



**HISTORICAL
GEOGRAPHY
RESEARCH
GROUP**



Historical Geography Research Group

NEWSLETTER

- SUMMER 2016 -

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Copy for the next issue:
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HGRG Newsletter, Summer 2016

Letter from the Chair

Dear HGRG members,

Welcome to this 'Summer' edition of the Historical Geography Research Group newsletter. I'm glad to report—as if it needed reporting—that the HGRG continues in ebullient form. What better proof than this newsletter, the first with two features: one 'How I became a historical geographer' launching with contributions from past HGRG chairs Alan Baker and Nicola Thomas; the other 'From the archive' featuring ruminations on latex and Latour from Miles Ogborn and Mike Heffernan on David Lubin and liberal internationalism. Elsewhere in this newsletter, you will find a report of the HGRG-sponsored conference 'Conceptualising Islands in History'. If you'd like to contribute to a future newsletter, our newsletter editor Jake Hodder would be delighted to hear from you.

The group is sponsoring thirteen sessions at the Annual Conference of the RGS-IBG (30 August – 2 September, London), including three 'New and Emerging Research in Historical Geography Sessions'. Returning to past practice, our AGM will be held during the conference on Thursday 1 September from 1.20pm to 2.10pm. As ever, your attendance is most welcome. While there are no major shifts in policy or direction to discuss, your presence at the AGM is important given that there will be several vacancies on the committee to fill. Julian Baker, Natalie Cox and Alice Insley are completing their (extended) terms of office as postgraduate members this summer having served with real enthusiasm and efficiency. Likewise, Alastair Owens is coming to the end of his long reign as Research Series Editor, an office he has served with great commitment and imagination. Thank-you Alastair, Alice, Julian and Natalie. I have also given my notice to the RGS-IBG and the HGRG committee of my intention to stand down as Chair after four years in the role. Alas, other professional commitments preclude my ability to give as much time and energy to HGRG as I would like, and it is only right that someone else bring new energy to the job. It has been a real honour to serve the HGRG, and to work with so many talented and dedicated committee members. I will be proposing Briony McDonagh as the next Chair at the AGM. Consequently, we will need a new treasurer. The vacant role of Undergraduate Dissertation Prize Coordinator

also needs to be filled. If you would like to join the committee, don't hesitate to get in touch with me.

In the previous newsletter I requested the opinions of members regarding the function and future of the HGRG Research Series. Thank-you to those who so contributed. It is clear that notwithstanding changing publication pressures and the opportunities for instant online publication of registers of interest and gazetteers, the Research Series still has an important function. But given the difficulty of commissioning new copy, and the need to inject new vibrancy, the committee intend to repurpose and reposition the series, potentially as a 'working papers' record of the best papers presented in the 'New and Emerging...' sessions. This, it is important to note, would not preclude other occasional publications in the series. We will also look to making new issue of the Research Series available online. In related news, I am delighted to also announce that I am in advanced negotiations with a commercial publisher regarding a new HGRG-sponsored book series in the vein of the 'Oxford Historical Monographs' series. This would not only offer an important venue for the publication of the best doctoral theses in historical geography but would also, through surrendered advances and royalties, generate important additional income for HGRG. In other news, we will be holding an informal 'Find a mentor' gathering during the Annual Conference. Mirroring best practice in other research groups of the RGS-IBG, we wish to bring together established historical geographers, who are happy and willing to act as informal mentors, with final year PhD students and post-doctoral scholars. More details of the scheme and the event will follow.

By way of signing off I wish to thank all the HGRG committee members past and present for their labour, imagination and encouragement, and the officers of the Research and Higher Education division of the RGS-IBG for their support and patience. More importantly, I also wish to thank all members of the HGRG—yes, all 800+ of you—for your continued support and membership of this most vital of research groups. To the future.

With best wishes,

Carl Griffin, Chair HGRG

HGRG Committee 2015-16

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How I became a historical geographer...

Editor's note: "How I became a historical geographer" is a new section of commissioned articles in which members are invited to reflect on their own journey into geography. This inaugural issue features two previous HGRG chairs, **Alan Baker** and **Nicola Thomas**.

Alan Baker



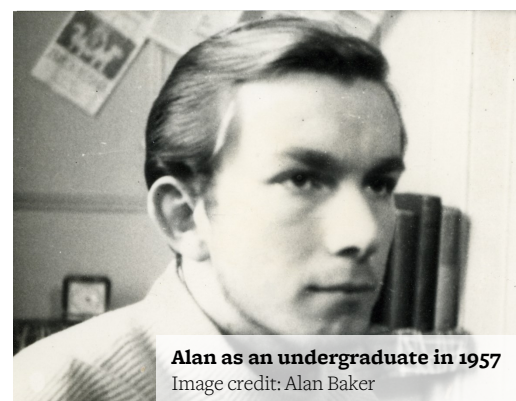
Alan Baker is a Life Fellow of Emmanuel College having been a university lecturer at Cambridge from 1966 to 2001. He was a founder member, and twice Chair, of the HGRG and served as Editor of the *Journal of Historical Geography* from 1987 to 1996. His research is focused upon the changing society, economy, culture and landscape of France during the nineteenth century. He is currently completing a book on amateur brass bands, choirs and sports clubs in France, 1815-1914.

My life-long interest in the histories and geographies of peoples and places began in my teens. I was born and lived in Canterbury until leaving for university in London on approaching my 19th birthday. Canterbury was centrally placed in East Kent. As a pillion-rider on my father's Matchless motorcycle and then on my own Raleigh pedal-cycle, I became acquainted with the distinctive landscapes and life-styles of the North Downs, the Stour valley, the Weald, Romney Marsh, Dungeness, and Kent's varied coastlines and contrasting seaside towns. That local experience was enhanced by many Scout camps in the county and broadened by 'foreign' explorations when camping in the Norfolk Broads, Epping Forest and the Thames Valley.

At school I focussed on the humanities. My Geography teacher, a Cambridge graduate of St Catharine's College, nearing retirement, taught effectively rather than inspiringly. Lessons in English and History did more to sharpen my critical faculties, but my nascent interest in places, landscapes and maps was best served by those in Geography. In 1956 I sat the State Scholarship examination, taking papers in Geography and History. For Geography, I answered questions on glaciation, long-shore drift, rivers and the settlement history of Australia—scant sign there of a preference for human geography! For History, I had to answer just two questions: "Consider the view that the French Revolution brought benefits to every European country but France" and "What qualities distinguish the great historian?" I have spent much time since then trying to answer the latter question!

The seed of a historical geographer planted in

me before I left school was brought to fruition at university. My school entered me to read Geography at St Edmund Hall, Oxford, and Trinity College, Cambridge. I was interviewed frighteningly at both and thankfully rejected by both. Subsequently, I was interviewed at University College London and accepted its offer. I cannot recall the extent to which applying to UCL was my decision or that of my school. But it was, deliberately or fortuitously, an excellent and life-changing choice.



Alan as an undergraduate in 1957
Image credit: Alan Baker

Geography at UCL was led by Clifford Darby. He had created a department whose staff all had historical-geographical interests—even the physical geographers were denudation chronologists and historical climatologists. Challenging courses by Darby on the historical geography of England and on the methods of historical geography enthused me, as did stimulating courses by Bill Mead on the historical geography of Scandinavia and North America, Hugh Prince on that of England, Tony French on Russia, Jim Johnson on Ireland and Karl Sinnhuber on Central Europe. During the Easter Vacation 1958, first-year students enjoyed a week's residential field class in



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Norfolk. Darby lectured us in the field about the coming of the Anglo-Saxons and Scandinavians to East Anglia and about the Agricultural Revolution in Norfolk. One evening we were joined by Jean B. Mitchell, a lecturer in historical geography at Cambridge University and author of the classic *Teach Yourself* book *Historical Geography* (1954). After supper, Darby invited me to join him and Miss Mitchell to discuss issues in historical geography. I was overwhelmed by the occasion but it served Darby's purpose—to encourage me to become a historical geographer.

That summer I spent a week with Hugh Prince in Norfolk on a research project. Together with another student, Clifford Green, we stayed at a pub/hotel in Fakenham. We investigated the numerous "holes" that had been noticed in Norfolk's fields during our Easter field class. We spent four days observing the holes, recording their features, and then two days searching the archives of the Earl of Leicester at Holkham Hall, in north Norfolk. We concluded that most of them were abandoned marl pits, relicts from the agricultural improvement of the light soils of Norfolk during the eighteenth century. That was an exhilarating week. It provided an insight into research methods and into the thrill of the intellectual chase that is historical enquiry; it taught me the importance of combining field and archival evidence when investigating landscapes; it revealed to me the excitement of working with archives, intensified by our doing so in the magnificent library of Holkham Hall; and it gave me a taste for debate, because during the week the three of us had lively and wide-ranging discussions about historical geography.

While an undergraduate, I was minded to become a schoolteacher. I held a place at the University's Institute of Education for its PGCE course. But on being awarded a First Class degree in 1960 and a postgraduate scholarship by the University of London, some quick rethinking had to be undertaken. I discussed the dilemma with my *fiancée*, Sandra—on the golf course at Herne Bay, walking her Corgi dog, she persuaded me to grasp the opportunity to do a PhD.

Clifford Darby was my research supervisor. He had three topics on which he was keen for research students to work: the 19th century British manuscript census, the Tithe Survey, and field systems. As I was from Kent, Darby invited me to work on its enigmatic field systems. But I had found Hugh Prince's approach very open-minded and stimulating and for my first term as a research student at UCL I worked on the landscape gardens of

Kent, Surrey and Sussex, as an extension of Hugh's work. Darby was unimpressed with the topic and advised me to change, which I did during the Christmas vacation of 1960. Hence my research for a PhD was on the field systems of medieval Kent. I worked with enormous fascination and enjoyment in the archives of the Public Record at Chancery Lane in London (where the taps in the washroom were labelled H, C and D—hot, cold and drinking—constantly reminding me of my supervisor, known to his colleagues amicably as "HCD"); in the Kent Archives Office at Maidstone (adjacent to the daunting County Prison); and in the archives of Lambeth Palace and Canterbury Cathedral. But in the middle of my second year as a research student I had nagging doubts about the social value of what I was doing. I considered seriously an alternative—training to become a probation officer. For a few weeks I struggled with my conscience, finally concluding that abandoning research would mean two wasted years and that I could pursue such training after completing my doctorate if I still wanted to do so. In the event, my PhD was awarded in 1963 and I determined to remain in academia. I viewed it as a career not only in research but also in teaching and thus with opportunities to make a positive contribution to changing society through influencing individual students. I have never regretted that decision. Unexpectedly, much later, my role as Senior Tutor of a Cambridge college was at times not unlike that of a probation officer. □



Alan and his wife, Sandra, with the RGS
Founder's Medal, 2009 Image credit: Alan Baker



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How I became...

(cont.)

Nicola Thomas



Nicola Thomas is Senior Lecturer in Human Geography at the University of Exeter. Nicola is a previous HGRG Chair (2009-12), having served on the group's committee since 2002 as Newsletter Secretary and Secretary, and currently serves on the Council of the Royal Geographical Society (2014-17). Her research interests include postcolonial geographies of gender, race and empire; the creative economy; histories of geography and science; and gendered labour practices and career progression in higher education.

Some of my favourite conversations are with sixth form students who are choosing what undergraduate degree to do. They arrive for taster days on campus, and I frequently share with them that I regret all the stress I generated around whether to study geography or history, and my sadness at ceasing to study English literature. I go on to tempt them with historical and cultural geography. Their anxieties start to recede as they realise, as I did in my second year of undergraduate study, that they can 'have it all'. These conversations remind me of my 17 year old self, finding my easy enjoyment of the past offset by my passion to single-handedly resolve global warming, and my curiosity piqued by an article in the *Geography Review* introducing me to the thinking of Amartya Sen written by Bill MacMillan, a lecturer at Oxford.

My Geography teachers didn't think I should apply to Oxford. They failed to appreciate the power of sibling rivalry, and the lure of recognising that the person who wrote in the *Geography Review* might teach you at University. I applied to Hertford College, Oxford and was interviewed by Bill. During the first year I was possibly the only person in my college cohort to enjoy the module about 'The History of Oxford' and the seeds were sewn in a module on 'Ethnology' where we analysed the visual culture of 'Nanook of the North'. I now see the discussion of the politics of the film produced by Robert and Frances Flaherty as my first encounter with postcolonialism, although it was not described as such at the time!

There are four academics who were fundamental to my becoming a historical geographer: Susan Parnell, Jack Langton, David Matless and James Ryan. I only had two tutorials with Susan Parnell, visiting from South Africa. She told me that I had interesting things to say, and should be more confident. A small lull in rough sea where you needed some resilience against persistent micro-aggressions.

Jack Langton was the person in Oxford who enabled me to appreciate the way you could understand the relations of time, space and intersections of materiality, class and power as a historical geographer. In an armchair at St Johns, tutorials may have started with debates about

proto-industrialisation in Northern England, but my mind was taken to the terrain I was knew well—Cornwall. Jack, enabled me to place the familiar with a new geographical sensibility. He offered intellectual curiosity, interest, encouragement and kindness. I still regret my 20 year-old self for not appreciating the value of a week spent with Jack in a record office. I went on a University rowing training camp instead.

I grew up in Camborne, amongst the decline of Cornwall's mining industry. The global history of Cornish mining was part of my own family story. My mother was quietly passionate about this place, and in enabling others living in our deprived neighbourhood to value the something of its history. She embedded this through her secondary school teaching practice. As a child I accompanied her as she prepared for the many history field trips she led. I learnt through her own development of teaching materials—in country houses, on the mine dumps, taking town walks, and then in discussion around the kitchen table. She trained me by stealth: my primary school history project on Camborne Church involved me hunting down the features described by archaeologist Charles Thomas; the 'living history' survey I did with my grandparents generation who remembered their schooling at Troon; and through the conversation about archives that we had when I helped cover copies of the local 1901 census with plastic fablon ready for the next day class. I joke I had an 'improved childhood' but I've only recently come to value those 'quick flips' we used to make to drop into the Cornish Studies Library to grab some more material from the archivist for one of her research led school projects. There is a reason for my comfort in the archives.

David Matless and James Ryan stand alongside Jack in providing the foundations for my development as a historical geographer. Fresh from their own PhDs, their lectures were captivating. David taught me in my second year and I discovered cultural geography. What I would later read in *Landscape and Englishness* were the delights of his lecture series. James held my attention with his careful crafting of postcolonial theory and slide shows. The pitch black lecture theatre with arresting images of atrocity and the narrative analysis of colonial power drew me in. Orientalism. I just knew I



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How I became...

(cont.)

needed to spend more time with Edward Said. I would later write in the first paragraph of my DPhil thesis that it was an image in my third year lecture course that led me to my research. James flicked the slide forward, and there was George Curzon, foot on dead tiger, the Viceroy of India. Standing against the tree behind was his wife Mary, with the Indian beaters in the background. James must have invited Felix Driver to give a seminar. The foundations became deeper.

It was James that led me to Royal Holloway (“there is a new MA in Cultural Geography – you should look at it”) and so I met Dennis Cosgrove, Felix, David Gilbert, Klaus Dodds, Deborah Sugg-Ryan, Keith Lilley, and the host of cultural geographers, including Alison Blunt and Catherine Nash, who came to give seminars. My MA cohort included Jo Norcup who carried on to complete a PhD and continues to be such an inspiring force. Highlights of the year were writing a review of James Duncan’s *City as Text*, and then meeting him when he came to external examine. Dennis was entertained when my sister recognized him at graduation from *The Iconography of Landscape*, which she told him was an excellent diversion from her endocrinology revision. We celebrate the 20th anniversary of this Masters this year, and it is a great honour to be the current external examiner on this Masters programme, which continues to shape the field.

Mary Curzon

Image credit:
Nicola Thomas



Felix Driver said during my Masters year, “you seem to keep coming back to Mary Curzon”. Mary and James Ryan, who became my supervisor back at Oxford. These were years where the joy of immersion into the archives sat against the collateral of becoming stuck in a difficult relationship. James offered persistent support and encouragement. The network of historical geographers became critical as I extracted myself, and valued the confidence boosts that others talking to you about your

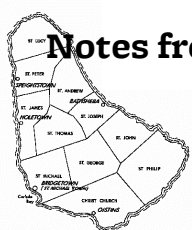
work brings: my first interaction with HGRG, ICHG, London Group of Historical Geographers, the ongoing support from Royal Holloway, and the everyday companionship of PhD colleagues.

My foray as a post-doctoral research associate into the contemporary world of South Asian transnationality and commodity cultures has been unexpectedly important in shaping my career. It felt good, however, to be appointed as a lecturer at Exeter University and be preparing undergraduate modules on postcolonial historical geographies. During the first eight years of my time at Exeter, David Harvey, Catherine Leyshon, Jude Hill and James kept me tethered as my parents’ health took an early, tortuous, and incredibly saddening decline. Through the grief, grants were gained, new projects flowed, a clutch of PhD students were nurtured and I enjoyed my teaching. My long-term cultivation of stakeholders became well matched to the new ‘engaged research’ culture, and my tentative foray into creative economy historical geographies exploded as my new research around craft took hold.

HGRG committee work became part of my practice through the gentle encouragement of Hayden Lorimer: from stuffing newsletters into envelopes to inviting the International Conference of Historical Geographers to London. The strength of the network of historical geographers, across all generations, is an inspiring element of the culture of historical geography in the UK. Preparing for the 2015 ICHG with Felix, Charlie Withers and the RGS-IBG team was an extraordinary time. The generosity of the UK historical geographers in creating a vast portfolio of activities to share with our guests was humbling to witness and very energising. When asked about organising the conference, I share “it was a once in a lifetime experience”. Said with relief (it had been rather all-encompassing at times) and celebration, of our collective achievement.

Writing this piece connects me with a sense of being incredibly fortunate to be in a position to follow my curiosity, and be connected to people who care for me, and my work. My pillars of research around creative historical geographies and colonial historical geographies are converging, with projects in development that are exciting and compelling in equal measure. This Autumn I’ll be having a mini-sabbatical. It arrives at a good time, having slowly emerged from the darker side of grief, to a space where I am ready to flourish and enjoy communicating my historical geographies.

I became a historical geographer through the people who shared their own curiosity with generosity and quiet determination, and have encouraged me to do the same. Thank you. □



by Miles Ogborn

A photograph of the National Library of Jamaica building, a modern multi-story structure with a sign that reads "NATIONAL LIBRARY OF JAMAICA" and "Jamaica Library of the World". The building is white with grey accents and has several windows. It is located on a street with other buildings and cars in the background. The sky is cloudy.



Fig. 2 Bridgetown, Barbados

Image credit: Miles Ogborn

of Jamaica and the Barbados Museum and Historical Society (where I spent the day sitting beside David Lambert!), and therefore between sources (on microfilm, in manuscript and in print), and topics. On any one day I might be reading a natural history notebook, a missionary's letters, the minutes of an island's council or an account of a revolt among the enslaved. This was not the systematic working through of a single body of archival material, but an attempt to ensure that wherever possible I found the materials particular to those collections that would help with my research during the short time I was there to do it.

There was an issue there too. The three-year project, entitled *The Freedom of Speech: Talk and Slavery in Barbados and Jamaica*, is one that is theoretically driven: attempting to use the historical geographies of speech to rethink how imperial relationships of power and resistance based on enslavement worked. It seeks evidence from forms of talk (sermons, speeches, proclamations, conversations, rumours, insults, promises and so on) that are discussed—surprisingly frequently it turns out—in written sources. Yet, it is difficult to say where they will turn up, since it requires what someone said, or how they said it, becoming a matter of concern. Archivists and librarians, although ever willing to share their extraordinary knowledge of their well-kept collections (despite the toll that time and climate, and limited resources, have taken here as elsewhere), cannot be expected to know them in this way. So, it is a matter of identifying some key likely sources—such as Nathaniel Lucas's indexed transcripts (made in the nineteenth century) of the records of the Barbados Council, available on microfilm at the Barbados National Library, or the letters of Methodist Missionaries in Jamaica (at SOAS library)—and then casting a wide net to find other examples. Hence both the range of reading in Barbados and Jamaica, and the need to spend as much time as possible perched on a stool in the Bridgetown library—which was mainly full of teenagers preparing for their exams—reading microfilm, a stool so hard that it was a welcome relief to stand up on the crowded bus on the way home! (Figure 3).

In deciding what to read I was guided by the pencil notes that I had made thirteen years previously when a Philip Leverhulme Prize gave me the rare opportunity to visit all of these archives and libraries as a scoping exercise without having to promise any immediate published outputs. Only one archive had moved premises in the interim, a fact that had passed me by until I tried to get into an obviously closed building and had to be put right by a barrister

From the archive

(cont.)

Fig. 3 Bridgetown Library

Image credit: Miles Ogborn



from the law courts next door, who told me of her own historical research as she walked me across town to the new location. I was also guided by printed and online guides to the collections, although these are inevitably variable, and—in the case of the National Library of Jamaica—an old card catalogue of manuscripts and prints (Figure 4). Despite the collection being searchable online, it was far better for me to go through the drawers of cards and order anything that looked promising. That meant that I was not there to consult their excellent collection of plantation maps (although there were some historical archaeologists doing just that). It also meant that the special collections staff did a lot of fetching for me, as items turned out to be more or less useful and more or less voluminous. In addition, policies on photography—digital and otherwise—varied between archives, with the tendency for it to be not allowed or very expensive. That meant reading as much as possible and note taking as I did so, albeit with a laptop not a pencil this time, and sometimes while wearing latex gloves to protect the documents! (Figure 5)

All archival work involves a constant process of thinking about how what you are reading relates to other sources, other people's work and to the questions that you are trying to address. This was helped by discussions with other researchers, including those at the University of

the West Indies on both islands, David Lambert over dinner by Bridgetown harbour, and my AirBnB host in Barbados who took me to a public lecture on gender and calypso where the examples were provided by a live band. I also found some new archival material on the Jamaican slave

revolt of 1760 for Vince Brown at Harvard. It was also helped by the ability to take with me—on laptop and iPad—a great range of other archival materials. So, for example, I was able to see George Spence, a magistrate in the northwestern Jamaican parish of Hanover in the 1760s, both agonizing over his limited ability to provide a Linnaean description of a flowering plant, in letters in the Institute of Jamaica's Natural History Library, and ordering the execution of enslaved Africans he considered guilty of conspiring to revolt, in photographs I had taken of documents at The National Archives in Kew a few weeks before.

So what did I find? Lots of things, because I was looking at and for lots of things. However, perhaps the standout moment was buried deep within those microfilms in the public library in Bridgetown. This is Governor Robert Lowther addressing the Grand Jury in 1719 in a way which resonates with the work of Bruno Latour and Jacques Rancière on the relationship between forms of speech and processual constitution of politics: 'We are tied to one another only by Speech, our Understanding being directed by no other way than that of words, he who speaks falsely betrays the public Society: It is the only Instrument whereby we impart our thoughts, it is the Interpreter of our Souls; if we are deprived of it, we are no longer tied to, nor know one another; if it deceives us, it breaks all our Correspondence & dissolves the bond of our Policy.' Well worth waiting my turn for the microfilm reader. □

Fig. 4 National Library of Barbados

Image credit: Miles Ogborn

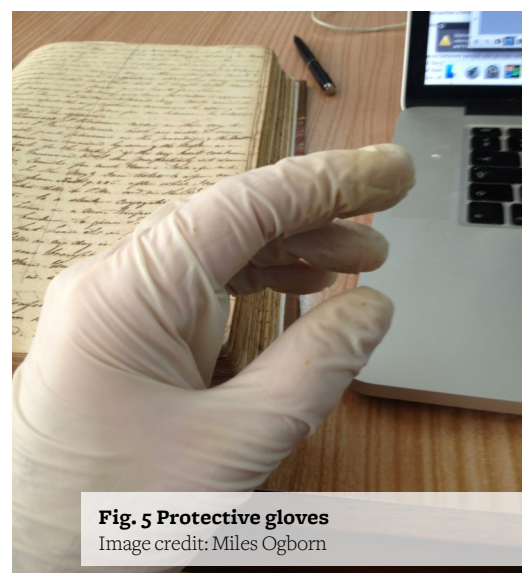


Fig. 5 Protective gloves

Image credit: Miles Ogborn

From the archive

(cont.)

La dolce vita negli archivi

by Mike Heffernan



I recently spent ten days at the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in Rome in connection with an AHRC project on ‘Conferencing the International’ on which I am working alongside Steve Legg and Jake Hodder at the University of Nottingham. The project seeks to explore how internationalism was constituted through the spaces and places in which it was formulated, articulated, and performed in the two decades after World War One. We are particularly interested in the role of international conferences in shaping the meaning and potential of internationalism. We want to explore how internationalism was created in the hotels and other venues where these conferences took place, focusing on the ‘etiquette’ of internationalism as revealed through comportment and dress, rhetoric and speech, socialising and dining. I visited Rome to consider whether these themes might be investigated through the archives of the FAO’s forgotten precursor, the International Institute of Agriculture (IIA).

The IIA was established in 1905 by David Lubin (1849-1919), a wealthy American businessman and agrarian philosopher whose name is memorialised in the FAO’s library (<http://www.fao.org/library/library-home/en>). This is not the place to dwell on Lubin’s story, which will feature in later publications, but suffice to say that the IIA reflected his conviction that the world’s food supply could only be assured in an era of rapid population increase by nation-states collaborating to counteract the influence of large corporations concerned solely with profits. Lubin conceived of the IIA as a statistical ‘clearing-house’ that would promote a rational and scientific approach to world agriculture while also functioning as a model for international governance.

Lubin’s ambitions were enthusiastically endorsed by many internationalists, including H. G. Wells who saw the IIA as a harbinger of the future. Victor Emmanuel III, the Italian King, was equally enamoured and provided Lubin with substantial funds and a palatial residence, the Villa Umberto, to ensure that the new venture was based in Rome, capital of the ancient world, epicentre of the largest Christian denomination and hence a natural home for new international organisations. Although Lubin succumbed to the influenza epidemic in 1919, the IIA became an influential organisation over subsequent years, working alongside but always independently of

the League of Nations. International conferences, in Rome and elsewhere, were a notable feature of the IIA’s operation.

As this was my first encounter with Italian archives, I spent some time preparing for my visit. I spoke at length on Skype with the FAO archivist, Fabio Ciccarello, a man of courteous, old-world charm whose extensive knowledge of the IIA proved indispensable. AirBnB provided what turned out to be an excellent studio apartment in the heart of Trastevere, the liveliest part of the city and an easy walk to the FAO. Friends and colleagues, including David Atkinson and Ginnie Panizzo, provided much needed advice on restaurants and shops.

Preparations also involved watching three films set in Rome—Roberto Rossellini’s *Roma città aperta* (1945), Federico Fellini’s *La dolce vita* (1960) and Paolo Sorrentino’s *La grande bellezza* (2013). These movies significantly influenced how I made sense of the city and the IIA archives. The first is set in 1944 when Rome was under German occupation following the collapse of Mussolini’s fascist regime in the city; the second explores the shallow, celebrity-obsessed age of the early paparazzi at the beginning of the 1960s; and the third examines Berlusconi-era hedonism through its memorable central character, an middle-aged roué drifting aimlessly through the city’s bars and restaurants.

Sorrentino’s depictions of Rome’s early 21st century demi-monde make for difficult viewing, especially for middle-aged men, so I resolved to conduct myself throughout my stay with a monkish reserve appropriate to my task. Sadly, this determination did not survive the first weekend thanks largely to the interventions of Robert Hearn, a Nottingham postdoc based at the British School in Rome (BSR), and Luca Muscarà, an Italian geographer on a Roman sabbatical whom I encountered, quite by chance, less than an hour after my arrival. As I had no choice but to accept Luca’s age-old



Fig. 1 Villa Umberto
Image credit: Mike Heffernan



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From the archive

(cont.)

advice—‘when in Rome...’—my evenings became less abstemious and more entertaining than I had anticipated, and included a pleasant supper in the grand surroundings of the BSR, an imposing edifice designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens as Britain’s national pavilion for the 1911 *Esposizione internazionale d’arte* that celebrated the 50th anniversary of Italian unification.



Fig. 2 Statue, Villa Umberto

Image credit: Mike Heffernan

The Villa Umberto, the IIA’s original home, now forms part of the Italian Finance Ministry and is only a short walk from the BSR and the other national academies that have co-ordinated the international investigation of the city’s artistic, archaeological and historical heritage since the 19th century (Figure 1). The villa’s surroundings retain many of the embellishments constructed for its former role, including a delightful statue of a young woman gathering corn (Figure 2). When I visited the site to take photographs, a boisterous group of multi-national teenagers, speaking a mixture of Italian, English and French, were line dancing on the impressive marble steps while the Kenny Rogers-Dolly Parton country-and-western duet ‘Islands in the Stream’ boomed out from a ‘ghetto-blaster’. Lubin would certainly have approved.

The FAO headquarters, a sprawling complex of marble, concrete and glass, is a very different but no less impressive building (Figure 3). Designed in the late 1930s by Vittorio Cafiero, it was originally intended as Mussolini’s colonial ministry but was still unfinished at the outbreak of World War Two. When finally completed in 1952, the building was handed over to the UN, thereby converting a monument

to fascist imperialism into a temple to post-1945 internationalism, a transformation affirmed not by altering the original design but by relocating the IIA’s library and archives from the Villa Umberto to the new building.

As a UN facility, Italy has no jurisdiction over the FAO and I was obliged to surrender my passport every morning at the heavily securitised entrance (Figure 4). Wandering along the building’s echoing corridors, past authentic 1960s furniture, is like walking through the set of James Bond movie featuring Sean Connery. A very good restaurant on the uppermost floor gives access to a capacious marble terrace with stunning views over the Baths of Caracalla, the Circus Maximus and the broad sweep of the city’s skyline (Figure 5). Lunch is an unmissable experience in this wonderful setting, surrounded by hundreds of UN officials conversing in a babel of different languages. Archivist Fabio told me in hushed, reverential tones of spectacular terrace parties on summer evenings in the 1960s and 1970s, adding ruefully that the UN is too impoverished and too serious for that kind of socialising today.



Fig. 4 FAO Entrance

Image credit: Mike Heffernan

The IIA archive is a well catalogued and largely untouched resource that provides a wealth of information on the challenges faced by interwar internationalism. The most interesting

Fig. 3 FAO Headquarters, Rome

Image credit: Mike Heffernan



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Fig. 5 Rome's skyline as viewed from the terrace of the FAO

Image credit: Mike Heffernan

documents are those that demonstrate how Lubin's liberal internationalism was gradually compromised during the 1920s and 1930s by Giuseppe de Michelis and other IIA officials who were sympathetic to fascism, though no less committed to their own version of internationalism. One file contains a remarkable sequence of photographs recording the IIA's 25th anniversary celebrations in 1930. These look like stills from a Fellini movie and speak directly to the themes we are seeking to explore in the AHRC project.

The photographs feature Mussolini, Victor Emmanuel III, and assorted ambassadors and international dignitaries, including Lubin's former secretary, translator and biographer Olivia Rosetti Agresti whose youthful commitment to anarchism had long since been replaced by her equally fervent devotion to fascism. They reveal the subtle conflicts, tensions and embarrassments over

comportment, dress and protocol that characterised these stilted public occasions, while also highlighting the importance of photojournalists, the forerunners of Fellini's paparazzi, who created these images.

Several photographs show the bullet-headed Mussolini before, during and after his florid speech in which he sought to reconcile the IIA's internationalism with his vision of a greater imperial Italy. He was sporting an ill-fitting morning suit, a top hat and a permanent scowl—mafia hitman meets disgruntled provincial solicitor. Victor Emmanuel, a tiny man barely five feet tall who was greatly irritated that even the diminutive Mussolini towered above him, was decked out in an absurdly camp army uniform with a preposterous cap from which a single, foot-long plumed feather extended directly upwards, presumably to make him appear taller than Il Duce as the two men stood side by side before the ranks of photographers

whose crisp images, taken over 80 years ago, now enrich this remarkable archive. Figure 6 is an excellent example of the sequence. This shows Mussolini striding towards the camera while Victor Emmanuel's feather, the only evidence of his presence, protrudes above the heads of the assembled worthies. Finding these photographs was an unexpected bonus: 'La dolce vita negli archivi' indeed. □



Fig. 6 Mussolini et al., 1930

Image credit: Mike Heffernan, FAO archives

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Conference Report

Conceptualising Islands in History: A Postgraduate and Early Career Researcher Workshop, Leicester

February 23, 2016

by Reshaad Durgahee

On a cold and crisp morning in late February, nineteen postgraduate and early career researchers made the trip to the current football capital of the country (Leicester) to discuss all things island. The idea for the workshop came about during a previous conference in which myself and Katy Roscoe, a PhD candidate in the Department of History at the University of Leicester presented on the same panel. Katy's work on convict islands and my work on Indian indentured labour to the nineteenth century sugar islands of empire, resulted in us thinking of putting together a workshop for postgraduates and early career researchers working on islands in different disciplines. We were keen to start a conversation within the emerging community of island researchers who, perhaps quite topically, are scattered disparately across different academic departments and schools and who rarely get the opportunity to interact.

We decided on a workshop format, whereby each participant would be allotted a ten minute slot to present their research in a 'work in progress' form, and take questions on their methodologies and research content. We limited the use of PowerPoint to two slides per presenter, so as to enable more of a discussion atmosphere to each presentation. The workshop was extremely interdisciplinary—welcoming delegates from the fields of geography, history, visual art, disaster risk management, Caribbean studies, international relations and Mediterranean studies. There was also a real

international dimension to the day with researchers from the UK, Denmark, the United States, Romania, Greece and Serbia giving presentations. The workshop kicked off with three keynote speakers: Professor Clare Anderson, a historian of empire at the University of Leicester; Dr Ilan Kelman, a reader at University College London's Institute for Risk and Disaster Reduction; and Dr Sarah Longair, a curator of Africa, Oceania and the Americas at the British Museum. As keynotes, they brought varied perspectives on the use and representation of islands in imperial history, through objects, and in modern media. The keynotes were followed by a special presentation from journalist and author Alice Albinia, about her upcoming book *The Britannias: An Archipelago's Tale*, which tells the history of Britain through its surrounding islands.

After the keynote presentations, each participant gave a ten minute presentation on their current 'work in progress'. A number of questions were circulated beforehand that encouraged speakers to reflect openly on the strengths and weaknesses of the island methodology as it applied to their work. This format encouraged open and honest discussion about research in an informal and non-hierarchical setting, and the breaks during the day led to many productive discussions and engagements in small groups stemming from the presentations. There was a wide spectrum of geographies and time frames presented including Ottoman Cyprus, Dutch Ceylon and the Scandinavian Caribbean colonies during the eighteenth century; St. Helena, Hong Kong, Malta, Mauritius, Fiji and Australian prison islands in the nineteenth century to more recent accounts of the Finnish island of Öro, used as a military space throughout the twentieth century, Yugoslav prison islands used during the 1950s and the role of the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands in the construction of anti-Japanese sentiment in



Discussing Islands
Image credit: Reshaad Durgahee



China.

After an island inspired buffet lunch, the presentations continued. The breadth of research being conducted on islands showcased in the presentations led to fascinating discussion in the roundtable at the end of the day on the symbolic nature of islands, the correlation between insular space and the development of societal structures, the intercolonial nature of many islands and the much debated theme of connectedness versus isolation. More practical issues were also discussed including the future direction of island studies, the challenges of interdisciplinarity for early career scholars trying to start a career in academia, the creative possibilities of an island framework, the complex and transient landscapes within islands and incorporating islands and mainland sites into one spatial framework.

After the event, there was real enthusiasm about the possibility of a follow-up workshop in 2017 and a special issue based on the research presented in Leicester. It was encouraging to hear about the breadth of research on islands being carried out across different disciplines, and hopefully this workshop was able to act as a platform to bring people together and take the islands conversation further. We would like to thank the Historical Geography Research Group, the Royal Historical Society and the College for Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities at the University of Leicester for their generous funding.

Reshaad Durgahee is a PhD student in the School of Geography, University of Nottingham. "Conceptualising Islands in History" was financially supported by the HGRG.

Recent PhD

A Colonial Cartographic Economy: the Contested Value of Mapping in Northern Rhodesia, 1915-1955

Elizabeth Haines, Royal Holloway

This thesis addresses the production and use of cartography in Northern Rhodesia (today Zambia), under colonial rule between 1915 and 1955. The predominant narrative for cartography in British colonial Africa has been one of 'absence': that mapping was side-lined due to a lack of available resources. However, this narrative evidences a strategy that has been critiqued, the use of technical failure as an explanation to mask positive political choices. It also treats cartography teleologically, with full, modern 'state' mapping as an inevitable endpoint. This endpoint was not achieved in Northern Rhodesia (arguably never has been), and yet colonial rule was maintained.

What then, the thesis asks, was the relationship between mapping and colonisation? Whilst colonial cartography in Northern Rhodesia largely failed to meet 'universal' cartographic ideals, hybrid, *ad hoc* forms of mapping emerged. These forms were determined by thoroughly local social, material and political conditions. I propose that investment in cartography was weighed against the potential value of a map; its symbolic value, utility, and financial cost. I use ethnographic archival analysis to reveal these local discussions of resources and values across multiple sites. Those discussions are then brought together within the framework of a 'cartographic economy'.

In addition to developing this theoretical approach, the thesis makes three further contributions. Firstly, it supplements the scant available description of the practices of colonial survey in the early twentieth century. Secondly, it differentiates the influence of an expanded range of actors and processes on Northern Rhodesian cartography going well beyond 'survey experts' to include; private enterprise, indigenous authorities, scientists, rural administrators, and African labour. Thirdly, it innovates the historiography of cartography by contrasting the use of maps with alternative *non-documentary* governance practices, such as peripatetic administration, and the embedding of colonial knowledge within local populations.

This Collaborative Doctoral Award was supervised by Innes Keighren and Alasdair Pinkerton (Royal Holloway) and initially by Jane Wess, and later by Tim Boon and Peter Morris (Science Museum). Examined by Lawrence Dritsas (Edinburgh) and Ruth Craggs (KCL), it was awarded in February 2016.



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Announcement

Inaugural Denis Cosgrove Lecture in the GeoHumanities

Dear HGRG members,

To celebrate its launch, the new *Centre for the GeoHumanities* at Royal Holloway University of London extends an invitation to attend the inaugural Denis Cosgrove Lecture in the GeoHumanities on the evening of June 16, 2016, at the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG).

The lecture will be given by *Professor Jerry Brotton* (School of English and Drama, QMUL), with a response by *Professor Steve Daniels* (School of Geography, Nottingham). Jerry's lecture is entitled 'This Orient Isle: The Cultural Geography of Elizabethan England and the Islamic World'.

Date: Thursday June 16th

Time: 6.00pm until c. 9.00pm (with welcome drinks and snacks)

Location: Royal Geographical Society (with the IBG), 1 Kensington Gore, London SW7 2AR

Registration: The event is free, but please signal intention to attend via Eventbrite at: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/launch-of-the-royal-holloway-centre-for-the-geohumanities-tickets-24953221758>



The Royal Holloway Centre for the GeoHumanities is a new initiative from the Social, Cultural and Historical Geography research group at Royal Holloway, dedicated to promoting links between geographers, arts and humanities scholars, and practitioners from the arts, cultural and heritage sectors. Its key areas of interest include:

- The Environmental GeoHumanities, encompassing arts and humanities scholarship on environment, nature and environmental change;
- The Creative GeoHumanities, encompassing practice-based arts research engaging themes of place, space, landscape and environment;
- The Spatial GeoHumanities, encompassing arts and humanities research on imaginative geographies and the production of space, past and present;
- The Digital GeoHumanities, including the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS), geo-coded data and digital mapping within arts and humanities scholarship;
- The Public GeoHumanities, encompassing the place-based and spatial understandings of the cultural, creative and heritage sectors as well as community and participatory work.

The Denis Cosgrove Lecture in the GeoHumanities will be a regular part of the Centre's programming. Denis was a Professor at Royal Holloway from 1994 to 2000, before moving to UCLA, and his intellectual vision played a central role in developing the links between Geography and arts and humanities scholars and practitioners internationally. 2016 also marks the 20th anniversary of the MA in Cultural Geography that Denis helped to establish at Royal Holloway. We are honoured that his family have agreed that we can name this lecture series in his memory.

We very much hope that you can join us for the lecture and wider celebration on June 16th.

Philip Crang and Harriet Hawkins

Co-Directors of the Royal Holloway Centre for the GeoHumanities



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