

Katie Cole is a history blogger living in north Essex. She has published two e-books on women in history, and runs regular blog series' on women in history on her website.

There are currently 4 talks available for bookings. Two more are in development, and will be available for booking from Summer 2020 (in time for the 2021 meetings).

Talks currently available

Unlucky Princesses: Women Who Didn't Get the Disney Treatment

Not all princesses live happily ever after. Some were murdered by their husbands. Some died on their way to the wedding. Some lived in misery in a foreign land, surrounded by people who hated them for their birth country.

Women who can be covered in this talk include: Isabella of Aragon, Queen of Portugal; Joan of the Tower, Queen of Scotland; Maria Josepha of Bavaria, Holy Roman Empress; Marie Louise d'Orléans, Queen of Spain; Blanche of Bourbon; Madeleine of Valois; Margaret of Burgundy, and others.

If you would like a particular area of focus (such as medieval women, post-Tudor women, French women only etc) please do ask when booking as this talk can be amended to your requests.

Nancy, Noor, Christine: Three Women of Special Operations Executive

This talk will look at three very different women, who all joined Britain's "Special Operations Executive" (SOE) during the Second World War. They all did different things for SOE, and all three had different outcomes.

Nancy Wake had a five-million Franc bounty on her head, but still parachuted back in to France in 1944 and helped the French Resistance.

Noor-un-Nisa Inayat Khan was raised a pacifist, but joined SOE when they needed fluent French speakers. Her incomplete training led to disaster when she was betrayed to the Gestapo.

Christine Chivers' work was nothing more than a rumour until 2016, when her SOE record was opened by the National Archives. Her work helped prove which agents were ready for deployment, and which ones were terribly unsuited for spy work.

Almost Kings: The Men and Boys Who Nearly Became King of England

The English crown hasn't always been a steady handover from father to eldest son. Early death stalked the English royal nursery, and even felled men in their prime who had survived the normal childhood illnesses.

Twice the throne has passed from grandfather to grandson. One young heir was brutally murdered by his own uncle. King Edward I had four of his sons die before they could get the throne. And was our potential King Fred The First really killed by a cricket ball?

Almost Queens

When one marries the heir to the throne, one expects to eventually get a slightly smaller throne, and the crown of Queen Consort. For some princesses, dauphines, and infantas, the early death of their spouse (or their own untimely demise) meant that they never gained the title “Queen”.

Women covered in this talk may include; Matilda of Anjou, Maria Josepha of Saxony, Joan of Kent, and Isabel Marshal.

Coming for 2021 bookings

Eleanor of Aquitaine, Eleanor of Provence, and Isabella of France: And you thought your mother-in-law was a nightmare!

This talk, not based on a blog series, will look at three English queens and their relationships with their daughters-in-law, who succeeded to their crown in their lifetimes.

Eleanor of Aquitaine escorted Berengaria of Navarre to her groom – King Richard I. But when Richard was held hostage it was Eleanor who spearheaded the campaign for his release, and Eleanor who was summoned to his deathbed several years later.

After the death of her husband, King Henry III of England, Eleanor of Provence couldn't quite let go of her influence at court. Even when it came to retirement she insisted on having a granddaughter committed to the convent to keep her company!

Isabella of France famously led a bloodless coup against her husband, King Edward II. But for several years she refused to let her son wield power, ruling in his name, and subsequently refused to do anything for her daughter-in-law Philippa of Hainault.

Royal Mistresses

Demanding, corrupt, manipulative – many Kings have had mistresses, and many of them were accused of being a bad influence over their royal lovers. In this talk looks at some of these women, and whether they were really as bad as history suggests.