



THE ARTS  
SOCIETY  
BEDS & HERTS  
AREA

## MORNING OF SPECIAL INTEREST

WITH

*Tessa Boase*

### **“Fashion, Fury and Feminism: Women’s Fight for Change”**

Friday 5<sup>th</sup> November 2021

For half a century, from the 1870s to the 1920s, women around the world were in thrall to feathered fashion. Not just feathers, but wings and whole birds – often several birds at a time – were de rigueur on top of hats. The cost to the birds was high. The exploitation of female labour was troubling. But the hats themselves were magnificent objects of art...



Tessa is a freelance lecturer for The Arts Society along with other organisations such as the V&A, English Heritage and the National Trust. She’s the author of two books of social history: *The Housekeeper’s Tale – The Women Who Really Ran the English Country House*, and *Mrs Pankhurst’s Purple Feather – Fashion, Fury and Feminism, Women’s Fight for Change*. Her interest lies in uncovering stories of invisible women of the Victorian and Edwardian eras, revealing how they drove industry, propped up high society and manipulated politics. Tessa has an MA in English Literature from Oxford University, a diploma in Art History from the British Institute of Florence, and has enjoyed a long career in journalism for national newspapers and magazines.

## FIRST LECTURE

10:00 - 11:10a.m. plus questions

11:10 to 11:40 coffee break

### LECTURE ONE: The Dark Side of Fashion

In the first lecture, Tessa shines a light on the Victorian plumage trade's shadowy back-story. Whose fingers put together those voluptuous hats? Who dyed the feathers? Who profited from the sales? How did this arcane commodity chain work? Digging deep in the archives, we'll hear some revealing human stories – from the brisk black market trade in stolen ostrich feathers, to the celebrity lifestyle of a notorious plumage hunter, to the Edwardian It Girl's go-to milliner.



## SECOND LECTURE

11:40 - 13:00 plus questions

### LECTURE TWO: The Women Who Saved the Birds

This is the untold story of those brave Victorian women who fought back on behalf of the birds. Few today know that Britain's biggest conservation charity, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), started life in 1889 as an anti-fashion movement. Discover how Emily Williamson, Eliza Phillips and Etta Lemon took on the mighty plumage trade – and won.

