



**Adult Learning  
Within Reach**

## **Course details**

### **Course title**

History: 350th Anniversary of the Royal Observatory

### **Course code**

Q00017696

### **Course date**

Start: 05/04/25

End: 05/04/25

### **Number of classes**

1 sessions

### **Timetable**

Sat 5th Apr, 14:00 to 16:00

### **Branch**

Petts Wood and Orpington Branch

### **Tutor**

Laurie Johnston

### **Fee range**

Free to £16.80

### **How you'll learn**

You'll join a small group of fellow learners for classes at the venue indicated. Some materials may be provided in our virtual learning environment.

Got it!

In venue

## Venue

St John's United Reform Church Orpington  
Lynwood Grove  
Orpington  
BR6 0BG

## Level of study

Beginners

## Course overview

This Saturday Lecture traces the creation and development of the Royal Observatory at Greenwich through its long and eventful existence. We consider why the Observatory came into existence, what contributions it has made both in terms of scientific knowledge and in the history of our island nation and why it continues to hold a fascination for people. We will explore the advances in navigation, cartography and timekeeping made under the Observatory's direction and consider some of the great personalities associated with it, John Flamsteed and John Harrison among them. Finally, we will consider the Observatory as it appears in Cultural History and reflect on its current incarnation.

## Course description

The lecture will consist of the following sections:

Why create a Royal Observatory? In the opening part of the lecture, we will explore the pressures that led to Royal sanction for the Observatory. Among the most pressing needs were the use of astronomy to further Britain's position as an international maritime nation. Accurate astronomical research was needed to improve navigation, cartography and crucially timekeeping. It would be through this work that the fixing of longitude would become possible

1. Longitude – in this part of the lecture we consider the story of the search for dependable longitude and the astonishing work of John Harrison
2. The Prime Meridian – in this section we discuss the question of accurate time and the establishment of the Greenwich Meridian and the impact of standardised time on the world
3. The Astronomer Royal – in this part we consider the contribution of various Astronomer Royals – John Flamsteed and Edmond Halley amongst them
4. Later – in this section we consider the changing role of the Observatory in the 20th & 21st Century

5. The Observatory in our Culture – in this final section we examine the place of the observatory in our culture with reference to depictions in literature and art and a reflection on its impact on our lives

## **What financial support is available?**

We don't want anything to stand in your way when it comes to bringing Adult learning within reach so if you need anything to support you to achieve your goals then speak to one of our education experts during your enrolment journey. Most of our courses are government funded but if you don't qualify or need alternative financial help to access them then let us know.

## **What other support is available?**

All of our digital content, teaching and learning activities and assessments are designed to be accessible so if you need any additional support you can discuss this with the education experts during your enrolment journey and we will do all we can to make sure you have optimal access.

**Source URL:** <https://www.wea.org.uk/courses/humanities-science/history/5-april-history-350th-anniversary-royal-observatory>