

Belonging to the Victorians? Community, Collections, and Care

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Friday 4 September 2026

Wilton's Music Hall, 1 Graces Alley, London E1 8JB

Keynote address: Professor Jane Hamlett (RHUL)

This 1-day conference looks at how the nineteenth century shaped ideas of belonging through its landscapes, laws and collections, and how those legacies still shape the heritage world today. It aims to bring together historians, legal and medical scholars, and galleries, archive and museum professionals to think about how Victorian institutions governed bodies, spaces, and objects, often deciding who could be included or left out of a national story. Through conversations about archives, museums and historic sites, we will discuss how heritage work today can reinterpret those systems of control through community participation, ethical care, and a renewed focus on place. Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- Law, medicine and governance – how bodies, health and morality were regulated in nineteenth-century collections and archives
 - Landscape and heritage management – reinterpreting spaces of control, pilgrimage and leisure in conservation practice today
 - Museums and material culture, ownership, provenance and the ethics of display in Victorian and post-Victorian contexts
 - Community and participation – co-curation, shared authority and local engagement with difficult histories
 - Art, literature and visual culture – representing belonging, exclusion and care in nineteenth-century imagery and storytelling
 - Digital and public humanities – mapping, accessibility and re-using nineteenth-century data for present-day heritage work

We invite proposals for papers of **15 minutes** each that engage with these issues. Although there is no conference fee, places are strictly limited. Interested colleagues are asked to submit a **250-word abstract** and a brief biography by email to d.j.grey@herts.ac.uk no later than 22 May 2026 for consideration. It is intended that a selection of the papers will be published in an edited collection.