

## Conference on Arms and Armour from Asia, Africa and the Ottoman World

---

**Dates** Friday 13 March and Saturday 14 March 2026  
**Times** 10.30–17.00 GMT, followed by a drinks reception until 19.00 on the Friday  
**Location** At the museum (Theatre) and online (Zoom)

---



Ankus (detail), around 1865

---

### Event Description

The Wallace Collection is home to one of the finest assemblages of arms and armour in a public collection. Our newly published *Catalogue of Arms and Armour from Asia, Africa and the Ottoman World* and our free display, *Swords of Lucknow*, highlight this previously understudied part of the museum's collections.

Delve into the world of arms and armour and learn about their important role both within and beyond warfare. Discussions will centre around courtly culture and diplomacy, making and decorating, cross-cultural interactions and colonial collecting histories.

---

## Friday 13 March

- 10.30–10.35 **Welcome and Introduction**
- 10.35–11.00 **Opening Keynote – Davinder Toor**
- 11.00–11.15 **Q&A**
- 

### Colonial Collecting Histories

- 11.15–11.35 ***'His insignia of Chiefship, I captured': The construction and taking of British colonial war trophies in India***  
**Nicole Hartwell**  
While it is widely recognised that looting took place in colonial conflicts fought during the course of the 19th century, how did British military officers themselves understand and discuss this practice? To unravel this issue the following talk examines the provenance of three artefacts, regarded at the time as 'war trophies,' and said to have been taken from the South Asian military commander Kunwar Singh during the Uprising of 1857-8.
- 11.35–11.55 ***The Epistemology and Anatomy of Loot in the Clive Collection***  
**Rhea Tuli Partridge**  
This paper focuses on objects in the Clive Collection (National Trust) associated with Tipu Sultān (1751-1799) and the Siege of Srirangapatna (1799). Such objects include arms and armour, textiles and metalwork, all of which have been formally categorised as 'loot' or sanctioned war acquisitions according to British military conduct. This categorisation presents the objects' acquisition or provenance as stable, lawful and largely resolved. Through a new approach to provenance research called *lut*, this paper interrogates the provenance narrative of 'loot' in the Clive Collection, exposing its instability and recovering the histories, meanings and voices it obscures. It reveals ambiguities in British military laws, protocols and terminologies; doubts surrounding the authenticity of the objects; and the overlap between colonial military acquisitions and 'gifts'. In doing so, *lut* enables more critical and layered engagement with colonial collections, an approach increasingly demanded by both institutions and audiences.
- 11.55–12.15 **Q&A**
- 12.15–12.30 **Tea Break**
- 12.30–12.50 ***Abyssinia 1868***  
**Eyob Derillo**  
The 1867–1868 British Expedition to Abyssinia culminated in the capture of Mäqdäla (Magdala), the death of Tewodros II, and the extraction of a substantial hoard of loot—including firearms, swords, banners, regalia, religious and ethnographic items, manuscripts, sacred textiles, carved ivories and woodwork, jewellery, medals, and architectural fragments. Largely dispersed into British museums and private collections, these objects have since foregrounded enduring debates over restitution and the propriety of repatriation. The King's Own Royal Regiment (Lancaster) participated in the 1868 Magdala campaign; its associated collection, housed within the King's Own Royal Regiment Museum at Lancaster City Museum, comprises over thousands of objects, notably uniforms, medals, and the original Regulation Colours

from the Battle of Culloden. The regiment's long history (1680–1959) and connections to subsequent conflicts provide a rich provenance framework for objects looted during the Magdala campaign. In 2023, Eyob Derillo was commissioned by the King's Own to identify looted items and provide historical context, contributing to ongoing provenance research and restitution discussions.

12.50–13.10 ***Punitive Expeditions and Victorian Plunder: Britain in Asante and Benin***  
**Barnaby Phillips**

In 1874, 1896 and 1897, the British sent armies to West Africa, and inflicted humiliating defeats on two of the most powerful kingdoms in West Africa; Asante and Benin. On each occasion the royal palace was systematically looted, and the plunder brought back to Britain, where it aroused keen interest from leading museums and collectors. The ramifications of these events are still being felt today, in the debates around colonial loot, museums and the legacy of empire. Barnaby Phillips highlights similarities and differences between these events, and their significance to Britain, Asante and Benin.

13.10–13.30 **Q&A**

13.30–14.30 Lunch [not provided]

---

**Beyond the Battlefield: Courtly Culture & Diplomacy**

14.30–14.50 ***Forging Friendship: Japanese Arms and Armour for the British Court, 1613-1952***

**Rachel Peat Underhill**

Arms and armour have played a central role in Anglo-Japanese cultural exchange for more than 350 years – from the earliest diplomatic gifts to careful symbols of 20th-century alliance. This paper will explore some of the most outstanding works exchanged between the British and Japanese courts, spanning lavishly mounted swords to silk-laced armours. Join Rachel Peat Underhill to consider how the craftsmanship, presentation and even later display of these pieces conveyed careful diplomatic messages between the two nations.

14.50–15.10 ***The keris: The many lives of a Southeast Asian weapon***  
**Fiona Asokacitta**

Drawing on examples from the Wallace collection, my talk will explore the keris, a traditional dagger from Indonesia. We will see how one object can live many lives, both in Indonesia and in Britain: as a weapon, a curio, a diplomatic gift, an ethnographic specimen, and as a contested national symbol. The keris is ubiquitous in almost all regions of the Indonesian archipelago, and is also produced in the Malay world, Thailand, Brunei, and the Philippines. However, beyond its function as a weapon, the keris was and is understood in Indonesia as a potent spiritual object, capable of exercising its own agency and desires. For centuries, it has served as patrimony: familial kerises were passed down from fathers to sons, and at the highest level, kerises were royal regalia signifying one's legitimacy to rule. The keris is also a common gift, exchanged by rulers and commoners alike. Over the past four centuries, the keris has captivated European collectors, drawn in by its craftsmanship, as well as the countless stories of its spiritual powers and the physical threat of 'poisoned' blades.

15.10–15.30 **Q&A**

15.30–15.45 **Short Break**

15.45–16.05 ***A Cloak and Dagger Mystery: The Multiple Meanings of the Mughal Khapwa***

**Jean-Baptiste Clais & Ali Gibran Siddiqui**

This presentation examines the *khapwa*, also known as the *khanjarli* or *chilanum* dagger, as an object central to Mughal ideals of universal sovereignty and the rituals of courtly gift-giving. Mughal paintings depict the distinctive styles the *khapwa* took on with each successive emperor from Akbar to Shah Jahan, revealing their close visual association with their reigns. While traditionally interpreted as a product of evolving courtly fashion under the Mughals, a close reading of temple sculptures conversely reveals the *khapwa*'s preexisting association with Vishnu, suggesting deeper symbolic genealogies. Comparative analysis of extant daggers and painted representations allows the evolution of the *khapwa* across successive Mughal reigns to be rooted in regional cultural contexts, resulting in a comprehensive chronotypology identifying over fifty morphological sub-types. Drawing on *akhlaq* literature, *futuwwa* manuals, court chronicles, and biographies, the presentation further examines the semiotic values assigned to the *khapwa*, arguing that it generated a powerful affective spectacle when gifted as part of the *khillat* (enrobing) ceremony. Analysis of commissions and exchanges of the dagger reveals the political and social networks activated through such acts of gifting, while demonstrating how the *khapwa* functioned as a visual translation of Mughal sacro-sovereign authority for audiences fluent in Sufi and Vaishnavite symbolic vocabularies.

16.05–16.25 ***Sharply Dressed: Edged Weapons and the Fashioning of Court Identity in Mughal India***

**Rachel Parikh [delivered online]**

From the 16th to the 18th century, Mughal elites wore and carried edged weapons as an essential component of courtly dress, embedded within a complex visual and political system that articulated rank, masculinity, loyalty, and imperial authority. Through close analysis of surviving objects, court paintings, and textual sources, this talk explores why and how the Mughals adopted edged weapons beyond the battlefield as sartorial markers wholly ingrained in courtly costume and regalia. Additionally, this talk will look at how materials – such as jade, gold and gemstones – as well as decorative motifs – from flora to fauna – communicated layered meanings. These embellishments linked the bearer to ideals of kingship, moral discipline, and divine favor, while also allowing space for individual expression within a highly regulated court culture. By foregrounding edged weapons as items of dress, this talk offers insight into Mughal codes of conduct, the performance of politics at court, and the ways personal identity was fashioned through martial-material culture.

16:25–16:45 ***Swords of Lucknow at the Wallace Collection***

**Nicole Ioffredi**

In 1819, Ghazi al-Din Haidar crowned himself emperor of the North Indian region of Awadh, ending his family's nominal allegiance to the Mughal Empire. Nevertheless, he adopted and adapted Mughal symbols of kingship to buttress his own claims. This talk will explore the role of edged weapons in forging a nascent royal identity at a time when the ruling Nawabs of Awadh were increasingly being stripped of real political power by the British East India Company.

16:45–17:05 Q&A

---

17:05–19:00 **Reception and private view of *Swords of Lucknow* and the Arms & Armour Galleries**

Saturday 14 March

10.30–10.35 **Welcome and Introduction**

---

## **Translocations & Cross-Cultural Interactions**

10.35–10.55 ***Early Modern Islamic daggers in the Venetian imaginary***

**Robert Brennan and Peyvand Firouzeh**

This paper focuses on a group of metal daggers, inscribed with self-referential Persian poems, that bridge artistic and literary production across Safavid, Ottoman, and Italian territories in the 16th century. We link these objects to the work of metalworkers and writers active in Italy and the Islamic world. These connections bring to light both cross-cultural affinities and misunderstandings, which involve comparable yet divergent dynamics of gendered violence and non-binary erotic fantasy.

10.55–11.15 ***Henry VIII's Lost Dagger: The Many Lives of an Ottoman Blade from the Tudor Court to Victorian Theatre***

**Silvia Davoli**

This talk explores how a 16th-century Ottoman ceremonial dagger, produced in Constantinople's imperial workshops, accumulated multiple identities as it moved through European collections. When Horace Walpole displayed the jewel-encrusted weapon at Strawberry Hill in the 18th century, he identified it as "Henry VIII's dagger," weaving an imaginative link between the Tudor past and his Georgian present. Through comparative analysis of related daggers in Vienna and Welbeck Abbey, alongside archival research, we trace how this object – with its jade hilt, steel blade damascened with gold, and elaborate gem settings – reveals broader patterns of cultural exchange between the Ottoman Empire and European courts, and how objects accrue and shed meanings as they pass through collections and imaginations.

11.15–11.35 ***Approaching Islamic arts through arms and armour: a few historic vignettes***

**Mercedes Volait [delivered online]**

Since the first retrospective exhibition of decorative arts organised in Paris in 1865, weapons have represented a significant introduction to the arts of the Middle East for many European collectors. Through figures as diverse as traveller Henri Moser, dilettante Frederick Stibbert or artist Mariano Fortuny, among others, the talk will evoke the art and meanings of collecting, displaying, repurposing, and eventually disposing off, Islamic arms in the age of industry and the melancholy of history.

11.35–11.55 **Q&A**

11.55–12.10 **Tea Break**

---

## **Making and Decorating**

12.10–12.30 ***Scale by Scale: Military Innovation and Technology Transfer Across Eurasia***

**Patrick Wertmann**

Imagine lifting a 2,700-year-old leather scale armour, every one of its 5,000 scales meticulously cut, dyed, and laced to form a flexible, wraparound shell around a

soldier's torso. Among the rare survivors of the Early Iron Age is a striking example housed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Together with a British master saddler, we brought its form and function to life, revealing a multi-layered skirt, asymmetrical fastening, and overlapping scales that perfectly balance protection with agility. Our reconstruction demonstrates how infantry could don such armour and engage in combat with surprising ease, moving and responding with a freedom unexpected for a heavily armoured soldier. Comparing it to a contemporary find from Yanghai, Northwest China, we uncover shared principles of construction, standardisation, and aesthetics – evidence that Neo-Assyrian military innovation travelled across continents, scale by scale. This armour is more than metal-free protection. It is a window into the hands of ancient craftsmen, the strategies of far-flung armies, and the invisible threads of knowledge connecting Eurasia.

12.30–12.50 ***The Imperial Treasure of Emperor Qianlong: Decoding the Gold Cups of Sir Richard Wallace***

**Shichun Lei**

In this presentation, I will examine the significance of the imperial gold cups housed in the Wallace Collection. First, I will trace the provenance of these objects, navigating the collecting history of Sir Richard Wallace and the cups' acquisition from the Paris art market. Crucially, I will contextualize them within the destruction of the Yuanmingyuan (Old Summer Palace), framing them as diasporic objects of immense historical weight. Secondly, I will explore why the Qianlong Emperor commissioned these vessels specifically for the Chinese New Year 'First Stroke' (kaibi) ceremony. Thirdly, I will analyse their typology and iconography. As the Wallace Collection likely houses the prototype for this renowned design, I will compare it against later iterations to illustrate the evolution of the motifs and symbolic language employed by the imperial designers. Finally, I will ground the discussion in production and materiality. Utilizing recent XRF (X-ray fluorescence) data, I will reveal the metallurgical composition of the gold. I will conclude by dissecting the technical virtuosity required for the diancui (kingfisher feather) inlay, chasing, and gem-setting that define these masterpieces.

12.50–13.10 Q&A

13.10–14.10 Lunch

---

## **Making and Decorating**

14.10–14.30 ***Pretty Useful: a practical appraisal of the materials and construction of ornate arms and armour***

**Francesca Levey**

The Wallace Collection is famed for its Princely arms and armour, and the Indian and Islamic collections particularly look the part, decorated with a proliferation of materials and techniques. The richness of surface decoration has led to assumptions that such items must be 'ceremonial' rather than practical, jewellery rather than weaponry. The materials analysis that took place as part of the new cataloguing project, enables us to see these objects as both weapons and works of art. Through an examination of the materials and construction of these pieces, a practical appraisal of their functionality is possible.

14.30–14.50 ***Watered steel***  
**Allan Williams**

The most highly prized blades in history were those made of "watered steel" sometimes known as "Damascus steel" but generally of South Asian origin. These were made of a very high-carbon steel (*wootz* or Indian crucible steel), unlike any European steel, which could form a very hard edge which never needed sharpening.



After polishing and etching the surface might display a pattern said to resemble “watered silk.” Such a pattern was believed to be the hallmark of a blade of the highest quality, so the less scrupulous smiths might be tempted to fakery. The surface of the blade might be etched to simulate a pattern, or a thin layer of wootz might be welded to an iron body. By contrast, some collectors in the past have polished their blades to brightness and so hidden any patterns. Neutron techniques enable crucible steel to be identified, its homogeneity to be assessed, and hidden patterns to be located.

14.50–15.10 ***Blades of ‘bloomery’ steel or blades of ‘watered’ steel... customer’s choice?***

**David Edge**

In India and the Middle East, a huge variety of different blade forms and methods of manufacture were in use over time. Not all these differences can be explained by the practicalities of how they were made or used - other factors, in some cases quite unexpected, can also be identified. This talk will endeavour to shed light on how and why they differed so much, from region to region and weapon to weapon.

15.10–15.30 Q&A

15.30–15.45 Short Break

15.45–16.05 **Closing keynote – Keith Downen**

---

**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.

**Dr Rhea Tuli Partridge** is an art and heritage specialist with extensive experience in curatorial practice, provenance research and collections interpretation across major UK institutions and platforms including the National Trust, the Fitzwilliam Museum, the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Kettle’s Yard and ‘Queer’ Asia (in partnership with the British Museum). She completed a PhD at the University of Cambridge in collaboration with the National Trust, where she conducted in-depth research on the Clive Collection, one of the Trust’s most important South Asian collections. Rhea’s work challenges colonial frameworks, recovers marginalised object histories and translates complex research into exhibitions, re-interpretation and public engagement.

**Dr Nicole Hartwell** is a historian of visual and material culture interested in examining cultural productions and representations of British imperialism, the development of British art in its global contexts, and the history of collecting and collections. She has a DPhil from The University of Oxford and has held postdoctoral positions at the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh, and the University of Cambridge.

**Eyob Derillo** is an Ethiopian scholar and historian specializing in Ethiopian manuscripts, culture, and spirituality, currently Project Officer for the Abyssinia Project at the King’s Own Royal Regiment Lancaster Museum, overseeing exhibitions and collection documentation from the 1868 Abyssinian expedition, and former curator of Ethiopic/Ethiopian collections at the British Library while pursuing a SOAS PhD on the development of Ethiopian “magic” within a Christian context; his recent publications include “A Just restitution?: the transfer to Ethiopia of digitised manuscript copies by the British Library” (with Alexander Herman) in *Mobile Heritage: Practices, Interventions, Politics* (Routledge, 2025) and “Degodding Maqdala” (with Emanuel Admassu) in *Fifteen Colonial Thefts: A Guide to Looted African Heritage in Museums* (Pluto Press, 2024).

**Barnaby Phillips** is a journalist and author. He worked for the BBC in Africa for many years. His

latest book, 'The African Kingdom of Gold- Britain and the Asante Treasure', published in March 2026, tells the story of the looting of the Asante gold and examines the on-going debate about restitution and colonial-era collections in museums. His previous books include 'Loot- Britain and the Benin Bronzes', (2021) which was a Prospect and Art Newspaper Book of the Year.

**Rachel Peat Underhill** is Curator of Decorative Arts at Royal Collection Trust, a charity which cares for the British Royal Collection. She curated *Japan: Courts and Culture* at The King's Gallery, Buckingham Palace, in 2022–23 and was editor of the accompanying catalogue, the first publication dedicated to Japanese material in the Royal Collection. Her role encompasses 13,000 works of art from across the globe, which today furnish 13 current and historic royal residences. She is a member of the Museum Ethnographers' Group and the Royal Studies Network.

**Fiona Asokacitta** is an Indonesian scholar pursuing a DPhil in Anthropology at the University of Oxford. Her research explores collections of Indonesian kerises across various museums in the UK, and how over four centuries of collecting reflects the history of Anglo-Indonesian entanglements. Fiona is also a volunteer in the British Museum's Asia Department, where she assists the Southeast Asia curator with the Indonesian Raffles collection. She also serves as Editorial Assistant for the Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute. Before her DPhil, Fiona completed an MSc in Visual, Material and Museum Anthropology at the University of Oxford and a BA in Asian History and Art History at Northwestern University. She has a sustained research interest in contentious museum displays and the decolonisation of Indonesian materials.

**Dr Ali Gibran Siddiqui**, Assistant Professor of History and History Cluster Lead at IBA Karachi, studies the Naqshbandi Sufis of the Timurid and Mughal Empires. His current book project focuses on Abdullah Khan Firuz Jang (d. 1544), a Central Asian Sufi commander in Mughal service, and explores how Firuz Jang navigated the Mughal imperial system through strategic appeals to Timurid nostalgia, Turanian identity, and the foreignness of Hindustan. His other ongoing projects include an article on miraculous dreams and spiritual monopolies in 16th-century jade production in Kashghar, a book chapter on the acquisition of Indo-Islamic manuscripts held by the Princeton University Library, and a co-authored typology of Mughal chilanum daggers.

Dr. Siddiqui holds a PhD from The Ohio State University and was the Leon B. Poullada Postdoctoral Research Scholar in the Department of Near Eastern Studies at Princeton University. He has taught at Sciences Po, France, and led manuscript digitization programs at the Anjuman Taraqqi-ye Urdu, Pakistan. He also works with the Sindh Police Museum in Karachi, where he oversaw the cataloguing of the museum's documentary collections and the construction of its arms gallery. He is proficient in Urdu, English, Persian, Uzbek, and Russian.

**Dr Jean-Baptiste Clais** (柯詣) is a senior curator in the Department of Decorative Arts at the Musée du Louvre, where he oversees the Asian collections — encompassing China, Japan, India, and arts of globalisation — as well as European porcelains. An ethnologist and art historian, he recently curated the exhibition "A Passion for China: The Adolphe Thiers Collection", showcasing 19th-century French fascination with Chinese porcelain and decorative arts. Looking ahead, Clais is developing a project exploring the intertwined history of jade across China and India, highlighting cross-cultural exchanges in lapidary traditions. Prior to his current role, he began his Louvre career in the Department of Islamic Art, managing collections of arms and Mughal art. He was also Chinese art curator at the Guimet. He authored several publications on Mughal decorative arts. He currently researches on agates from Gujarat, Chinese Mughal style jades and Mughal daggers.

He holds an undergraduate degree and museology diploma from the École du Louvre, a master's in anthropology from Université Sorbonne Paris V René Descartes, the curator diploma from the Institut national du patrimoine and a Political and Social anthropology Ph.D from Université Jean Monnet Saint-Étienne. He's a teacher in the Global history masters at Sciences Po Paris. His research bridges ethnography and global art histories, fostering dialogues between Eastern and Western traditions.



**Dr. Rachel Parikh** is a specialist in Indian and Islamic arms and armor. She currently serves as the Marguerite S. Hoffman and Thomas W. Lentz Curator of Islamic Art at the Dallas Museum of Art. Prior to her appointment, she has held curatorial positions at the Art Institute of Chicago; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Worcester Art Museum; and the Harvard Art Museums. She was also involved with the Wallace Collection Arms and Armour cataloguing project, working predominantly on armor, melee weapons, and archery equipment. She recently co-curated an exhibition with City University of Hong Kong, entitled "Might and Magnificence: Ceremonial Arms and Armour across Cultures" (November 2024 – February 2025). Rachel has presented her work internationally and has published extensively. She is currently working on her second book, which focuses on Indian arms and armor. Rachel received her Ph.D. from the University of Cambridge.

**Nicole Ioffredi** is the recently appointed Archivist at the Wallace Collection. She was previously the Cronk Exhibitions Research Assistant, where she contributed to the delivery of the *Ranjit Singh: Sikh, Warrior, King* exhibition and curated the display *Swords of Lucknow*. She also works part-time at the British Library within the Visual Arts department, which houses the library's prints, drawings and photographs related to South Asia. She earned an MA from SOAS in Museums, Heritage and Material Culture Studies.

**Dr Robert Brennan** (PhD, New York University) is Lecturer in Italian Art, c. 1300-1500, at the Courtauld Institute of Art. He has previously held postdoctoral and teaching positions at the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz (Max-Planck-Institute), the Power Institute at the University of Sydney, and the University of Queensland. His first book, *Painting as a Modern Art in Early Renaissance Italy*, was published by Harvey Miller in 2019.

**Dr Peyvand Firouzeh** (PhD, University of Cambridge) is a specialist of the art and architecture of the early modern Islamic world and author of *Intimacies of Global Sufism: Ne'matullahi Shrines and Material Culture Between Iran and India* (Indiana University Press, 2025). She is currently Senior Lecturer in Islamic Art at the University of Sydney, Australia and will be joining the Department of History of Art at University of Cambridge in March 2026.

**Dr Silvia Davoli** is Senior Curator at Strawberry Hill House & Garden and Research Associate at the University of Oxford. She specialises in 18th and 19th-century collecting practices, material culture, and the history of taste, with particular expertise in Horace Walpole's collection and its influence on British culture. Her research has contributed to international scholarship on the history of collections, and she has collaborated with numerous institutions including the V&A, Wallace Collection, National Gallery, and Waddesdon Manor.

**Dr Mercedes Volait** is CNRS emeritus research professor at INHA, Paris. She specialises in a connected history of visual and material Cairo in the 19th-century and early 20th-century. Her current research focuses on the global commodification of Islamic antiques after 1850, with particular interest in collecting patterns, immersive displays, revival crafts, and cross-cultural interplays. Her most recent publication is devoted to the early art collecting of Antonis Benakis, a member of the Greek diaspora in Alexandria (EFA, 2024, with Angelos Dalachanis).

**Dr Patrick Wertmann** is a historian and archaeologist whose work focuses on material culture, craftsmanship, and technological innovation across East and Central Eurasia. He studied Chinese Studies and East Asian art history in Berlin and Shanghai and has held research positions at the German Archaeological Institute, Renmin University of China, and the University of Zurich, as well as served as a visiting researcher at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the Taiwan National Museum of Prehistory.

His research brings together archaeological analysis, experimental reconstruction, and ethnographic fieldwork, ranging from Early Iron Age leather armour to craft traditions among hunting communities in Northeast China and Taiwan. He is currently Head of the Science Department and Deputy Director at the Ballenberg Open-Air Museum in Switzerland and initiator of the *Crafts of Life* project, dedicated to the study and communication of material knowledge in past and present societies.

Shichun Lei is currently a DPhil student in Archaeology at the University of Oxford. Previously, he served as a Senior Research Assistant for the International Research Centre for the History and Culture of the Nanzhao and Dali Kingdoms at Northumbria University (2021–2023) and as a Research Assistant for the Summer Palace Project at SOAS, University of London (2018–2019). Shichun holds two Master's degrees: an MA in the History of Art and Archaeology of East Asia from SOAS (2017) and an MSc in Visual, Material, and Museum Anthropology from the University of Oxford (2019). His research investigates the dispersal and provenance of Chinese material culture in the 19th and 20th centuries. His specific case studies include the Qianlong Emperor's manuscript *Zhiguolun* (御筆知過論) at the British Library, the Jinou yonggu (Eternal Territorial Integrity) gold cups (金甌永固杯) at the Wallace Collection, and the displacement of artifacts during the Boxer War of 1900.

**Francesca Levey** has been Arms and Armour conservator for The Royal Collection Trust since 2019. She previously spent six years at The Wallace Collection, cataloguing their Ottoman, Middle Eastern and Asian arms, and armour. Francesca also built and ran her own private conservation practice. Francesca gained her Masters in Conservation Studies at West Dean College (Metals) and has a bachelor's from the Courtauld Institute. Her research interests include historical metalworking techniques and South Asian edged weapons. She is a QEST, J.P. Getty Scholar and a member of ICOMAM.

**Alan Williams** originally trained as a chemist but has migrated into archaeometallurgy over the years. He was a Leverhulme Fellow at the University of Manchester, then spent some time teaching in various schools and colleges, before working for some years in the Engineering Department of Reading University studying the performance of armour, which would lead to the publication of his main book "The Knight and the Blast Furnace" (Leiden 2003, reprinted 2012). He is part of a team which has for some years employed neutron techniques to analyse numerous examples of swords and armour, including the helmet of the Black Prince from his tomb in Canterbury Cathedral, which was carried out at the British neutron source (ISIS in the Rutherford Appleton Laboratory, Harwell) as well as numerous objects from Wallace Collection, including some 72 blades from its Asian collections (of which 15 were watered steel). He is currently a Research Fellow in the Wolfson School of Engineering at Loughborough University.

**David Edge** joined the Wallace Collection as Armourer/metals-conservator in 1975, gaining his initial hands-on experience in the treatment of historic arms and armour by working part-time at the Royal Collection under the tutelage of the Queen's Armourer. Besides his conservation role at the Wallace, he was also for many years its temporary Curator of Arms and Armour, until being appointed Head of the Conservation Department in 2004. David has lectured widely on the history of arms and armour, as well as publishing and lecturing on their conservation and analysis, and has always been a passionate advocate of museum education, founding the Armour-handling section of the former Conservation Gallery in 2000 and working at both school and university level to promote and encourage wider knowledge of museums and museum conservation. He officially retired from the Wallace Collection in 2020 to become '*Armourer Emeritus*', continuing to pursue his wide interests within the field of historic arms and armour both within and outside the Collection.

**Keith Downen** is Curator of Arms and Armour at the Wallace Collection, 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.

---

## Joining Information and Format

**Take part at the Museum:** This event will take place in the Theatre, Lower Ground Floor at the museum.

**Watch Online:** This event will also be broadcast live from the museum on Zoom. All ticketholders will also receive a link to view a recording of the talk, which will be available for two weeks only.

---