

# Speaker Abstracts and Biographies

## WeatherLive Conference

### Luke Howard, Namer of Clouds

Dr Richard Hamblyn, Senior Lecturer, Department of English, Theatre and Creative Writing, Birkbeck, University of London

**Abstract:** Clouds have been objects of delight and fascination throughout human history, their fleeting magnificence and endless variety inspiring scientists and daydreamers alike. Yet they resisted all efforts at naming and classification until, in the opening years of the 19th century, a young Quaker pharmacist named Luke Howard devised the deceptively simple cloud taxonomy that is still in use today. This talk tells the story of Luke Howard's language of the skies – cirrus, cumulus, stratus, &c. – examining its wider cultural impact as well as its meteorological significance.



**Biography:** Richard Hamblyn is a lecturer in the department of English, Theatre and Creative Writing at Birkbeck, University of London. His books include the award-winning *The Invention of Clouds* (2001), which tells the story of Luke Howard and his cloud classification; *Terra: Tales of the Earth* (2009), a study of natural disasters; and *The Art of Science* (2011), an anthology of readable science writing from the Babylonians to the Higgs boson. Richard's most recent book, *Clouds: Nature and Culture*, was published in 2017.

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### Cloud Spotting for Beginners

Gavin Pretor-Pinney, Founder of the Cloud Appreciation Society

**Abstract:** Gavin takes you on an illustrated tour of the sky. He shows how to recognize many of the varied and beautiful cloud formations, from the fair-weather cotton tufts of Cumulus to the UFO shapes of lenticularis clouds and the surreal undulations of fluctus clouds. He explains why clouds look the way they do and how they reveal the invisible movements of our atmosphere. In this enlightening and entertaining talk, you will understand why clouds are the most evocative and poetic aspect of nature, you will learn how cloudspotting is the perfect antidote to the pressures of the digital world, and you'll discover that spending a few moments each day with your head in the clouds will help you keep your feet on the ground. Looking up will never be the same again!



**Biography:** Gavin Pretor-Pinney is founder of the Cloud Appreciation Society, which has over 47,000 members in 120 countries. He is the author of the internationally bestselling *Cloudspotter's Guide* and *Cloud Collector's Handbook*. His third book, *The Wavewatcher's Companion*, won the prestigious Royal Society Winton Prize for Science Books. Gavin is a TED Global speaker with over 1.2 million views. He has presented television documentaries for the BBC and Channel 4 and is a Visiting Fellow at the

Meteorology Department of Reading University and winner of the Royal Meteorological Society's Michael Hunt award. Gavin co-founded the *Idler*, a magazine that argues for the importance of downtime in creative thinking. His latest book, *A Cloud A Day*, is out now.

## Reading the Sky: how to use clouds and other atmospheric phenomena to predict the weather

Aisling Creevey, Weather Presenter, ITV News Anglia

**Abstract:** Observation is one of the most important elements of weather forecasting. Luke Howard was key to developing meteorology when he took time to observe the clouds and start to classify them. I feel in love with the sky at a very young age but it took me a further 20 years to start to understand the types of clouds I was looking at, how they changed and what it all meant. My love for clouds grows as I get older and my appreciation of online sharing of cloud pictures means that even on a busy day, I can enjoy what the rest of the UK is looking at.

In this talk I hope to share with you my experience of observing clouds both professionally and personally and to share a few stories about the challenges of professional observing the clouds during my time working with the Met Office.



**Biography:** Aisling Creevey works as a weather presenter for ITV Anglia and more recently has become a mother to twin boys. She has a degree and Maths and Economics and two Masters degrees, one of which is in Meteorology. She was born in Ireland and came to the UK ten years ago during the Irish recession. She has since been a part of a wonderful community of weather lovers both amateur and professional and has recently started to educate more about climate change.

She is a qualified meteorologist and has spent time working for the BBC, the Met Office and for MeteoGroup UK.

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## Cloud 9 and Everything Else

Samantha Ellis, Fine Art; Painting and Drawing Student, University of Northampton

**Abstract/Philosophy:** To create amazement and awe through a painting is to give something freedom. Freedom means many different things to different people, However, for me it resides in the landscape. Fresh air, floating clouds and crashing waves. How can anything be more captivating than something that gives you an experience that you can turn into a piece of artwork and what is more beneficial to our culture and society than art..



**Biography:** Art has always been something that I loved to do. I can't remember a time I wasn't drawing or painting. Currently being in my third year of University I am doing something I love every day and don't plan to stop anytime soon. Up until my first year of BA I thought my Art had to move mountains, if it didn't make somebody cry at the sight of it, it wasn't doing its job. I was painting, Drawing and Sculpting anything I thought would make an impact. Then I moved to Bournemouth. If attending an art university next to the Seaside did anything it was defiantly sparking my interest into the Sublime. My

first year consisted of me painting the sea. Looking at the waves power and the never-ending horizon onto the abyss. I began thinking about the theory behind my thoughts, when does the horizon stop? Does it go on forever? That overwhelming feeling of the never-ending space and what is next? That's the feeling I wanted to capture in my art. To feel the unknown and sit in the moment of being overwhelmed, the weather seemed the appropriate direction to go. Second year at the university of Northampton lead me onto Clouds. Such strange, impossible things just floating there. The ultimate freedom to just be suspended and drifting. I soon realized my everyday life was not amazing enough to capture these feelings. Images from social media/second hand sources is where you find human beings physical loss for words when presented with vastness. To be dramatic seemed only apt in everything I do. The world is dramatic, the sea, the sky and more importantly myself.

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## Clouds in Art

Professor John Thornes, Emeritus Professor of Applied Meteorology, University of Birmingham

**Abstract:** Of Truth of Clouds – John Ruskin Modern Painters Vol 1 1843

‘It is totally impossible to study the forms of clouds from nature with care and accuracy, as a change in the subject takes place between every touch of the following pencil, and parts of an outline sketched at different instants cannot harmonise, nature never having intended them to come together.’

Artists have struggled over the centuries to paint realistic skies and clouds – we will trace the history of their endeavours from Cave drawings through to the more realistic Romantic artists and on to the present day.



**Biography:** Professor John E Thornes is Emeritus Professor of Applied Meteorology at the University of Birmingham and author of the book ‘John Constable’s Skies’.