

## The conversion of England

---

<b>Start date</b>	2 June 2017	<b>End date</b>	4 June 2017
<b>Venue</b>	Madingley Hall Madingley Cambridge		
<b>Tutor</b>	Professor Edward James	<b>Course code</b>	1617NRX083

**Director of Programmes** Emma Jennings  
**For further information on this course, please contact** Public Programme Coordinator, Clare Kerr  
[clare.kerr@ice.cam.ac.uk](mailto:clare.kerr@ice.cam.ac.uk) or 01223 746237

**To book** See: [www.ice.cam.ac.uk](http://www.ice.cam.ac.uk) or telephone 01223 746262

---

### Tutor biography

Edward James is Emeritus Professor of Medieval History at University College Dublin. He has held Chairs of Medieval History at both Reading and UCD; before that he was in the Department of History at the University of York, and was Director of the Centre for Medieval Studies between 1990 and 1995. He has held research professorships at Rutgers and Sydney.

His DPhil from Oxford was in early medieval archaeology, and he has always emphasised the importance of archaeology for understanding the history of this period, and vice versa. He has published numerous articles on the archaeology and history of early medieval Europe, focussing on France. His first book was *The Merovingian Archaeology of South-West Gaul* (1977), which was followed by an edited book on Visigothic Spain (1980), *The Origins of France* (1982), *The Franks* (1988), *Britain in the First Millennium* (2000) and *Europe's Barbarians* (2009). His translation of Gregory of Tours' *Life of the Fathers* was the first book to appear in Liverpool University Press's Texts in Translation series (1985); he is currently working on a book on Gregory of Tours. Hardly a year went by during his teaching career when he did not teach either Gregory of Tours or Bede.

In another life he is a science fiction and fantasy fan. He published *Science Fiction in the Twentieth Century* with Oxford UP in 1994, and with Farah Mendlesohn edited *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction* (2003), which won a Hugo Award at the 2005 World Science Fiction Convention, and *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature* (2012). Their book *A Short History of Fantasy* appeared in 2009. In 2014 he prepared an extensive website on "Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of the Great War", for which he was awarded the BSFA Best Non-Fiction Award.

---

## Course programme

---

### Friday

Please plan to arrive between 16:30 and 18:30. You can meet other course members in the bar which opens at 18:15. Tea and coffee making facilities are available in the study bedrooms.

19:00	Dinner
20:30 – 22:00	Session 1. The Conversion of Roman Britain and Ireland (Bede, <i>Ecclesiastical History</i> , Book 1)
22:00	Terrace bar open for informal discussion

### Saturday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	Session 2. The Mission of St Augustine (Bede Book I and II)
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	Session 3. The Mission of Paulinus (Bede Book II)
13:00	Lunch
14:00 – 16:00	Free
16:00	Tea
16:30 – 18:00	Session 4. The Mission from Iona (Bede Book III)
18:00 – 18:30	Free
18:30	Dinner
20:00 – 21:30	Session 5. The Mission from Lindisfarne (Bede Book III)
21:30	Terrace bar open for informal discussion

### Sunday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	Session 6. Preaching, Baptism, and Miracles
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	Session 7. The Survival of Paganism?
12:45	Lunch

**The course will disperse after lunch**

---

## Course syllabus

---

### Aims:

1. To explore the evidence for the change of religion in England in the early Middle Ages.
2. To gain a clearer understanding of the processes involved.
3. To understand the gaps in our current knowledge.

### Content:

The Roman Empire was Christian before the Anglo-Saxon invasions put an end to direct Roman rule in Britain, in the course of the fifth century. Over eastern Britain, the structures of the Christian Church were lost. In the early eighth century the Venerable Bede told the story of what happened next: missionaries sent from Rome in 596 converted the new kingdoms in the south-east of England, and started on the conversion of Northumbria. After that, missionaries from the Irish monasteries of Iona (off Mull) and Lindisfarne (off the Northumbrian coast) completed the process. The last kingdom to be converted was Sussex (the Kingdom of the South Saxons) in 688. By that time the church in England (up to then directed by Italians, French, Irish, Welsh, one Syrian and one African) was beginning to stand on its own feet. This course will examine this traditional history, and see the ways in which historians and archaeologists have modified Bede's picture. The course will conclude by thinking about what difference the conversion meant to the Anglo-Saxon society.

### Presentation of the course:

At the core of this course will be Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*. Ideally this should be used in the Penguin Classic translation, as revised by R.E. Latham and D.H. Farmer: that is, any edition after 1990. Each session will be introduced by a brief lecture, which will normally introduce the physical (archaeological and art historical) evidence, to be followed by a discussion of the written texts. Bede's *History* constitutes most of the surviving evidence, and **a copy of that should be brought along to each class**. Other written material will be made available in translation at the weekend.

**As a result of the course, within the constraints of the time available, students should be able to:**

1. Place the work of Bede in its context.
2. Understand more clearly the processes of conversion to Christianity in this country.

---

## Reading and resources list

---

Listed below are a number of texts that might be of interest for future reference, but do not need to be bought (or consulted) for the course.

Author	Title	Publisher and date
Blair, Peter Hunter.	<i>The World of Bede</i>	(Cambridge UP, 1970/1990)
Brown, George Hardin,	<i>A Companion to Bede</i>	(Boydell Press. 2009)
Campbell, James, ed	<i>The Anglo-Saxons. New Edition</i>	(Penguin, 1991)
DeGregorio, Scott, ed.	<i>The Cambridge Companion to Bede</i>	(Cambridge UP 2010)
Farmer, D.H.	<i>The Age of Bede</i>	(Penguin Classics, 1998)
Fleming, Robin	<i>Britain after Rome: the Fall and Rise, 400 to 1070</i>	(Penguin, 2011)
Fletcher, Richard.	<i>The Conversion of Europe</i>	(HarperCollins, 1997)
Higham, Nick.	<i>Re-)Reading Bede: The Ecclesiastical History in Context</i>	<i>Context</i> (Routledge, 2006)
James, Edward.	<i>Britain in the First Millennium</i>	(Bloomsbury Academic, 2000)
Mayr-Harting, Henry.	<i>The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England</i> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> ed.	(Batsford, 2001)
Wormald, Patrick, ed. Stephen Baxter	<i>The Times of Bede: Studies in Early English Christian Society and Its Historian</i>	(Blackwell, 2006)
Wright, J. Robert.	<i>A Companion to Bede: A Reader's Commentary of the Ecclesiastical History of The English</i>	(Eerdman's, 2008)

**Note** Students of the Institute of Continuing Education are entitled to 20% discount on books published by Cambridge University Press (CUP) which are purchased at the Press bookshop, 1 Trinity Street, Cambridge (Mon-Sat 9am – 5:30pm, Sun 11am – 5pm). A letter or email confirming acceptance on to a current Institute course should be taken as evidence of enrolment.

*Information correct as of:* 23 March 2017