Helen Ackroyd (Based in St Ives)

One place, one time, one life: Lord Fairhaven’s life at Anglesey Abbey
This talk takes a look at some of the history of the buildings at Anglesey Abbey, between the years 1236 and 1956. Learn more about the family history of Lord Fairhaven, discover where the money came from, and find out more about the house and its gardens.
Wicken Fen: Past, Present and Future
Wicken Fen is one of the few remaining parts of the fen that once covered most of Cambridgeshire and part of Norfolk. It is an internationally recognised nature reserve and site of special scientific interest and has been intensively studied over many decades by scientists especially from Cambridge University and Anglia Ruskin University. Over 9,000 species of plants and animals have been identified on the fen at some time. This talk will describe the history of the fen, its present conservation and future plans. (40 to 60 mins)

The Draining of the Fens
Much of Cambridgeshire and part of Norfolk were originally fenland. People who lived within and around the fens earned their living from the fens by harvesting such things as reeds and sedge for house construction and fuel, wildfowl and fish as food and peat as fuel. The fens were a rich habitat for wildlife. As far back as the Roman times attempts had been made to drain the fens to allow their use for agriculture, mainly grazing animals in the early centuries. However, it was not until the Duke of Bedford, financed by the Adventurers brought over Dutch engineers in the 1600's that the fens were effectively drained, and over the following few centuries most of the fenland became rich agricultural land. A few small areas were protected and remain havens for wildlife. This talk will describe the history of the fenland. (40 to 60 mins)

The Theatre Royal, Bury St Edmunds - From barrel store to Regency theatre
The Theatre Royal in Bury St Edmunds is the last working Regency theatre in England. The talk will describe the first theatres in Bury St Edmunds and the eventual construction of the Theatre Royal. It will go on to describe the decline and eventual closure of the theatre and various attempts to resurrect it before the National Trust took on responsibility and renovated it as close as possible to its original Regency condition. (45 mins)

The History of the National Trust
The National Trust was formed in 1895 primarily due to the efforts of three social reformers, Octavia Hill, Sir Robert Hunter and the Reverend Hardwicke Rawnsley. It was enshrined in law by an act of parliament passed in 1907. Its remit was, and is, to protect places of historic interest and/or natural beauty for ever, for everyone. The talk will describe the evolution of the National Trust and the ways in which it fulfils its remit. (45 mins)

The use of Konik Ponies and Highland cattle in conserving the Wicken Fen wetlands
The Wicken Fen vision was created to ensure the long term survival of the ancient fen nature reserve. The challenge has been to create a system for maintaining the extended fenland that preserves its status as wet grassland and the home of a large variety of flora and fauna and that is practical and affordable. This talk will describe the innovative work Wicken Fen has done with Konik ponies and Highland cattle to assist in the conservation of the nature reserve. (45 mins)

Life on the Edge: The story of the Butcher Family of 5 Lode Lane, Wicken
The Butchers built the cottages on the edge of Wicken Fen in the 18th century. These cottages have been acquired and restored by the National Trust. The talk will describe the life of those who lived on the ancient fens. (45 mins)