Rotunda Trust

Media pack / November 2026 *Building Preservation Trust / Company 17115816 / Charity 1220458*

Rotunda Trust is a charitable Building Preservation Trust. Its sole purpose is to repair the Rotunda, Woolwich, John Nash's 1814 timber polygon, and return it to open, accessible use. This pack is a short film, a vision, the wider site, press coverage, and a set of images available for editorial use.

The Ministry of Defence has approved the sale of the Rotunda to the Trust, subject to contract. The Trust is acquiring the site in partnership with the Greenwich Enterprise Board as part of a joint plan to activate the site for the wider community, and expects to complete the acquisition early in 2027.



Watch the film *Rotunda Irrepressible, FennecMedia, March 2026*

https://vimeo.com/1180517747

Online

Website

rotundatrust.org.uk

History, vision, collection, monitoring, trustees, supporters and press.

Media enquiries

hello@rotundatrust.org.uk

07870 607554. Rotunda Trust Limited.

Support the Rotunda

rotundatrust.org.uk/give.html

Gifts, Founding Patrons, sponsors and Gift Aid.

The building now

rotundatrust.org.uk/rotunda-monitoring.html

Live temperature and humidity from inside the Rotunda, with a two-day forecast.

What three months of monitoring show

Eight sensors have reported from inside the Rotunda since 10 August 2026, from the floor to the king post. In August the roof air fell to 31 per cent relative humidity; by late October the drum was touching 80. That swing between dry and wet is what harms timber of 1814. On 9 of October's 31 days the timber under the lead reached the dew point of the air beside it. The building is measured live and forecast two days ahead, so it can be cared for before the weather arrives.

Images

Media pack / November 2026 *Photographs, visualisations and historical images*

Image library: for print, full resolution, 3840 by 2160 pixels; for web, 2000 pixels wide. Each file name carries its credit. Commons and archive images in the Rotunda bands link to their source page, which gives the full-resolution file and its licence. Credit as shown.

FennecMedia / CC BY 4.0 International / the Rotunda



Exterior
FennecMedia, CC BY 4.0



The whole interior
FennecMedia, CC BY 4.0



Wide interior
FennecMedia, CC BY 4.0



Interior geometry
FennecMedia, CC BY 4.0



Central column
FennecMedia, CC BY 4.0



Column from below
FennecMedia, CC BY 4.0



Colonnade
FennecMedia, CC BY 4.0



Arched window
FennecMedia, CC BY 4.0



Perimeter ties
FennecMedia, CC BY 4.0



Iron strap connection
FennecMedia, CC BY 4.0



Cross-bracing
FennecMedia, CC BY 4.0



Bracing and sarking
FennecMedia, CC BY 4.0



Mid-height bracing
FennecMedia, CC BY 4.0



Truss perspective
FennecMedia, CC BY 4.0



King post near apex
FennecMedia, CC BY 4.0



Inspection walkway
FennecMedia, CC BY 4.0

Rotunda Trust and the wider site



Trust and GEB, 2026
Rotunda Trust

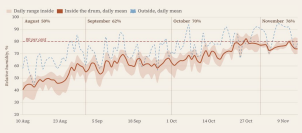


The Rotunda and its site
Visualisation, © LOM



Workshops, former tractor shed
Visualisation, © LOM

The record / live monitoring charts, Rotunda Trust



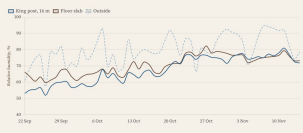
From a dry summer to a damp autumn
Drum humidity daily, 10 August to 14 November 2026. Rotunda Trust



October: the roof timber reaches dew point
Nine of 31 days at or below dew point. Rotunda Trust



The roof follows the weather, the floor stays steady
Seven days to 14 November 2026. Rotunda Trust



Top and bottom of the Rotunda
King post and floor, from 22 September 2026. Rotunda Trust

Each tile opens the live chart. Images in landscape and square from the Trust on request. Figures as at 14 November 2026.

Other photographs / Wikimedia Commons



Column inscriptions, 2026
FennecMedia. CC BY 4.0



Exterior, July 2026
Matt Brown. CC BY 4.0



Roof detail, January 2026
Dominic Nelson. CC BY-SA 4.0



Exterior, 2022
Hjamesberglen. CC BY-SA 4.0



Exterior, 2015
Kleon3. CC BY-SA 4.0



Lead roof, 2015
Kleon3. CC BY-SA 4.0

The Rotunda in history / drawings, prints and portraits



Nash elevation, 1814
John Nash. The National Archives, WORK 43. Public domain



Nash section, 1814
John Nash. The National Archives, WORK 43/576. Public domain



Nash timber roof, 1814
John Nash. The National Archives, WORK 43. Public domain



Nash roof details, 1814
John Nash. The National Archives, WORK 43. Public domain



Carlton House, 1819
Pyne, Royal Residences. Public domain



Temple of Concord, 1814
Contemporary print. Public domain



The Rotunda, 1820
Lucas. Public domain



View from the Rotunda, 1823
T. M. Baynes. London Metropolitan Archives. Public domain



Royal Artillery Barracks, c.1830
W. Ranwell. London Metropolitan Archives. Public domain



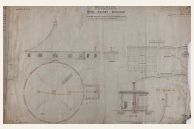
The Rotunda, 1844
Published by John Grant. Public domain



Repository exercises, 1844
John Grant. Public domain



The Rotunda, c. 1860
William Ranwell. Public domain



Repairs, 1861
Unknown. Public domain



The Rotunda, c. 1900
Photographer unknown. Public domain



Aerial, 1975
© Historic England Archive, EAC30. CC BY 4.0



Congreve father and son, 1782
Philip Reinagle. National Gallery of Ireland. CC BY 4.0



Sir William Congreve, 1807
Restoration by Richie Bendall. CC BY-SA 4.0



Congreve rockets
Contemporary illustration. Public domain



Rocket badge, 1832
Lee Brandon-Cremer. CC BY-SA 3.0



Sir Augustus Frazer
Named on the central column. Public domain



Sir Edward Sabine
Stephen Pearce. Named on the central column. Public domain

The world of 1814 / paintings and prints



Napoleon, 1812
J.-L. David. National Gallery of Art, Washington. Public domain



The Prince Regent
Public domain



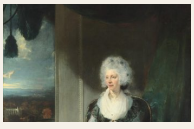
Napoleon leaves for Elba, 1814
Horace Vernet, 1825. Public domain



Wellington, 1814
Thomas Phillips. Public domain



John Nash, c.1827
Sir Thomas Lawrence. Jesus College, Oxford. Public domain



Queen Charlotte
Sir Thomas Lawrence, 1789. National Gallery. Public domain



Grand Jubilee, 1 August 1814
Coloured print. Public domain



Sir William Congreve, c.1812
James Lonsdale. National Portrait Gallery. Public domain



A Mysore rocket man
Robert Home. Public domain



Woolwich in 1746
John Rocque. Public domain



Waterloo, 1815
William Sadler. Public domain



Navarino, 1827
G. P. Reinagle. National Maritime Museum. Public domain

In the press

Media pack / November 2026 — *Previous coverage of the Rotunda and the Trust*

Outlets are listed with article date and a direct link. Pull quotes are from the published pieces.

HISTORIC ENGLAND · Alfie Stroud, Places Regeneration Team Leader · 18 November 2026

On the Ministry of Defence's approval of the sale

> *"This represents a real turning point for securing the future of the Rotunda, something we have been working towards for many years. We are grateful for the pragmatic approach taken by all partners involved and look forward to supporting the conservation and sustainable reuse of the building. This spectacular piece of Regency heritage deserves to once again be enjoyed and valued by the wider community."*

THE GREENWICH WIRE · 18 November 2026

Defence bosses back bid to save Woolwich's 200-year-old Rotunda

> *"Finally set for a new lease of life."*

greenwichwire.co.uk/2026/11/18/defence-bosses-back-bid-to-save-woolwichs-200-year-old-rotunda

CHARLES SAUMAREZ SMITH · former Director, National Portrait Gallery · 27 April 2026

The Woolwich Rotunda

> *"I hope it can be acquired by the Rotunda Trust which has been set up specifically in order to preserve a building of extraordinary architectural and more purely structural interest."*

charlessaumarezsmith.com/2026/04/27/the-woolwich-rotunda

TIME OUT LONDON · 25 April 2026

This iconic abandoned south London building, which was designed by a famous architect, is up for sale

> *"The 200-year-old Rotunda in Woolwich Common could soon be transformed into a new music and theatre venue."*

timeout.com/london/news/...-up-for-sale-042526

The story

Media pack / November 2026 — *From the war that made it to Woolwich Common*

Twenty years of war

France declared war on Britain in February 1793, and with one break of fourteen months the two countries fought until 1814. Nelson destroyed Napoleon's fleet at Trafalgar in 1805; Britain paid

other countries' armies, blockaded the coast, and from 1808 fought in Spain and Portugal under Wellington. By 1814 a man of thirty had no adult memory of peace. Woolwich had made that war: the Royal Arsenal cast the guns and filled the ammunition, the Royal Military Academy trained every gunner and engineer officer, and between them sat the Royal Military Repository, set up in 1778 by William Congreve the elder.

The summer of 1814

The Allies entered Paris on 31 March 1814 and Napoleon abdicated on 6 April. In June the Tsar, the King of Prussia and Marshal Blücher came to London, and on 23 June Wellington landed at Dover, newly made a duke. The Prince Regent decided to give a fête for him at Carlton House, for two and a half thousand guests, and Carlton House had no room large enough.

Ten weeks

John Nash, then sixty-two, drew a tent of twenty-four sides with a conical roof, framed in timber to carry chandeliers, mirrors and two bands. His drawings are dated May 1814. William Nixon, Clerk of Works at Carlton House, and the builders Jeffry and William Wyatt had nine or ten weeks. Each of the twenty-four ribs was built up from four boards of deal, bent to the curve and held with iron, and raised to a ring at the top, with crowds on the Mall watching it go up. When members of the Commons asked why so much was spent on a building for one night, the Chancellor replied that it could be taken down and put up again. The House laughed. Four years later that is what was done.

21 July 1814

The company began to arrive at nine. Queen Charlotte came at ten, and the Prince led her round the Polygon Room while his band played from a garland hung from the roof. Supper was a little before two; the last guests left after six. Eleven days later the public had its own celebration, the Grand Jubilee in the royal parks, with fireworks by William Congreve the younger, maker of the Congreve rocket. Every Jubilee building was gone within weeks. The Polygon Room stayed.

To Woolwich

After Waterloo the room stood empty. In 1818 Congreve asked for it for the Repository at Woolwich, and the order went through the Board of Ordnance, whose Master-General was now the Duke of Wellington: the guest of honour of 1814 signed for the building four years later. William Wyatt took it down, numbered every timber and sent it to Woolwich. It went up again in 1819 and 1820 inside a drum of yellow brick, its canvas roof boarded and covered in lead, with a column at the centre to carry the new weight. The roof of 1814 is still there above it.

The museum and after

For a hundred and eighty years the Rotunda was the Royal Artillery Museum or its heart, open to the public from the start and among the earliest military museums. It came through two world wars, was restored in the 1970s, and closed in 2001 when the collection moved, first to the Arsenal and then to Larkhill. It has been on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register since 2007. It is the last building standing from the summer that ended the Napoleonic wars.

Sources: Cole, Skedd, Clarke and Newsome, Historic England Research Report 251-2020; Cole, Newsome and McCaig, The Woolwich Rotunda: From Waltzes to Wargames; The National Archives, WORK 43/573–576; the Annual Register for 1814.

Background

Securing the Rotunda

The Rotunda has stood empty for a quarter of a century, and nine of its twenty-four timber trusses are propped. The first grants are in, from The National Lottery Heritage Fund and the Architectural Heritage Fund, with a Historic England repair grant to follow. Each funder expects the Trust to bring money of its own. Every gift is restricted to securing and repairing the building.

Everyone who gives before 30 June 2027, ahead of the capital repair, is recorded as a founding supporter. Founding Sponsors, companies giving £10,000 or more, and Founding Benefactors, giving £5,000 or more, are named on a board in the Rotunda. Founding Patrons, giving £500 or more, are numbered in order of giving and receive a certificate signed by the Chair. Details: rotundatrust.org.uk/give.html.

Our vision

The Rotunda was built as a place for people to gather. For 181 years it served as one of London's most distinctive public buildings. We want to return it to that role. The Trust will choose an operator through an open process and grant a lease at an open market rent, keeping control of the building and its repair. Until the conservation is complete, that income goes to one place: the Rotunda.

This winter

Eight sensors have recorded the air inside the Rotunda since 10 August 2026, from the floor to the king post 16 metres up, and the record is live on the Trust's website with a two-day forecast. The drum averaged 50 per cent humidity in August, 62 in September, 70 in October and 76 in November to the 14th. The immediate priority is to bring the building through the winter without further deterioration, with heating run on humidity rather than to a set temperature. rotundatrust.org.uk/rotunda-monitoring.html

The method, the first three months' findings and the forecast are set out in the Trust's technical note, *What Historic Timber Needs: Live Monitoring and Forecast at the Rotunda*. rotundatrust.org.uk/Rotunda-monitoring-technical-note.pdf

For science and broadcast press: a Nash building of 1814 with a live data feed and a forecast, read against what its timber needs to survive.

The collection

The first object in the Trust's collection is a small glazed case holding a length of gilded cord and a piece of canvas, labelled as part of Nash's original tent of 1814. It was exhibited at Sir John Soane's Museum in 2014 and acquired at auction in August 2026 with the support of Dr Nigel Fletcher. rotundatrust.org.uk/rotunda-collection.html

The wider site

The Rotunda parcel sits within a larger 1.65-acre disposal site that includes a former tractor shed, a small gatehouse, and an ancillary annex. The Trust is buying the Rotunda in partnership with the **Greenwich Enterprise Board**, a Greenwich-based not-for-profit social enterprise that has restored listed buildings in the Royal Borough for over forty years, including Orangery Studios and Royal Arsenal Gatehouse.

Visualisations by LOM Architecture and Design show the Rotunda and the former tractor shed as one destination around a shared public realm, with workshops for small businesses.



Rotunda Trust with Greenwich Enterprise Board Director Max Skomorowski, summer 2026. Credit: Rotunda Trust.

The people

Trustees

Lakshan Saldin, Chair; Lara Ruffle Coles; Mick Essex; Commodore Jonathan Lett

Secretary: Michael Trousdell. rotundatrust.org.uk/trustees.html

Founding Patrons

Dr Nigel Fletcher (01); Tim Barnes MBE KC (02); Dr Chris Gill (03)

rotundatrust.org.uk/supporters.html

Vision A4 PDF

Rotunda_Trust_Vision_A4.pdf

The Trust's vision for the Rotunda.

Vision A5 booklet

Rotunda_Trust_Vision_A5_Booklet.pdf

Same content, folded booklet format.

This winter's work is made possible with The National Lottery Heritage Fund, thanks to National Lottery players, and with the Architectural Heritage Fund.

Earlier coverage

THE PAST · November 2025

From royal hall to cannonballs: rediscovering the many lives of the Woolwich Rotunda

> *"Currently on the Historic England Heritage at Risk Register and described as being in 'very bad' condition, the Woolwich Rotunda is supported by a web of scaffolding and faces an uncertain future."*

the-past.com/feature/from-royal-hall-to-cannonballs...

ROYAL ARTILLERY MUSEUM · 15 July 2025

Historic England Book Celebrates the Rotunda

royalartillerymuseum.com/news/historic-england-book-celebrates-rotunda

TIME OUT LONDON · 15 September 2023

This Grade II-listed nineteenth-century London ballroom is getting some much-needed TLC

timeout.com/london/news/...-much-needed-tlc-091523

SOUTH LONDON PRESS · 15 September 2023

Woolwich's Rotunda ballroom built to celebrate the defeat of Napoleon in need of 'urgent' repair

southlondon.co.uk/news/woolwichs-rotunda-ballroom...-urgent-repair

Reference

HISTORIC ENGLAND · 2025

Emily Cole, Sarah Newsome and Verena McCaig, The Woolwich Rotunda: From Waltzes to Wargames

historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/woolwich-rotunda

HISTORIC ENGLAND · Heritage at Risk Register

The Rotunda, Green Hill, Woolwich Common: Grade II*, condition very bad

historicengland.org.uk/advice/heritage-at-risk/search-register/list-entry/49644