

SPECIAL INTEREST DAY – Friday 16 October 2026

To be held in the Dove Suite at The Ark, Turners Hill. Timing 10.00 - 15.00

Subject: The Houses of Parliament – 1000 Years of a British Icon

Lecturer: Dr Caroline Shenton DPhil (Oxon) FSA FRHistS

This Special Interest Day of three lectures is Caroline's flagship and most popular day. With the restoration of the Palace of Westminster in the news, it's a highly-topical event that covers a thousand years of the history, art and architecture of Britain's most famous building. Beginning with its medieval origins as a royal palace, we will see the complex transformed into the Tudor Houses of Parliament; burned down in the disastrous fire of 1834; rebuilt by Barry & Pugin; damaged in the London Blitz; and then finishing with an update on the current multi-billion pound plans to restore this great survivor for the 21st century. Caroline will bring along to the study day a selection of artefacts from the old and new Palaces in her own collections, and signed copies of her award-winning books will be available for purchase at a discount, if desired.

Lecture 1 - The Day Parliament Burned Down

Lecture 2 - Mr Barry's War: Rebuilding Westminster

Buffet Lunch

Lecture 3 - From the Suffragettes to Restoration and Renewal

Dr Caroline Shenton is an archivist and historian. She was formerly Director of the Parliamentary Archives and before that a senior archivist at the National Archives, and a fellow of a number of learned societies. Her book *The Day Parliament Burned Down* won top prize at the Political Book Awards in 2013, and its sequel *Mr Barry's War*, about the rebuilding of Parliament, was a book of the year for the *Daily Telegraph* and *BBC History Magazine* in 2016. She was Political Writer in Residence at Gladstone's Library in 2017, and her third book *National Treasures. Saving the Nation's Art in World War Two* was published in November 2021 and was shortlisted for the Historical Writers Association Non Fiction Crown.



J M W Turner - 'The Burning of Parliament'



The Palace of Westminster during the Blitz
(Parliamentary Art Collection)



Elizabeth Tower – Big Ben in June 2022 after restoration