

The International History Seminar, Institute of Historical Research, University of London, the British International History Group and the School of History and Art History, UEA.

'Politics, Power and Polemic: John Charmley and British Political and International History, 1815-1965.'

Venue: Bush House, North East, Rooms 1.02 and 1.03, King's College, London, Tuesday 19 May 2026.

2pm-6pm.



When Professor John Charmley died in May 2025, one of his obituarists wrote: 'all those who met him, never forgot the experience'. That description could be interpreted in more than one way, of course. However, whether one agreed with his approach to writing history or not, his work was always thought provoking and often written with a wit and turn of phrase that was nevertheless underpinned by a profound knowledge of history and historical sources. John Charmley was a deeply committed sceptic when it came to historical consensus. He was often a polemicist who very much identified with the cat and not the pigeons. But few would doubt that he was one of the leading scholars of British political and international history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries of his generation. His work on the origins of the Second World War, for example, was so revolutionary that he gave his name to an entire branch of the historiography on that subject. As a person, he was equally larger than life; one always knew when he was in the room. He was warm, witty and the epitome of patrician bonhomie; he could, in equal measure, be a fickle and demanding colleague. John Charmley was a man of many parts and many paradoxes.

This event is intended to be a celebration of John the man and the scholar. With presentations from some of his colleagues and other experts in his field who knew him best, this event offers an opportunity to assess his legacy.

The event is FREE: although we do ask you to register so we can cater for refreshments. To do so, please email Prof Gaynor Johnson on G.L.Johnson@kent.ac.uk

Speakers:

David Brown: 'John Charmley, Palmerston and nineteenth century Liberalism'.

Jennifer Davey: 'John Charmley and 'petticoat politics': women and political history'

Richard Grayson: 'John Charmley's challenges on appeasement, Churchill and Chamberlain Bendor Grosvenor: 'Personal Recollections'.

Geoff Hicks: 'Traditions and Troublemaking: John Charmley and Conservatism'.

Gaynor Johnson: 'John Charmley: an historian in context'.

Thomas Otte: 'Knight Errant: John Charmley as International Historian'.

Tim Smith: 'Faustian Bargains: John Charmley, Empire and Cold War'.