per person and the *en suite* supplement is £90 per room. This includes the full lecture programme, three nights’ accommodation, all meals, dinner wines and refreshments as timetabled. Gratuities are not expected. Bookings can be made online or by telephone. Full payment must be made at the time of booking. Online booking is available on the ‘Visitors and Conferences’ section of our website.

A full refund [subject to an administration fee] will be offered in the event of cancellations made up to and including 60 days prior to the start of the event. No refunds will be offered after this time. All monies are held by Christ Church.

Please direct enquiries to:

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FORCE MAJEURE

The College reserves the right to make alterations and substitutions to the programme. It will not be liable for any non-performance under this contract arising out of circumstances beyond its control.
**Professor Brian Young**, the Academic Director for this programme, is Professor of Intellectual History at Christ Church, Oxford. He is the author of *Religion and Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century Britain* and *The Victorian Eighteenth Century*. He has co-edited books with Stefan Collini, Richard Whatmore, and Karen O’Brien, and has published extensively on intellectual and religious history from the eighteenth to the twentieth century.

**Joshua Bennett** is Darby Fellow and Tutor in History at Lincoln College, Oxford. He is the author of *God and Progress: religion and historical thought in British intellectual culture, 1845-1914*, and is currently working on a major study of the relationship between secularisation and the growth of the social sciences in nineteenth-century Europe. He has published widely on nineteenth-century British religious and intellectual history, particularly as it intersected with European ideas and traditions.

**Michael Bentley** is a Senior Research Fellow at St Hugh’s College, Oxford and Emeritus Professor of History at the University of St Andrews. A leading authority on the political and intellectual history of Victorian Britain, his many books include *Politics Without Democracy, 1815-1914; Lord Salisbury’s World; and The Life and Thought of Herbert Butterfield*.

**Professor Lawrence Goldman** was Tutorial Fellow in Modern History at St. Peter’s College, Oxford; Director of the Institute of Historical Research; and the Editor of the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. He is often heard on Radio 4’s ‘In Our Time’, most recently on the 1865 Jamaican Rebellion (3 November 2022). This talk is from his new book, *Victorians and Numbers: Statistics and Society in Nineteenth Century Britain* (OUP, 2022).

**Dr Martin Grossel** is an Emeritus Student in Organic Chemistry at Christ Church and an Emeritus Fellow of Southampton University. Like Dodgson, he was Curator of the Christ Church Senior Common Room for many years and is currently writing its history. He uses the works of Dodgson and others for outreach activities with a view to increasing the public’s understanding of science.

**Alex Middleton** Fellow and College Lecturer in History at St Hugh’s College, Oxford, where he teaches nineteenth-century British and European history. A specialist in political history, he has published widely on Victorian liberalism and reform and is the author of a major forthcoming study, *Rethinking Empire: English Liberalism and Imperial Government, 1820-60*.

**Sophie Ratcliffe** is Professor of Literature and Creative Criticism at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford. A regular reviewer in leading literary journals and newspapers, she is the author of *On Sympathy and P.G. Wodehouse: a life in letters*, and a memoir, *The Lost Properties of Love*.

**Michael Sullivan** is Lecturer in English at St Catherine’s College, Oxford, and General Editor of The Complete Works of Alfred Tennyson for Oxford University Press. His research spans the poetics and verse cultures of the eighteenth and long nineteenth centuries, with publications on Victorian and Romantic literature and a special interest in the works of Tennyson, Byron, Wordsworth, and Dickinson. He took his PhD in English Literature at Trinity College, Cambridge, and was a Junior Research Fellow at Christ Church.

**Jacqueline Thalmann** has been the Curator of Christ Church Picture Gallery, Oxford since 2003. Before that she was research associate at Sir John Soane’s Museum and the ‘Census of Works of Art and Architecture Known in the Renaissance’ at the Humboldt Universität in Berlin. Since being at Christ Church her research interests have increasingly focused on the college’s collection and the history of collecting, in particular on Christ Church’s art benefactors.
Christ Church, established by Henry VIII in 1546, is a unique foundation of college and cathedral. It is home to some 650 undergraduate and postgraduate students and over eighty Senior Members. Christ Church occupies a 150-acre site in the heart of the city, including the Meadow, a tranquil area of pasture, preserved for centuries and bounded by the Rivers Isis and Cherwell.

Lectures take place in the Sir Michael Dummett Lecture Theatre, located on the ground-floor in Blue Boar Quad. The Lecture Theatre has fixed seating with foldaway writing tables and is fitted with a sound amplification system with an induction loop for hearing-aid users.

Accommodation is located in buildings of architectural and historical interest which reflect the different centuries since the college’s foundation. Rooms are single, twin-occupancy or double-occupancy and are situated on the ground, first, second and third floors (low floor rooms are available on request). All rooms have tea and coffee-making facilities, complimentary Wi-Fi and a refrigerator. A free laundry room is also provided.

Meals are prepared under the direction of the college’s Executive Head Chef and are served in the magnificent Tudor Dining Hall. Dietary requirements can be catered for provided they are requested at the time of booking. Refreshments are served in the Sir Michael Dummett Exhibition Space. The Buttery Bar, adjacent to Hall, will be open at set times during the event. House wines, included in the price, will be served at dinner. Lift access is available to the Buttery Bar and Hall.