

LECTURE

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Presenter: Tobias Capwell

In the Renaissance, Christmas was a popular time to hold jousts, tournaments and courtly spectacles. In the dark dead of winter, a colourful, glamorous celebration of chivalry very much took on the role of a kind of sixteenth-century 'festival of light'. In England, Christmas jousts became especially popular under that famous lover of armour and fighting, King Henry VIII. Such events were a kind of performance art, which fused real armoured combat with fantastical, mythological and allegorical themes. In this lecture, we explore this rich history through the personal experiences of the lecturer, an academic specialist but also one of the world's foremost jousters and medieval martial artists.

Nothing says Christmas like an Axe-fight: Courtly spectacles of the Renaissance



Tobias Capwell is an American historian, whose principal interest is in European arms and armour of the medieval and Renaissance periods (roughly, the 12th century to the 16th). He is Curator of arms and armour at the Wallace Collection. He has written and spoken extensively on both the historical and the practical aspects of his subject. He is a skilled joustier, and has claimed to be the world's only jousting curator.

