

Persecution & Toleration in England, 1400 – 1700
By Professor Alexandra Walsham,
President of H.A. University of Cambridge
2.30pm Saturday 19th September
at Trinity Methodist Church, Chelmsford CM1 2XB.
Visitors and prospective members warmly welcomed – £5.
Booking not required



Resume of talk:-

'Persecution and Toleration in Britain, 1400-1700'.

Today we think of 'persecution' and 'toleration' as opposites. Persecution is an emotive and highly charged word with negative connotations. 'Toleration' by contrast is positively inflected and is often linked with modern liberal values of equality, inclusion, and liberty of conscience. This lecture invites a reassessment of these concepts and examines their interconnections and paradoxes. It explores religious and political developments in Britain between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, stretching from the development of the Lollard heresy to the Act of 'Toleration' of 1689. It considers the impact of the Reformation and Civil War and investigates the paradox that these developments both intensified the impulse to engage in religious coercion and facilitated the acceptance of religious pluralism.

Background:-

Alexandra Walsham is Professor of Modern History at the University of Cambridge and a Fellow of Emmanuel College and of the British Academy. She has published extensively on the religious and cultural history of early modern Britain, including *Providence in Early Modern England* (1999); *Charitable Hatred: Tolerance and Intolerance in England 1500-1700* (2006), *The Reformation of the Landscape: Religion, Identity and Memory in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (2011) and *Generations: Age, Ancestry and Memory in the English Reformations* (2023). She was President of the Historical Association between 2023 and 2026.