

Arms and Armour Summer School 2025

Dates	Monday 14 to Friday 18 July 2025
Times	10.45–16.30 each day
Location	Theatre and Galleries
Level	Introductory



Overview

Uncover the remarkable history of arms and armour through one of the finest collections in the world. Over the course of an immersive week, we'll introduce you to a wide range of rare and important examples, from medieval Europe to 19th-century Asia. Through lively talks and hands-on demonstrations delivered by our leading experts and craftspeople, you'll learn how arms and armour functioned, how they were produced, and the ways in which they developed.

Each morning of the summer school will offer in-depth, theatre-based presentations while in the afternoon, spotlight talks will delve into a particular aspect of arms and armour

history. We'll complete each day with a combination of gallery tours, object handling and demonstrations, offering you opportunities to get up close to real and replica pieces.

Over five days, you'll gain a broad knowledge of the subject, enabling you to recognise and understand the major characteristics and material developments of European and Asian arms and armour, as well as becoming familiar with the museum's outstanding collections.

Monday: An introduction to European and Asian Arms and Armour

We'll start the week with an exploration of the development of arms and armour in Europe, from the early Middle Ages. Examining pieces from the collection alongside a range of sources, we'll discover how arms and armour changed according to function, technological innovation, contemporary fashion and princely patronage. We'll also look at examples from India and Persia, examining their form, function and decorative purpose, helping to contextualise the world of the Indian and Persian warrior.

In the afternoon, our spotlight talk will focus on a rare painted helmet, likely from 16th-century Nuremberg, which will reveal the wide range of surface decoration often applied to armour. We'll then complete the day with object handling and gallery tours, giving the opportunity to get to know the Collection's arm and armour.

Tuesday: Making and Decorating

On day two, focus will turn to the construction of personal body armour in Europe from the Middle Ages onwards. We'll reveal armour's dual function as both practical defensive clothing and visual statement of wealth and prestige. We'll also explore how individual skill and craft knowledge were vital in the construction of metal armour and its decoration in later centuries, looking at the role of forge-based manufacture, and how Renaissance masters created extraordinary sculptural armour, adorned with beautiful and complex surface decoration.

Tuesday's spotlight talk will uncover the techniques used to embellish daggers made in the court workshops of emperors Jahangir and Shah Jahan in the Indian subcontinent during the 17th century. We'll then end the day with a special talk and demonstration from Leo 'Tod' Todeschini, of the renowned Tod's Workshop, and the handling of a select group of Indian daggers.

Wednesday: Mounted Combat

On Wednesday we'll focus on mounted combat, learning that elite warriors fought on horseback for centuries in Europe before the advent of the medieval knight. We'll also investigate the qualities that made knights exceptional, peeling away generations of misconceptions to explore the real battlefield roles played by the medieval 'man of arms'. We'll discuss how knights are usually misrepresented as an obsolete aristocratic class whose military, social and political dominance was overthrown by ordinary people with guns and will trace the later military history of the knightly class to discover the real cause of their ultimate demise.

Wednesday's spotlight talk will explore the crucial role of mounted combat in the expansion of the Mughal Empire (1526-1857), looking particularly at horse armour. Bringing the day to a close, we'll be joined by Mark 'Griff' Griffin for a practical demonstration of equestrian armour, together with a tour of the Collection's famous horse armours.

Thursday: Sport and Hunting

Thursday brings us to sport and hunting. We'll examine the development of the tournament over the course of 600 years, from the mock combats of the 11th and 12th centuries to the complex, highly choreographed spectacles of the Renaissance. Looking at a rich array of visual and textual sources, you'll see how arms and armour became increasingly specialised, and we'll examine the role of powerful individuals in driving these changes. Our attention will then turn to hunting weapons, from the simple spear to the technically complex wheellock rifle. We'll learn how hunting was a way for both men and women to display their strength, skill and status.

Thursday's spotlight talk will introduce the Indian Katar or 'Jamdhar', revealing how this efficient, cross-cultural weapon was used, embellished and venerated across India. We'll then complete the day with an opportunity to learn more about our collection of sporting arms and armour, through object handling and gallery tours.

Friday: Black Powder

On our final day, we'll explore the emergence of firearms technology in Asia, and its spread across the world between 1300-1650. You'll learn about the technological developments and artistry of the gunmaker, together with the political and cultural impact of its introduction across societies. We'll also trace the more recent history of firearms, from the establishment of the gun as a central weapon of war, to the widespread adoption of smokeless powder. This period also saw ever-increasing global interactions, and we'll see how these are reflected in both the form and function of firearms.

Friday's spotlight talk will investigate a group of 18th-century rockets, a rocket sword and rocket flags, originally presented to George IV, now housed at the British Royal Collection. Bringing the week to a close, we'll have the opportunity to learn more about the Collection's historic firearms, through object handling and gallery tours.

Timetable

	Mon 14 July	Tue 15 July	Wed 16 July	Thu 17 July	Fri 18 July
	A History of Arms and Armour	Making and Decorating	Mounted Combat	Sport and Hunting	Black Powder
10.45-11.00 (15 minutes)	Welcome and overview	Day overview	Day overview	Day overview	Day overview
11.00-11.45 (45 minutes)	<i>European Arms and Armour</i> , with Keith Downen	<i>The Construction of European Armour</i> , with David Edge	<i>Through the Walls of Babylon: Armoured Cavalry 1100-1500</i> , with Toby Capwell	<i>Sport and Hunting</i> , with Keith Downen	<i>A Global History of Firearms: 1300-1650</i> , with Calum Robertson
11.45-12.00 (15 minutes)	Coffee break	Coffee break	Coffee break	Coffee break	Coffee break
12.00-12.45 (45 minutes)	<i>Indian and Persian Arms and Armour</i> , with Davinder Toor	<i>The Decoration of European Armour</i> , with David Edge	<i>'Cursed, Abominable Device': Armoured Cavalry and Firearms 1500-1650</i> , with Toby Capwell	<i>Sport and Hunting</i> , with Keith Downen	<i>A Global History of Firearms: 1650-1900</i> , with Calum Robertson
12.45-13.00 (15 minutes)	Q&A	Q&A	Q&A	Q&A	Q&A
13.00-14.00 (1 hour)	Lunch (not provided)	Lunch (not provided)	Lunch (not provided)	Lunch (not provided)	Lunch (not provided)
Spotlight Talks					
14.00-14.30 (30 minutes)	<i>'These warlike champions all in armour shine' Medieval painted armour</i> , with Keith Downen	<i>Mughal Daggers</i> , with Susan Stronge	<i>'Outstripping the Wind': Mughal Mounted Combat</i> , with Nicole Ioffredi	<i>Jaws of Death: Indian Katar</i> , with Davinder Toor	<i>18th-Century Indian War Rockets</i> , with Simon Metcalf
14.30-14.45 (15 minutes)	Q&A	Q&A	Q&A	Q&A	Q&A
14.45-15.00 (15 minutes)	Comfort break	Comfort break	Comfort break	Comfort break	Comfort break
Tours and Demonstrations					
15.00-16.30 (60 minutes)	Object handling. with Keith Downen Gallery tour with Oliver Jones	Demo with Leo 'Tod' Todeschini Object Handling, with Nicole Ioffredi	Demo with Mark Griffin Gallery tour with Oliver Jones	Object handling, with Nicole Ioffredi Gallery tour, with Oliver Jones	Object handling, with Keith Downen Gallery tour with Oliver Jones

External Contributors

Toby Capwell is an independent scholar and leading authority on medieval and Renaissance arms and armour. Over the last 30 years he has worked with many of the world's great collections, including the Imperial Armoury in Vienna, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the V&A Museum and the Royal Armouries in Leeds, and has served as Curator of Arms and Armour at Glasgow Museums and the Wallace Collection, where he worked for 16 years until January 2023. He is a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries and a Freeman of the Worshipful Company of Armourers in London. He is the author of many books on armour, weapons and tournaments, has curated numerous exhibitions, and frequently appears in film, television and online media.

David Edge is currently Armourer Emeritus at the Wallace Collection, having been its armourer and metals conservator since 1975 and for many years armour curator as well, until his appointment as Head of Conservation in 2004. He has lectured and published widely on the history, conservation and analysis of arms and armour, and has always been a passionate advocate of museum education, founding the concept of armour-handling at the Wallace and working with both schools and at university level to promote and encourage wider knowledge of the subject.

Mark Griffin is a historian with many strings to his bow. As well as running a historical events company that brings the past to life at venues around the world and making many tv appearances, he's an arms and armour collector and enthusiast and has taken part in many jousts over the past few decades. He'll be bringing harnesses of armour with him to explain its use and go through the experiences of the mounted knight in the late medieval and early Tudor periods.'

Simon Metcalf is The King's Armourer at the Royal Collection. He has previously worked in the Conservation Departments of the Wallace Collection, the Royal Armouries and V&A Museum. His research interests include the historical metalworking techniques and materials used in arms and armour. He is a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries and an accredited Conservator-Restorer with the UK Institute of Conservation

Dr Calum Robertson is Senior Curator of Modern and Military History at National Museums Scotland, where he is responsible for the military collections from c.1600 to the present. His current research focuses on arms and armour, particularly traditional Scottish weapons and the history of collecting.

Susan Stronge recently retired as Senior Curator in the Asian Department of the Victoria & Albert Museum and is now an honorary senior research fellow in the museum's research department. She is a specialist in the arts of the Mughal empire in the late 16th and 17th centuries.

Leo 'Tod' Todeschini has been making replica weapons for 25 years, specialising in the period from 1200 – 1500. His aim is to make artefacts that have an authentic look and feel. His clients include serious re-enactors, collectors, martial artists, museums and historic institutions. He also makes fully functional fantasy weapons for film and TV. Tod has a passion for making YouTube films about historic weapons, or subjects that he feels

are slightly misunderstood. These films are epitomised by the 'Arrows vs Armour' series which were jointly presented by Dr Tobias Capwell, former Curator of Arms and Armour at the Wallace Collection.

These activities are undertaken under his company banner of 'Tods Workshop'.

Wallace Collection Contributors

Keith Downen is Curator of Arms and Armour, having previously been an Assistant Curator at the Royal Armouries, Leeds. He is a Fellow of both the Society of Antiquaries and Royal Historical Society and has published and lectured widely on all aspects of arms and armour and military history. His main specialisms include the British Civil Wars and armourers' workshops, and he has a particular interest in the role of arms and armour in expressing identity in medieval and early modern societies.

Nicole Ioffredi is the Cronk Exhibitions Research Assistant. She assisted with the delivery of the exhibition Ranjit Singh: Sikh, Warrior, King. She is currently researching the collection's arms and armour from South Asia.

Oliver Jones is Informal Learning and Content Producer. With a background in re-enactment and experimental archaeology, he has spearheaded the Wallace Collection's approach to teaching about arms and armour, developing an object handling programme, talks and tours.

Davinder Toor is a Sikh, Indian and Islamic art collector and author. A trustee of the Wallace Collection, he has acted as a consultant to major private collectors, auction houses and institutions such as the British Museum, Victoria & Albert Museum and Wallace Collection. He currently lectures on the Arts of the Royal Sikh Courts for the Victoria & Albert Museum's prestigious 'Arts of Asia' course. Most recently he co-curated the acclaimed Ranjit Singh: Sikh, Warrior, King exhibition at the Wallace Collection in 2024

Previous Skills, Knowledge or Experience

None required; this summer school is designed as an introduction to the subject for those with no or little pre-existing knowledge of art history.

Joining Information

The summer school will be taught in the Wallace Collection Theatre and in galleries throughout the museum. Please meet each day in the Theatre, on the Lower Ground Floor.

Tickets are for all five dates. Morning tea and coffee will be provided; participants should make their own arrangements for lunch.
