

The Welford and Weston Local History Society

(www.welfordandweston.org.uk)

Newsletter 103 – March 3rd, 2026

Dr Ruth Larsen

Friday March 27th 2026 at 7:30 pm



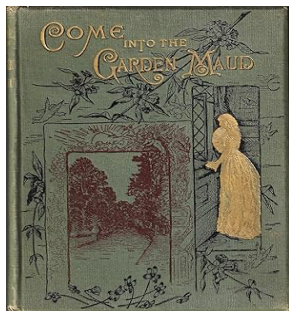
Dear History Society member, this is a reminder that our March speaker is Dr Ruth Larsen, a history lecturer at the University of Derby who will be speaking on gardens as places for romance and desire. Ruth studies the lives of aristocratic women, and their country houses and gardens between the 16th and 20th centuries.

Her research has revealed just how much gardens have been associated with love and desire throughout time. She says “there’s a long history between relationships and gardens, in many ways starting with the Biblical story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. We also see authors and aristocrats from the 16th-19th centuries using gardens as locations to initiate marriage proposals; if two individuals spent time

together in the garden, they had opportunities to discuss more intimate things.

Many people leaned into the idea of gardens being intimate spaces, such as famous diarist Anne Lister (also known as Gentleman Jack), who built a moss-roofed hut in her garden to offer more privacy. Other women were more fearful of the danger that came with being in the compromising setting of a garden. But some female writers rejected that danger entirely, making the garden a female-only space where they could work together.

Putting women’s voices back into history is what Dr Ruth Larsen aims to do. So much literature from this period is dominated by male voices so her work looks at uncovering the different ways women perceived the garden as a space for relationships and intimacy. She says “It’s key to understanding how gardens have been used over time”.



The presentation will last for around 45 minutes, after which there will be an opportunity to ask questions.

The talk will be available to people attending in person in the village Memorial Hall. Entrance is £5, or free for members.

Doors open at 19:10 and the talk itself will start at 19:30. We look forward to welcoming you to what promises to be another great talk.

Karen Dickinson and the team, 7th March 2026

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