# THE NORWICH SOCIETY EVENTS PROGRAMME Autumn 2026

**BOOK** & **PAY On-line** **www.thenorwichsociety.org.uk/events/all-events** *or* **RESERVE** by **Email** admin@thenorwichsociety.org.uk *or* **Tel 07503 951195** *and* **PAY** by **BACS** to: **The Norwich Society CIO** Sort Code **08 92 99** Account No **67345795** *or* **Post a cheque** to: Carrow House, King Street, Norwich NR1 2TG *or* **Pay on the door for TALKS** *if tickets are available*.

**TALKS** are held in **The Forum, NR2 1TF - Members £5 / Non-member £10** NO REFUNDS

## Thursday 24th September
**10:30am**

## TALK Chomped Hillsides – The Chalk Pits of Norwich

**Speaker: Matt Williams**

**Chalk workings form part of Norwich's rich heritage. Matt Williams looks at the geological and historical context to explain why and where excavation took place - and what the legacy of chalk pits means for the modern city.**

**Matt Williams** is a chartered geologist and local author with a professional background in the construction industry. He was a member of the Society's Strategic Planning and Transportation Committee and gave a talk at the Society's Climate Change Conference in 2024 on Floods and the City infrastructure.

## Monday 5th October
**10:30am**
**Members £10 / non-members £12**

## WALK A Step in Time

**Tour Guide: Jonathan Hooton**

**A guided tour looking at some of the public clocks (and some sundials) on display on the buildings of Norwich, most of which pre-date the pocket or wristwatch and digital phones. Many of them have fascinating stories to tell and today are an important part of the urban landscape.**

*Meet by the War Memorial in St Peter's Street in front of City Hall. A circular tour ending up in St Giles. It will last about 1 ½ hours. The route is fairly easy to walk with one set of steps to negotiate at St Lawrence.*

**Jonathan Hooton** is a city of Norwich tour Guide, a former Head of Geography at Notre Dame High School and a regular feature in the Society's Talks and Walks programmes.

## Tuesday 6th October
**6:30pm**

## TALK Thinner Than Eggshells: Heinz Isler's shells for the former Norwich Sports Village

**Speaker: John Chilton**

**The recently-listed, reinforced concrete shell roofs at the former Norwich Sports Village are unique examples in the UK of free-form shell architecture.**

First developed in Germany, in the 1920s, thin reinforced concrete shells are relatively thinner than eggshells. Early concrete shells were based on geometrically definable forms – domes, cylindrical vaults, conoids and hyperbolic paraboloids. However, in 1959, at the First Congress of the International Association for Shell Structures, the Swiss engineer Heinz Isler (1926-2009) astounded the international audience of eminent engineers and architects by presenting three ingenious methods for creating non-geometric, free-form shells. The most novel of these was the 'hanging cloth reversed'. This was the technique he used to find the shape of the sports hall and swimming pool roofs of the Norwich Sports Village, opened officially by Princess Anne, on 8th September 1988.

This talk will describe Heinz Isler's formative years, including the design and construction of the former Norwich Sports Village swimming pool roof. **John Chilton** is Professor Emeritus of Architecture and Tectonics at the Department of Architecture and Built Environment, University of Nottingham, and Honorary Member of the International Association for Shell and Spatial Structures, based in Madrid. He was a long-standing friend of Heinz Isler and is author of the book *The Engineer's Contribution to Architecture: Heinz Isler* (2000). He had the good fortune to witness the first day of concreting the Norwich swimming pool shell.

## Thursday 15th October
**10:30am**

## TALK Norwich, City of Hermits

**Speaker: Professor Carole Rawcliffe**

Norwich has been described as 'the most religious city in late medieval Europe', famous for its cathedral, friaries, richly decorated parish churches and, of course, its community of recluses headed by the internationally celebrated Dame Julian. The hermits who were then such a prominent feature of civic life seem, however, to have been largely forgotten, even though, as this talk will reveal, they enjoyed widespread support and respect. From Richard Furness, a charismatic priest with a circle of affluent and devoted female admirers, to Robert Goddard, who cleaned the ditches at St Stephen's, they emerge as a fascinating cast of characters thanks to the survival of so much unparalleled documentary evidence.

**Carole Rawcliffe** is Professor Emeritus of Medieval History at the University of East Anglia. Carole is also a Member of The Norwich Society's Publications Working Group and a regular contributor to *Aspects of Norwich.*

*The Norwich Society is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), registration number 1189593*

**Thursday 12th November**
**10.30am**

## TALK Black Beauty: The Making of a Classic

**Speaker: Victoria Manthorpe**

**Now regarded as a children's book, *Black Beauty* was written for an adult market to raise awareness of the suffering of working horses. It is also a veiled autobiography of its author, Anna Sewell and her relationship with her then more-famous mother, Mary Sewell. Both writers were published by Jarrolds but it is the daughter's book that has found world-wide success and enduring popularity. Behind that success lies a century of philanthropy that brought together non-conformists and evangelicals in endeavours to improve the living conditions of both humans and their animal workmates. The book itself has received more critical scrutiny in recent years.**

**Victoria Manthorpe** is an author and feature writer. Her book *Different Drums: One family, two Wars* was nominated for a 2024 East Anglian Book Award. Victoria is also a member of the Society's Publications Working Group and a regular contributor to *Aspects of Norwich.*

**Tuesday 17th November**
**6:30pm**

## TALK Norwich in the 1950s and 60s

**Speaker: Pete Goodrum**

**Pete Goodrum returns to us with his popular look at the city across two important decades. These were the years that saw Norwich emerge from the wreckage of World War Two, and go on to embrace the Swinging 60s. From bomb sites to The Beatles this was a period of unprecedented change.**

Based on two of his best selling books Pete will once again combine historical facts with humour and nostalgia. It's a must see event from one of our most popular speakers.

**Pete Goodrum** is a writer and broadcaster, and author of several books on local history. He frequently broadcasts on radio, on a range of subjects and gives talks based on his books. Pete will be presenting a sequel in January 2026 on *Norwich in the 1970s*.

**Monday 23rd November**
**2.30pm**
**Members £20 / non-members £22**

## TOUR Norwich Cathedral: Upper Level Tour and the Architecture of Devotion

**Join us on a bespoke tour of the upper level gallery at the east end of the cathedral and marvel at views formerly only available to the Benedictine monks prior to the Reformation. We'll explore how the gallery, and indeed the whole building, was designed to reflect the liturgical practices of medieval belief. Even the stones of the building had their devotional purpose!**

The 1 hr tour will start from the western end of the southern aisle, half of which will be spent at the gallery level.

***Please be aware that access to and from the upper level gallery involves spiral staircases.***

**Wednesday 2nd December**
**2.30pm**
**Members £14 / non-members £16**

## TOUR The Cathedral in the time of Elizabeth I

**When Elizabeth I attended a service in the Cathedral during a week-long visit to Norwich in August 1578, she had been on the throne for 20 years. After the tumultuous religious upheaval of her predecessors' reigns, Elizabeth's settlement of the Church of England had provided stability, though not all accepted it!**

This 1 hr tour explores how the governance of the cathedral developed in Elizabeth's time, the consequences of the dissolution of the Benedictine monastery, and the impact of the Reformation on the use and fabric of its buildings.

*The tour will start from the western end of the southern aisle.*

**Thursday 3rd December**
**10:30am**

## TALK Norwich at Work – Trades & Industries in the 19th - 20th centuries

**Speaker: Adrian O'Dell**

**Norwich buzzed with industry in the 19th-20th centuries, transforming from a medieval trading hub to a manufacturing powerhouse. Key sectors included shoe-making, food processing, brewing and engineering. The city's river and rail links fuelled growth, while gas and later electricity works powered homes and factories. Though many traditional industries declined, Norwich's legacy as a hard-working, innovative city endures, now shifting towards services, education and creative sectors.**

**Adrian O'Dell** was raised in Norwich to which he returned following an international career in the oil industry and running his own computer printer business in Scotland. Since retiring he has devoted himself to the study of Norfolk and Norwich's history as well as being a freelance city tour guide.