



**HISTORICAL
GEOGRAPHY
RESEARCH
GROUP**

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Copy for the next issue:
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HGRG Newsletter, Winter 2017-18



Historical Geography Research Group

NEWSLETTER

- WINTER 2017/18 -

Letter from the Chair

Dear HGRG members,

Welcome to the winter edition of the newsletter. I hope this finds you well rested after a pleasant winter break and full of exciting plans for 2018. It will certainly be a busy year for the HGRG committee and membership, with many of us making trips to both the ICHG in Warsaw in July and Cardiff for the RGS-IBG conference in early September.

The end of 2017 and the beginning of 2018 has also proved to be a productive few months for the Group. The 23rd annual Practising Historical Geography conference took place at Manchester Metropolitan University in November. As Hannah Awcock reports later in the newsletter, it was a fun day packed full of excellent talks and plenty of thoughtful discussions about methods and approaches in historical geography over tea, coffee and biscuits. I am also very pleased to report that the first HGRG Writing Retreat took place in early January at the Gladstone Library in Hawarden in North Wales. Sarah Evans has kindly provided us with a detailed account of proceedings later in the newsletter so I won't repeat the details here, but suffice to say I was both delighted and slightly stunned to have written almost 8,000 words in the 48 hours we were there. The committee and I very much hope the event will run again early in 2019, so please do look out for information on it—via Twitter, the mailing list and the newsletter—closer to the time.

As well as organising workshops and other events, the HGRG also sponsors conferences organised by members. Thus the Group recently supported the postgraduate-organised *Women's Negotiations of Space* conference held in mid-January at the University of Hull—a full report on which will follow in a later issue of the newsletter—as well as two bursaries for the Postgraduate Forum's Mid-Term Conference to be held at Royal Holloway, University of London in April. I'm also delighted to announce that the winner of the HGRG Harley Fellowship in the History of Cartography was Philip Koyoumjian, a PhD student at the University of Rochester in the USA. He will be working on a project entitled 'A geographer's world: Herman Moll and the British map trade, 1678-1732'. Good luck to Philip with his research project and we'll look forward to reading his report on the archival leg of the

project later in the year. The Harley Fellowship scheme will run again in 2019 and 2020, with the deadline for applications being the 1st November in the previous year. Further details are available at: <http://www.maphistory.info/application.html>.

Readers might also like to take note of the call for applications for the HGRG's Biennial Conference Organisation Funding Scheme. As members will know, the Group are keen to support conferences dedicated to the advancement of historical geography and supporting the profile and careers of postgraduate and early-career historical geographers. Applicants should be members of the HGRG and application forms can be found on the Group's website: <https://hgrg.org.uk/grants-and-prizes/>. The page also includes information about our Postgraduate Support Scheme, Small Conference and Seminar Funding, and Undergraduate Dissertation Prize. The deadlines for the first two schemes are 1st April, 1st August, and 1st December in any year, so postgraduate readers might like to consider making an application for the next round.

Finally and as always, my thanks go to our fabulous contributors to the newsletter. Alongside the reports from Hannah and Sarah, we have another brilliant contribution to the 'How I became a historical geographer' feature. This comes from Stephen Daniels of the University of Nottingham and is accompanied by a really rather wonderful picture perhaps best titled 'man with umbrella'. I still remember very fondly the lectures Steve gave on *mappae mundi* sometime early in the first term of my undergraduate degree at Nottingham (rather later than 1984, I should say!), and I much enjoyed reading his reflections here. Thanks too to Innes Keighren for his 'From the Archive' report on his research in Avignon on William Macintosh and to Ed Armston-Sheret for his 'Shelfie' piece. Members keen to contribute to any of these new regular features are encouraged to get in touch with our newsletter editor, Jake Hodder (jake.hodder@nottingham.ac.uk), or to drop me a line.

With very best wishes for 2018,

Dr Briony McDonagh, HGRG Chair

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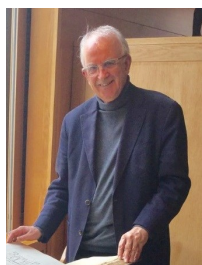
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How I became a historical geographer

Stephen Daniels



Stephen Daniels is Emeritus Professor of Cultural Geography at the University of Nottingham. Stephen was director of the AHRC's Landscape and Environment programme (2005-2012) and recipient of a Leverhulme Major Research Fellowship (2012-2015). His books include *The Iconography of Landscape* (1988), *Fields of Vision* (1994), *Humphry Repton, Landscape Gardening and the Geography of Georgian England* (1999) and *Paul Sandby, Picturing Britain* (2009). He is currently completing a book on the topographer John Britton.

St Andrews, September 1968

This wasn't planned, being here now.

I arrive by one of the last rail services to St Andrews, also on the slow train of University Entrance, 'going through clearing', about as far as possible from small town Hertfordshire for a new undergraduate. Before searching for vacant geography places, I'm not sure I had heard of St Andrews. It never appeared on physical-economic school maps of this part of eastern Scotland, dominated by the Fife coalfield, Dundee, Perth and the Carse of Gowrie. Geography, as a cultural-historical adventure, begins here.

One of the hallmarks of a St Andrews degree, which has shaped my subsequent career, is the equal weighting in the first year of two subjects outside a major specialism. Moral Philosophy I continue with as joint honours with Geography. As well as wondering whether an 'ought' can logically be derived from an 'is', what I learn lastingly is the imperative of thinking clearly rather than deeply, reading past masters of cool analytical prose like David Hume. Art History is hotter, and more mesmerising, a transportive experience. Lectures are delivered dramatically by John Steer, a specialist in Venetian Renaissance painting, with passionate erudition and double slide projection.

The Geography department is more temperate and rather traditional, the quantitative revolution largely a distant rumour. I am drawn to the regional geography of John Paterson, for its understated eloquence, its range of cultural and historical interest and his authorship of a compellingly readable, vividly illustrated text on North America, each region given a graphic narrative. I will write picture books, with good stories.

In lecturing on the history and philosophy of geography, Paterson draws on his experience studying with Richard Hartshorne in Wisconsin. When a graduate student there myself in 1973, Bob Sack leads a ground breaking seminar recuperating questions of region and place in

The Nature of Geography; encountering Hartshorne himself in the corridor, it feels as if I have seen a ghost.

My interest in literary landscape at St Andrews stirs in long periods between classes and exams, in an informal reading culture, or counter-culture, which is hard, in hindsight, not to satirise. In former farm cottages in the Fife countryside, among the joss sticks, wall hangings and Incredible String Band LPs, are copies of 'earth mystery' and 'mythic travel' texts pored over by wide eyed students of all subjects. Many of these are forgotten old books, newly re-packaged with hip album art style cover illustrations. Two works originally published in the 1920s I still consult, academically now, as cultural texts of their time and its geographical imagination, *Steppenwolf* by Herman Hesse and *The Old Straight Track* by Alfred Watkins, its liberal vision of Ancient Britain framed by the wonder of Ordnance Survey maps, its faded pages still wafting a faint aroma of patchouli oil.

London, April 1976

John Constable Bicentenary Exhibition, Tate Gallery.

An electrifying event, provoking a series of interdisciplinary explorations on cultural-historical relations between the landscape arts and the worlds they represent. The grounds have been laid by previous Tate shows and some key texts notably John Berger's *Ways of Seeing* and Raymond Williams' *The Country and the City*. Constable's once consoling, pastoral looking scenes are reframed as more complex, socially engaged views, mindful of the conflicts of early nineteenth century Britain.

This, the cultural history of landscape art, is the expanding field I want to research, but it is not the subject of my PhD thesis at UCL (on industrial philanthropy in Victorian Yorkshire), and it remains a parallel path which eventually crosses over when I discover that Repton landscaped an industrial site outside Leeds. Moreover my research path finally enters the

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field my supervisor Hugh Prince has written on for south-east England, in elegant prose, none finer, still, in historical geography.

Nottingham, July 1984

Annual HGRG Conference 'Iconography in Historical Geography'

It's a grim period of recession, record unemployment, deep cuts to the UK public sector, notably the mining industry, but also the universities, with Margaret Thatcher nursing a personal animosity to the arts and social sciences. Funding of any kind, not least for research, is scarce. Appointed to a lectureship here in 1981, I am the only new member of staff for seven years. I remain lastingly grateful for my good fortune. The pleasure is greater for the presence of Denis Cosgrove nearby at Loughborough, a good companion. We begin to team teach an option exploring a new kind of cultural geography, attentive to the symbolic and material aspects of historic landscapes. As we are both on the Committee of the HGRG, and I am Treasurer, there is the opportunity to stage a conference on the theme.

It is a modest, convivial gathering, thirty delegates, with a dozen speakers. Many of the speakers are local to the East Midlands, if from

different disciplines, and include two senior members of the Nottingham Department giving field excursions, reframed as 'iconographic walks', one which moves from the history of Derby on the ground, to the paintings of Joseph Wright of Derby in the gallery. The talks explore cartography, poetry, painting, social history, theology, advertising and art theory, with a relaxed sense of adventure.

The publication of a selection of the papers in 1988, in the CUP Historical Geography series, with a couple of commissions, and a jointly authored introduction, has proved the landmark event. If *The Iconography of Landscape* has made a lasting interdisciplinary, international impact, it is, I think, because much changed in the four years since the conference. The volume was part of a brighter new era, extending into the 1990s, more buoyant intellectually, with universities expanding again, when culture and cultural imagery in all realms, often with a post-modern twist, were attributed a powerful social agency and effect. Various versions of cultural geography grew in importance, and a vibrant, historically minded, postgraduate community emerged in Nottingham. With some of these former students I will collaborate; from all I will continue to learn, as they pursue their own careers. □



Stephen Daniels and Denis Cosgrove in Vicenza, Cultural Geography field week, April 1985
Image credit: Stephen Daniels

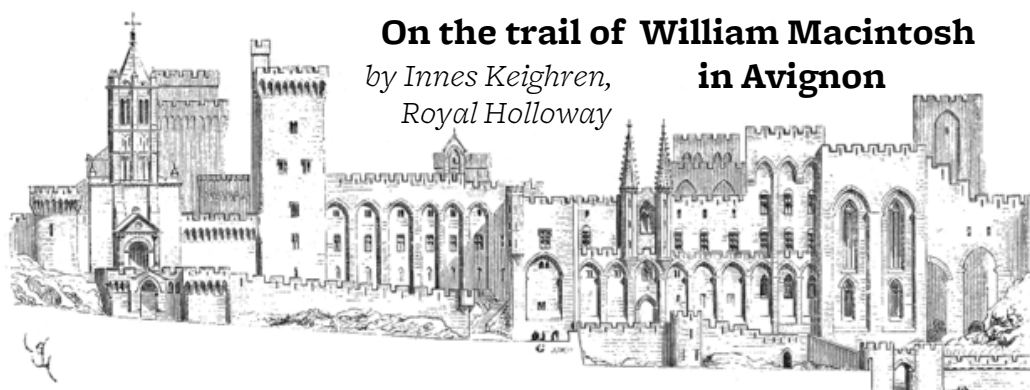
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From the archive

From the archive

On the trail of William Macintosh by Innes Keighren, Royal Holloway in Avignon



Any hope I have of persuading sceptical colleagues that archival research really is hard work typically evaporates when I reveal to them the particular venue for my scholarly digging: the Palais des Papes in Avignon, home to the Archives départementales du Vaucluse. As archival locations go, the Palais des Papes—a UNESCO World Heritage Site—is hard to equal: a soaring gothic edifice whose stonework seems to glow under the Provencal sun. At intervals since 2012 I have been returning here, and to the nearby Bibliothèque Ceccano, on the trail of an eighteenth-century Highland Scot turned Caribbean planter turned global traveller turned author: William Macintosh.

Born in 1737, Macintosh, like many Highland Scots during the eighteenth century, pursued a commercial career in the Caribbean—first in Antigua, then, following the end of the Seven-Years' War, in the Ceded Islands of Dominica, Grenada, and Tobago. In addition to his work managing plantations, Macintosh was involved in the political administration of Grenada, earning a reputation as something of an iconoclast as he clashed, in meetings and in political pamphlets, with the island's governor, Robert Melville, whom he considered incompetent and divisive. The American Revolutionary War precipitated a downturn in Macintosh's commercial fortunes and, under somewhat mysterious circumstances, he left the Caribbean in 1777 to undertake a three-year journey to India. The publication in 1782 of his *Travels in Europe, Asia, and Africa*—a travel-narrative-cum-political-exposé—earned him notoriety; the book exposed the corruption of the East India Company and highlighted its mismanagement under Warren Hastings, Governor-General of Bengal. Macintosh's text was read by Hasting's critics, including Edmund Burke and Charles Fox, and was cited as evidence in Hasting's impeachment trial from 1788. *Travels* was, for a brief period, a *cause célèbre*.

After the publication of *Travels*, Macintosh settled in Avignon where he remained until 1795

when, as a consequence of the French Revolution, his property and possessions were seized and he was exiled from the city. Macintosh's correspondence and notebooks (covering the period from 1763) are now in the collections of the Archives départementales du Vaucluse and his personal library (or what survives of it) is in the Bibliothèque Ceccano. Neither collection has been subject to scholarly attention; much like Macintosh, these materials have gone unnoticed by historians (although not by the archivists who care for them).

During my most recent visit to Avignon in October 2017—facilitated by a term's sabbatical leave—my attention was focused on reconstructing Macintosh's library. This task involved correlating the inventory that was drawn up at the point at which Macintosh's possessions were seized by the Revolutionary authorities with the catalogue and collections of the Bibliothèque Ceccano. The inventory lists approximately eighty titles in Macintosh's library (many in multiple volumes) but often records their bibliographical details in highly abbreviated

Innes Keighren at the Palais des Papes

Image credit: Innes Keighren



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terms. This characteristic is especially true in the case of English-language books whose titles were often transliterated in odd ways. *The history of Tom Jones, a foundling* (1749) becomes in the inventory, for example, “histoire du tom jaunes [sic]”. Here we get a clear sense of the inventory having been drawn up by two individuals working together—the first plucking the book from the shelf and reading its title out loud, the second transcribing it more or less precisely into the ledger.

While many of the titles in Macintosh’s library are unsurprising given his political and geographical interests, the items he would have read for pleasure—the plays of Lillo, Molière, and Shakespeare, for example—serve to give a rounder sense of the individual. On a personal level, I was struck by the fact that, like me, Macintosh was at one stage attempting to learn Italian: among other learning aids in his library, his copy of *Dizionario delle lingue Italiana, ed Inglese* (1787) was, a manuscript inscription on the title page tell us, bought in Rome in 1790. I hope he was more successful in that task than I have so far been.

In addition to reconstructing Macintosh’s library, I devoted some time to identifying the house in Avignon in which

he lived—a task that involved triangulating a number of pieces of archival evidence. While there was no particular intellectual justification for doing this, I felt compelled by personal curiosity to find the house—which stands at Rue des 3 Testons—in order to understand how Macintosh would have experienced the city, to follow the narrow streets down which he would have walked, to see the windows from which he would have gazed. I wanted to do this, I think, to ensure that Macintosh never becomes in my mind an abstract entity or a historical cypher—he was a real person who, at turns, was a caring father, a heartless slave-owner, a relentless political commentator, and a lost soul. □



Macintosh’s home, Rue des 3 Testons
Image credit: Innes Keighren

Shelfie

My ‘Shelfie’

by Ed Armston-Sheret



On my shelf are five books addressing different aspects of my PhD research that examines British cultures of exploration between 1853 and 1913, with a focus on the relationship between the body and questions of authority, science, culture, and identity. I am particularly interested in how explorers prepared their bodies for travel, how they used and experienced their bodies while on expeditions, and how they represented their bodies and the bodies of others to readers of their written accounts.

Bodies of knowledge on travel and exploration

Johannes Fabian’s *Out of Our Minds* (2000) has been a useful book during my first term of doctoral research. Fabian provides a compelling account of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century exploration of Central Africa, predominantly through the writings of French and German explorers. In doing so, he seeks to

Shelfie

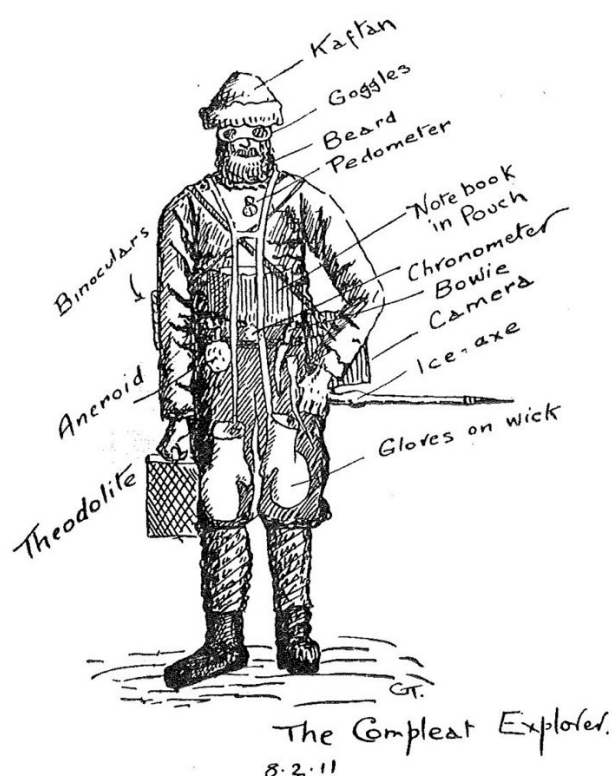
dismantle the idea that European travellers were rational scientific observers. In reality, Fabian argues, European explorers were frequently “out of their minds’ with extreme fatigue, fear, delusions of grandeur, and feelings ranging from anger to contempt”. Often, this loss of control was brought on by fever or other tropical diseases. But, as Fabian is keen to point out, the explorers’ own efforts to discipline their bodies could prove equally problematic—many medications contained high doses of opium and alcohol, which, unsurprisingly, did little to clear travellers’ heads. These insights make *Out of Our Minds* an interesting, and at times, humorous read, but what makes this work compelling is its wider implications. Fabian argues, for example, that the loss of control which explorers experienced was often productive and helped to facilitate cross-cultural exchange. In doing so, Fabian uses the bodies of explorers to highlight the contradictions at the heart of both European imperialism and scientific fieldwork—issues I am keen to address in my own research.

Like many studies of exploration, Fabian looks at only one region and time period. My research aims to be comparative and holistic, by studying expeditions to both torrid and frigid environments. In doing so, I aim to understand the relationship between these different spaces and the ways explorers equipped, experienced, and wrote about their bodies. This interest in comparative studies of exploration is informed by my second book choice, Dane Kennedy’s *The Last Blank Spaces* (2013). Kennedy’s work is wide-ranging, addressing British expeditions to both Australia and Africa throughout the nineteenth century. Through its thematic arrangement, Kennedy covers a great deal of ground: analysing changing scientific practices; discussing the various roles of intermediaries; and identifying the different logistical approaches adopted by expeditions. By comparing expeditions to the two continents, Kennedy’s work offers a number of perceptive insights on the practices common to most nineteenth-century explorers. At the same time, the comparison also highlights how the different environments and societies on each continent shaped explorers’ expeditionary preparation and conduct. Reading Kennedy’s work, therefore, highlights the opportunities presented by studying expeditions to different environments alongside each other.

The third book on my shelf also takes a comparative approach to the study of travel and exploration. In *Travels into*

Print (2015), Keighren, Withers, and Bell draw on the John Murray archive to study the process by which accounts of travel and exploration became published works between 1773 and 1859. In doing so, they reveal how the relationship between authors, editors, and printers shaped both the form and content of travel narratives. Many studies of exploration take the published accounts alone as their empirical focus, as such they do not fully explore the ways in which these published works were composed and edited in efforts to enhance their credibility and popularity. Although addressing an earlier period than my work, I take from this book a strong interest in the editorial process and its impact on how explorers’ bodies were represented.

The fourth book on my shelf is Robyn Longhurst’s *Bodies* (2000). Longhurst claims her work grew out of the gap between theoretical insights that conceptualise the body and identity as fluid or porous and the absence of real fluids or mess in studies of embodied experience. Through a series of interviews with pregnant women, she explores how they are excluded from many public spaces due to a lack of facilities and the construction of their bodies as “messy” and “leaking”. As a counterpoint, and as a strategy to displace the idea that male bodies are not leaky or messy, Longhurst also looks at men’s experiences of private bathrooms. She finds that many men are deeply uncomfortable with talking about the liquids that their bodies produce. This discomfort, Longhurst argues,



1911 drawing by Griffith Taylor depicting typical clothing worn by a polar explorer
Image credit: National Library of Scotland



Shelfie

exposes the various ways that men are constructed as sealed and solid despite their various bodily flows. Longhurst, therefore, uses bodily fluids to explore the inseparability of people from the spaces they inhabit, an approach which I am keen to adopt within my own project.

Like the leakage of bodily fluids, the ingestion of food is a process that blurs the boundaries between bodies and space. My final book selection is, therefore, Jason Anthony's *Hoosh* (2012), which traces the history of Antarctic cooking from the first footsteps on the continent to the present day. Anthony explores the various roles that food has played for those exploring and dwelling on the continent. Food and its preparation is presented as being not only important in the context of travellers' nourishment but also because of the role it played in both group bonding and the expression of national cultures. I am drawn to Anthony's work, and particularly his section on early-Antarctic exploration, because it paints a captivating picture of domestic life in an extreme environment, exposing frequently ignored aspects of exploration. For instance, Anthony provides a detailed account of the different approaches to cooking adopted in polar huts during the "heroic age", an account which sheds light on the challenges polar cooks faced in providing varied and nutritional food with limited supplies and equipment. As such, Anthony's work highlights how the study of food can throw light on alternative narratives within the history of exploration.

Recovering the explorer's body

Drawing something from each of the books on my shelf, my research seeks to provide a comparative study of relationship between explorers' bodies and different environments. Through Longhurst's work, I have become particularly interested in liminal objects that blur the boundaries of the human body, for example, food, clothing, and bodily dirt. My research will, therefore, explore the selection of clothing, food, equipment, and medical supplies in order to understand how these choices were shaped by travellers' views of the relationship between their bodies and the environments they were travelling to. I am, likewise, interested in the extent to which these choices were shaped by broader cultures of exploration.

My second main interest is in the bodily experiences of travel and exploration. Building on the insights gained from reading Fabian and Anthony, I seek to explore how choices about equipment, clothing, and food affected explorers' bodies and their ability to survive, move, and carry out scientific work in the environments through which they travelled. Instances of bodily breakdown and loss of

control are of particular interest, as are moments where the barriers between the explorers' bodies and the space around them became blurred—for example, during cases of frostbite. Through addressing these issues, my research aims to understand whether the process of travel and cross-cultural encounter changed travellers' ideas about embodiment.

Finally—drawing on Keighren, Withers, and Bell—I will look at the ways explorers represented their bodies to both public and scientific audiences. To do so I intend to examine the relationship between explorers' published accounts and unpublished manuscripts. Were, for example, instances of bodily breakdown altered or omitted? Did the scarred and wounded bodies of explorers play an important role in the credibility of their narratives? Alongside these questions, my research will address the extent to which explorers relied on the bodies of others to facilitate their travels and the ways in which the bodies of those who helped them were represented—or omitted—in their published narratives.

During the first term of my PhD, the books in my shelfie have helped me to develop my research focus outlined above. The books are also some of the works that I have most enjoyed reading, and I would, therefore, recommend them to anyone interested in the issues raised by my project. I have relished the opportunity to read widely at this stage in my PhD and I am excited to begin my initial phase of archival research. As a starting point, I plan to look at the travels of Sir Richard Burton and Isabella Bird alongside Scott's *Terra Nova* expedition—case studies that have been selected because they span the time period (1853–1913) and include expeditions to different environments. To do so I plan to conduct initial scoping exercises in the Scott Polar Research Institute, National Library of Scotland, the Royal Geographical Society (w/ IBG) and the Wellcome Collection in the coming months. □

Ed Armston-Sheret is a first year PhD Student in the Geography Department at Royal Holloway, University of London. Ed is supervised by Dr Innes M. Keighren and Professor Klaus Dodds.

Editor's note:

'My Shelfie' is a section commissioned and edited by the HGRG's Postgraduate Committee members: **Laura Crawford, Peter Martin and Ben Newman**. In each issue postgraduates are invited to report on their research, beginning with a 'shelfie'—a photograph of a collection of books which best encapsulates their work. If you would like to take part in the 'My Shelfie' feature please contact one of our postgraduate representatives.



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Reports

HGRG Writing Retreat, Gladstone Library, Flintshire

January 14-16, 2018

by Sarah Evans

The inaugural HGRG Writing Retreat took place in the suitably atmospheric surroundings of the Gladstone Library, North Wales from Sunday 14 to Tuesday 16 January 2018. Over 48 packed hours, our group of six historical geographers powered through a series of eight writing sessions together, with an incredible 35,000 new words written by the last session on Tuesday morning.

The retreat had been ably organised by Dr Jo Norcup after discussion at the last HGRG AGM, and drew on similar recent activities undertaken by some of the other RGS-IBG Research Groups (particularly the Higher Education Research Group and the Gender and Feminist Geographies Research Group). Given that HGRG already provides extensive support for the postgraduate community of historical geographers (most notably through the annual Practising Historical Geographies conference in November each year), the retreat aimed to provide support to early-career, mid-career, and more established, historical geographers, looking to ‘facilitate time to begin new writing projects, progress with working through ideas, or finish off/edit pieces of work while being in company with other HGRG folks in a supportive and conducive space’.

Keen to make progress on some planned publications from my PhD thesis on which I’ve successfully been procrastinating for the last three years (the day job helps), I was delighted to be offered a place, if faintly terrified by the extensive preparation materials that Jo sent through in early December. These proved however to be immensely useful both in terms of thinking through what I hoped to achieve over the three days of writing sessions, and in terms of what I needed to prepare in advance and bring with me. The retreat was non-directed, in that we all selected the projects we would work on, rather than working on a shared project together.

Arriving on Sunday afternoon after a straightforward journey from London (if a depressingly early start for a Sunday morning in January), I was welcomed by the ever-helpful and pleasant staff at the Gladstone Library and shown to the Anwyl Room, where we’d spend much of the next day and a half. Our first session

started with introductions, with each of us outlining what we were currently working on, and what we hoped to achieve while on the retreat, before starting our first block of ‘writing time’.

The premise of these writing sessions is simple, if somewhat full-on. You gather together in a space, laptops and notes at the ready, and agree that for the next hour, or hour and a half, you will all sit together and write. Given how easily distracted and fidgety I normally get when faced with having to sit and think and write—oh, but I must make a cup of tea, oh but I must see what emails have come in, oh but I must sort the laundry first—I was amazed at how productive this set-up made me, with similar results reported by the others. At first, I thought it was simply the implicit pressure of having the others around the same table, tapping away on their laptops, and not wanting to be the first one to cave in and give up, but it was more that in the quiet space created, it was possible to focus and really dig into what I was trying to write. This was helped by the instruction not to spend time fact-checking or referencing—these could be tidied up later, outside of the sessions—but instead to concentrate on getting words onto the page (hence why it had been so helpful to prepare outlines ahead of time). At the end of the first session, we tallied up word counts, impressed by what it had been possible to achieve in such a short time.

The productivity continued over the following sessions, interspersed with a rather muddy walk to the ‘old’ Hawarden castle (benefitting from Dr Briony McDonagh’s expertise in medieval



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castles and landscape) on Monday afternoon, and some truly excellent cakes from the 'Food for Thought' café. Progress was undoubtedly helped by the carefully cultivated atmosphere of peaceful serenity throughout the building—mint green DAB radios in the bedrooms rather than televisions, the convivial Gladstone Room for evening socialising, complete with fireplace (giving off faintly disappointing levels of heat), board games and jigsaw puzzles. Some of us also ventured into the library itself between sessions,

a similarly peaceful working space which houses a leading collection of theological, literary and historical works. On Tuesday morning, we moved to the Robinson Room to work, where Dr Cheryl McGeachan rigged up an appropriately Heath Robinson style contraption to keep the overhead light working properly.

The retreat was over all too quickly, but we all left on Tuesday with words under our belts and a sense of accomplishment and renewed purpose. The support of HGRG, in organising the retreat

and covering the costs of our meals and of the hire of the conference rooms, was very much appreciated, and it is to be hoped that future HGRG retreats continue to be as immensely productive and rewarding—I understand that the 2019 retreat is already in the works! □

Sarah Evans is a Professional Officer in the Research and Higher Education division of the Royal Geographical Society (with Institute of British Geographers).



Writing retreat writers

Image credit: Briony McDonagh

Practising Historical Geography Conference, Manchester Metropolitan University

November 8, 2018

by Hannah Awcock

The 23rd Annual Practising Historical Geography Conference was held at Manchester Metropolitan University on the November 8th, 2017. The conference is designed for postgraduate and undergraduate students with research interests in historical geography. It aims to give attendees an insight into the kind of research going on in the field, as well as providing an opportunity for networking and socialising. This was my fifth time attending the conference; I have only missed one since I started my postgraduate career in 2013. The reason I keep coming back is that Practising Historical Geography is always a rewarding, interesting, and stimulating experience, and this year was no exception.

The day involves: two keynote speakers; two methodological workshops; a Postgraduate Voices presentation by a recently completed PhD student; and a paper by the HGRG

undergraduate dissertation prize winner. In her introduction to the conference, HGRG Chair Dr Briony McDonagh reported that historical geography was in “rude health”, quoting Simon Naylor’s recent review of the field in *Transactions*. By the end of the day, I couldn’t help but agree. The keynote lectures, given by Professor Jon Stobart and Dr Kimberly Peters, were both fantastic, and they highlighted the diversity of research being conducted in the field. Professor Stobart discussed the construction of ‘comfortable’ homes in Georgian England using material objects. Dr Peters talked about the development of maritime ‘motorways,’ shipping lanes designed to minimise the chance of large container ships colliding head-on. I never thought that I would find maritime trade so interesting!

The two workshops were also excellent. The first, organised by Dr Sarah Mills, was about the ethics of archival research. I must admit that I generally fall into the trap of assuming I don’t need to think too much about ethics because I research the past, but the workshop made me realise it was something I should pay more attention to. Dr Mills conducts research on the historical geographies of youth citizenship and volunteering, which is ethically more sensitive than researching adults, but the workshop was a



Reports



Pre-conference meal
Image credit: Jo Norcup

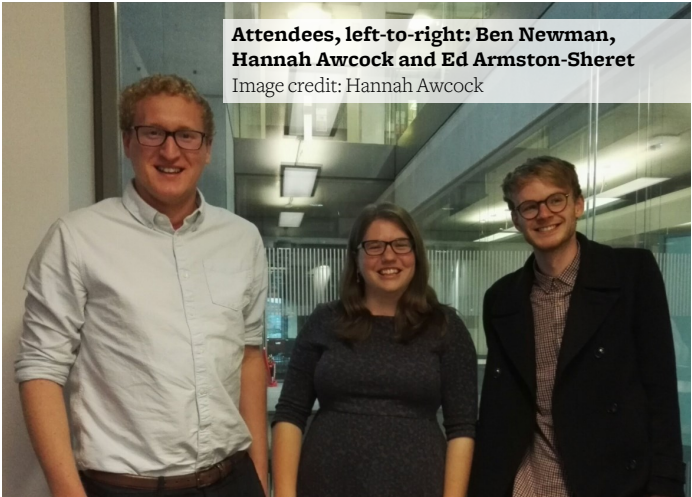
reminder that ethical considerations should be built into any research project, historical or otherwise. The second workshop, run by Dr James Kneale, was about the merits and challenges of time capsules for historical research. During the recent demolition of the Temperance Hospital in London, two time capsules were found, and Dr Kneale was asked to consult on their contents. Whilst it seems unlikely that many historical geographers will find themselves in a similar situation during their careers, we had some challenging discussions about the nature, meaning, purpose, and use of time capsules. It also led to some interesting conversations about the nature of historical sources more generally; with historical research it is always necessary to consider why the sources you are consulting were produced, and why they were preserved.

This year, I gave the Postgraduate Voices talk. I was pleased to be asked, as the Practising Historical Geography conferences have been an important part of my PhD. I have valued the time spent with other enthusiastic researchers who have been unfailingly supportive over the last five

years. Because of how much I have got out of these conferences, I decided to use my Postgraduate Voices presentation to talk about my place in the academic communities that played such an important role in my PhD. Doing a PhD can be a lonely experience, so I think it is essential to take a bit of time and effort to participate in academic networks when you get the chance.

Every year, the HGRG runs a competition in association with Routledge to find the best undergraduate dissertation in historical geography. Amongst other things, the winners are invited to present their work at the Practising Historical Geography conference. The 2017 winner was Anna Lawrence, from the University of Cambridge. Anna gave an excellent presentation on her dissertation entitled: “Morals and Mignonette: the use of flowers in the Moral Regulation of Women, Children, and the working classes in Late-Victorian London.” Her arguments about how the symbolism of flowers was used to discipline different groups were clear and persuasive.

Practising Historical Geography conferences are always brilliant events, and this year was no different. I went home feeling energised, with a renewed enthusiasm for my own research. I would like to say thank you to the HGRG committee, particularly Dr Cheryl McGeachan and Dr Hannah Neate, for organising such a successful event. □



Attendees, left-to-right: Ben Newman, Hannah Awcock and Ed Armston-Sheret
Image credit: Hannah Awcock

Hannah Awcock has recently completed a PhD at Royal Holloway, University of London.



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SEMINAR PROGRAMMES

V&A/RCA History of Design

Research Seminars, Spring 2018

11 January

Sukajan: a Transcultural Site for Commemoration, Rebellion and Commercialisation

Elizabeth Kramer,
Northumbria University,
Department of Arts

18 January

Thrifty Science: Making the Most of Material Things

Simon Werrett, UCL,
Department of Science
and Technology Studies

25 January

Designing Resistance to Adversarial Ageism in Caryl Churchill's *Escaped Alone* and Split Britches' *Ruff*

Jen Harvie, Queen Mary / UL
School of English and Drama

1 February

From Decoy Screen to Bird Hide: Design, Socio-technical Devices and an Observational Culture of Nature

Sean Nixon, University of Essex
Department of Sociology

V&A / RCA History of Design Research Seminars Spring 2018

5.15 pm, RCA White City, Room GH 109, Garden House,
11 Dorando Close, London W12 7FN

15 February

The Flexible Heart of the Home: Rehabilitating Homemakers in postwar America

Barbara Penner, Bartlett
School of Architecture / UCL
Faculty of the Built Environment

1 March

Corporeal Resonances: Making Contemporary Dance in Quito, Ecuador

Sofie Narbed, Royal Holloway / UL
Department of Geography

8 March

Camera Time: Popular Photography in Egypt in the Era of High Modernity

Lucie Ryzova, University of
Birmingham Department of History



All seminars are free, external attendees are asked to contact hod@rca.ac.uk to reserve a seat
rca.ac.uk/schools/school-of-arts-humanities/hod/history-design-research-seminar-series





Seminar Series

London Group of Historical Geographers

Seminar Programme, Spring 2018

Collections in Circulation

January 16	Victoria Pickering (British Museum) Collections and catalogues of natural history: early modern objects in motion, past and present
January 30	Caroline Cornish & Felix Driver (Royal Holloway) Mobile museum: Kew's economic botany collection in circulation
February 13	Laura Peers (Pitt Rivers Museum/University of Oxford) There and back again: the Haida Great Box and its child
February 27	Sarah Longair (University of Lincoln) Objects, islands, empire: collecting in the western Indian Ocean, 1860 – 1930
March 13	Julie Adams (British Museum) Museum, magic, memory: the curating of Paul Montague

Seminars, unless otherwise indicated, are held on Tuesdays at 5.15pm in **Wolfson Room I (NB01), Institute of Historical Research, North Block, Senate House, University of London**. For further details, or to have your name added to our e-mail list, please contact one of the convenors. For supporting this seminar series, we are grateful to AHRC, King's, Queen Mary, Royal Holloway, Birkbeck, LSE, Open University, UCL, University of Sussex, and the IHR.

Series Convenors: Ruth Craggs (King's), Felix Driver (Royal Holloway), Innes M. Keighren (Royal Holloway), and Miles Ogborn (Queen Mary).



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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Recently Completed PhD

The Early Industrial Revolution in the Leen valley, Nottinghamshire.

Stephen J Walker, University of Nottingham, 2017

At Papplewick, Nottinghamshire, there is physical evidence of 18th century industry. This study focuses on George Robinson and Sons, who were cotton-spinners between 1778 and 1830. The firm's records have not survived, so detail of their operation has been re-constructed using alternative sources. The thesis investigates some accepted ideas about the concept of industrialisation, and attempts to address the question of when, where and what constituted the Industrial Revolution in this particular locality.

The study adopts a transdisciplinary approach, viewing physical evidence from the landscape alongside documentary sources. Evidence from archaeological exploration is presented. The historic landscape is viewed in the context of biographical and socio-economic data relating to people and events.

These water-powered mills were the first in the world to apply steam to cotton-spinning. The study considers the evolution of the water-system, and the introduction of steam to this pioneer site. It also examines transport networks, delivery of raw materials and capital expenditure. Personnel associated with the mills are identified, charting their employment and migration. Cartographic sources of different ages are used to provide a spatial framework for the description. The principles of reverse engineering are applied - attempting to understand, on one hand, the function of the mills and water-system, and on the other to de-construct the factors which influenced this innovative undertaking.

It is generally accepted that three key attributes of the Industrial Revolution were adoption of new technology, introduction of centralised production, and socio-economic changes, accompanied by urbanisation. The Robinson mills could be perceived as the beginning of the Industrial Revolution in the Leen valley. However, when the company was wound up (in 1830) industrial activity in the valley reverted to manufacture of hosiery and bobbin-net lace, both of which were, at that time, cottage industries.





HISTORICAL
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ARE YOU A FULL MEMBER OF THE HGRG?

Some of you reading this newsletter and, perhaps, participating in our activities will not be a full member of the HGRG. Some of you, for instance, will have expressed an interest in the work of the group when you became a member of the RGS/IBG and so joined that way. And that's just great! We welcome and celebrate the breadth of our membership.

Nevertheless, there are some important benefits to be gained by switching to Full membership and we would encourage you to consider doing so. It would be of immense benefit to the Group and we promise to make you feel 'special' in return! As it stands if you are with us as a RGS/IBG member only, we receive a minimum contribution (as little as £2 *per annum*) from that. In return all you receive is this newsletter.

In short we would be delighted to welcome you to join us as a full member of the HGRG community! Membership subs are essential for us to continue to provide the full range of support and we are grateful for the collegiate generosity of members in this regard.

Full Membership £12.00 *per annum*.

Should you choose to become a full member you will be added to the e-circulation list, will receive the HGRG Research Series and the HGRG Newsletter. Your subs will help support the grants that we provide to the HGRG community and you will be eligible to apply for these. Finally, you will get a reduced rate on back issues of the HGRG Research Series and have the opportunity to take up an Officering role.



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