

# CREATIVE HISTORIES

BRISTOL ZOO GARDENS  
19TH-21ST JULY 2017



## Table of Contents

Introduction	p.3
Program	p.4
Exhibitions	p.11
Zoovenir App	p.13
Ground rules for discussions	p.15
Map/directions	p.16
Accessibility	p.18
Abstracts	p.19
Index of participants	p.47

# Introduction

Welcome to Bristol, and to the Zoo!

Thanks to the overwhelming response to the call for contributions, we have a program that is packed with talks, performances, screenings, and workshops that demonstrate just how important creativity is to the ways we research, write, and present history today. There are events and discussions around topics as varied as choose your own adventure books, archive and exhibition practices, steampunk, blogging, children's literature, and autoethnography. Alongside these performances and talks, there are also three exhibitions running. We hope you have time to enjoy as much of this packed program as possible.

Please do use the conference hashtag: #CreativeHistories17

The organisers would like to thank the plenary speakers and performers: Julia Blackburn, Darren Hayman, and Professor Ronald Hutton. We would also like to thank the organizations that have funded and supported this event including the History Department at the University of Bristol, Bristol Institute for Research in the Humanities and Arts (BIRTHA), and the British Academy. The conference is the first of three 'Creative Histories' events funded by a British Academy Rising Star Engagement Award awarded to Will Pooley.



BIRTHA



#CreativeHistories17

	<b>Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> July</b>	
	<b>CLIFTON SUITE</b> Registration 12:00-13:00	
	<b>Session 1: 13:00-15:00</b>	
<p><b>COUNCIL ROOM</b> <b>Panel: Children's Literature</b> Chair: Mike Gulliver</p> <p>'Catching them Young: Approaches to Historical Fiction for Children and Young Adults' <i>Miriam Halahmy, Anne Booth and Lydia Syson</i></p> <p>'Creating (fictional) histories for children: representations of the colonial frontier in Australian historical novels and picture books for children' <i>Kylie Flack</i></p>	<p><b>LECTURE THEATRE</b> <b>Panel: Colonial Archives</b> Chair: Andy Flack</p> <p>'No Longer a Wandering Spirit: kinship imaginaries of <i>Minang</i> Noongar Bessy Flowers' <i>Sharon Huebner</i></p> <p>'Loyalty and Dissent: South Asia in the First World War' <i>Iqbal Husain</i></p>	<p><b>GARDEN ROOM</b> <b>Panel: Archives Out and About I</b> Chair: John Reeks</p> <p>'Threads of Time: What We Take Away With Us: The Travelling Case of John Radcliffe' <i>Daphne Knott and Ghislaine Peart</i></p> <p>'Creative Wiltshire: Collecting Cultures' <i>Julie Davis, Ally McConnell and Leighton Gosai</i></p>

	Session 2: 15:00-17:00	
	<p><b>LECTURE THEATRE</b>  <b>Screening and Q &amp; A:</b> Death or Liberty:  investigating Britain's political prisoners  exiled to Australia in book, documentary  and digital transmedia  <i>Tony Moore</i>  Chair: Rich Sheldon</p>	<p><b>GARDEN ROOM</b>  <b>Performance and Q&amp;A</b>  'The Fortunes of Fanny Fust'  <i>Alice Parsley, Clemma Fleat, Katy Branch,</i>  <i>Tim Lumley Smith and Nicola Grove</i>  <i>(OpenStorytellers)</i></p>
	<p>17:00-18:30  <b>LECTURE THEATRE</b>  <b>Performance and Q&amp;A</b>  <i>Darren Hayman</i> will perform songs  from his 'Thankful Villages' project.</p>	
	<p><b>CLIFTON SUITE</b>  18:30  <b>DRINKS RECEPTION</b></p>	
	Thursday 20 <sup>th</sup> July	

	<b>LECTURE THEATRE</b> 9:00-10:30 <b>Plenary Lecture</b> Ronald Hutton 'History in Public: The Case of Modern Paganism'	
	<b>CLIFTON SUITE</b> <b>COFFEE 10:30-11:00</b>	
	Session 3: 11:00-12:30	
<b>COUNCIL ROOM</b> <b>Panel: Public Engagement and Creativity</b> Chair: Richard Stone  Creating an Evaluative Framework for the First World War Engagement Centres: A Case Study of the Centre for Hidden Histories' <i>Larissa Allwork</i>	<b>LECTURE THEATRE</b> <b>Panel: The Self at Stake</b> Chair: Catherine Fletcher  'The Relevance of Personal History' <i>Nick Barratt</i>  'The Researcher as/at the Site of the Research: Vulnerability, Creative Histories, and the Undoing of the Self'	<b>CEC LECTURE THEATRE</b> <b>Panel: Playing with Branscombe</b>  "Branscombe pickling", or six go mad in Dorset" <i>Beth Williamson, Erika Hanna, Josie            McLellan, Marianna Dudley, and Tim Cole</i>

<p>'Historians out and about: historical practice in contemporary Brazil'  <i>Gisele Iecker de Almeida and Guilherme Bianchi</i></p>	<p><i>Sonja Boon</i></p> <p>'Combatting Colonialism Through Steampunk'  <i>Cheryl Morgan</i></p>	
	<p><b>LUNCH 12:30-13:30</b></p>	
	<p>Session 4: 13:30-15:00</p>	
	<p><b>LECTURE THEATRE</b>  <b>Panel: Archives at Large II</b>  Chair: Erika Hanna</p> <p>“Revisiting an old rhetoric”? Participatory research and creative engagement with the CPRE archive'  <i>Francesca Church</i></p> <p>'Maurice Elvey, a film about Nelson and quilting my research'  <i>Lucie Dutton</i></p> <p>'The Public Past and Private Present: Families and the National Maritime Museum (NMM)'  <i>Claire Warrior</i></p>	<p><b>CEC LECTURE THEATRE</b>  <b>Screening and Q&amp;A: 'Story of a House: Piazzale Lugano, 22'</b>  <i>John Foot</i>  Chair: Juliane Furst</p>

	Session 5: 15:30-17:30	
<p><b>COUNCIL ROOM</b>  <b>Panel: 'The True, the Real, and the Possible: Thinking and Writing through Hayden White'</b>  Chair: John Lyons</p> <p><i>Leanne Bibby, Steve Nash and Karen Dodsworth</i></p>	<p><b>LECTURE THEATRE</b>  <b>Panel: Creative Writing I</b>  Chair: Will Pooley</p> <p>'The Medici Vendetta, or, the Revenge of My Minor Characters: Historical Writing from Fact to Fiction'  <i>Catherine Fletcher</i></p> <p>"'As I went forth one summer's day': putting the story in early modern history"  <i>Mark Hailwood</i></p> <p>"Choose your own adventure': creating interactive social and cultural history, inspired by video games, board games, and serialised children books from the 1980s'  <i>Julia Laite</i></p>	<p><b>CEC LECTURE THEATRE</b>  <b>Panel: Creative Writing II</b>  Chair: Laura Sangha</p> <p>'Punching Hitler: comic books and their uses for the historian'  <i>Joanne Krawec</i></p> <p>'The Academic as Storyteller: Learning from Writers and Performers'  <i>Laura Tisdall and Polly Tisdall</i></p>
	<p><b>CLIFTON SUITE</b>  17:30:18:30  <b>EXHIBITION Q&amp;As</b>  <i>Lito Apostolakou, Ann Chow, and Anthony Rhys</i> will be available to discuss their</p>	



	installations.	
	Friday 21 <sup>st</sup> July	
	Session 4: 9:00-10:30	
<p><b>COUNCIL ROOM</b>  <b>Panel and Discussion: 'A Little Local Knowledge (is a dangerous thing?)'</b>  Chair: James Thompson</p> <p><i>Bronwyn Lowe, Peter Minard and Meighen Katz</i></p>	<p><b>LECTURE THEATRE</b>  <b>Interactive Writing Workshop</b>  <i>Beth Williamson, Erika Hanna, Josie McLellan, Marianna Dudley, and Tim Cole</i></p>	<p><b>GARDEN ROOM</b>  <b>Panel: Creative Writing III</b>  Chair: Helen Rogers</p> <p>'Fact or Fiction?: Creating convict lives with the Digital Panopticon'  <i>Lucy Williams</i></p> <p>"'History is just journalism': how the history of journalism can help us write a more creative history"  <i>Nell Darby</i></p> <p>'Better looking than he really is'  <i>Robert Bickers</i></p>

	<p><b>LECTURE THEATRE</b>  10:30-12:00  <b>Plenary Lecture</b>  Julia Blackburn  ‘On not getting in the way’</p>	
	<p><b>LUNCH</b> 12:00-13:00</p>	
	<p>Session 6: 13:00-15:00</p>	
<p><b>COUNCIL ROOM</b>  <b>Panel: History Out and About</b>  Chair: Alison Twells</p> <p>“‘What gets lost, what gets hidden really matters”: Birmingham Women Past and Present Revisited’  <i>Nicola Gauld and Nikki Thorpe</i></p> <p>‘Creative History in Tinsley, South Yorkshire, 2013-2018’  <i>Sally Rodgers and Charlotte Head</i></p> <p>‘Telling Not Showing: Storytelling in Historical Exhibitions’</p>	<p><b>LECTURE THEATRE</b>  <b>Panel: Digital Creativities</b>  Chair: Matt Houlbrook</p> <p>‘Co-producing LGBT+ History: Mapping LGBT+ Bristol’  <i>Andrew Foyle and Nate Eisenstadt</i></p> <p>‘Experiencing Arcadia in a Digital World’  <i>Clare Hickman</i></p> <p>“‘The Many-Headed Monster”: Blogging for and from Below?’  <i>Laura Sangha</i></p>	<p><b>GARDEN ROOM</b>  <b>Performance and Q&amp;A: ‘WITCH’</b>  <i>Tracey Norman, Mark Norman and Sam Burns (Circle of Spears Productions)</i></p>

<i>Andrew Roberts</i>		
	<b>LECTURE THEATRE</b> 15:00-16:00 <b>Closing Roundtable</b>	

## Exhibitions

### I: London Rocks – Narrative Flows Lito Apostolakou

Art installation: museum boxes, prints, ink tracings, sound recordings.

A story of the river Thames is told through rock tracings, texts and sounds in a 25-box installation, titled “London Rocks – Narrative Flows.” The installation is a comment on and visual representation of history writing: its capacity to preserve and exhibit relics and interpretations of the past; its claim to authenticity, objectivity and truth; its need for a linear narrative that makes sense to its audience; its drive to create a unified narrative free of discrepancies, fragmentations and discontinuities.

25 stones located in the proximity of 25 bridges of tidal river Thames have been photographed, printed and traced with the aid of magnifying lenses. Words from historical and literary texts related to the 25 sites are inserted in the tracings. The images of stones are placed in museum boxes, each with a sound recording from each location. The sound and images of the river follow the viewer as they move along the installation.

“Narrative Flows” comments on the perceived need to make history accessible via verisimilitude; to make history appear objective with the removal of authorship; to create a comforting narrative that makes sense in the present.

## **II: 'In Our Minds'**

### **Project led by The National Archives & University for the Creative Arts (UCA)**

'In Our Minds' was a collaborative project (2016-2017) where participants were recruited through an open call-out at UCA, to interpret and respond to a selection of archives related to mental health held at The National Archives and The UCA Archive.

UCA lecturers Rosie Gunn and Dr Craig Jordan-Baker, and artists Susan Merrick, Diana Williams and Sparrow Davies responded to subject of mental health, with wide ranging and thought provoking results: in the forms of works of art. Participants produced a variety of works: audio, film, choreographed dance and sculptural pieces which show the wide ranging interpretations of mental health – a theme which is often described as a 'hidden history'. These outputs of creative expression, along with a selection of the documents from both archives, form the content for the panel display 'In Our Minds'. Using archives in this way, not only opens up conversations around mental health, but also the myriad ways in which archives can be used. Pedagogical strands were also developed in tandem and eventually took the form of workshops and talks which took place at The National Archives and UCA.

Ann Chow, one of the projects leads will talk more about the project in a Q&A session.

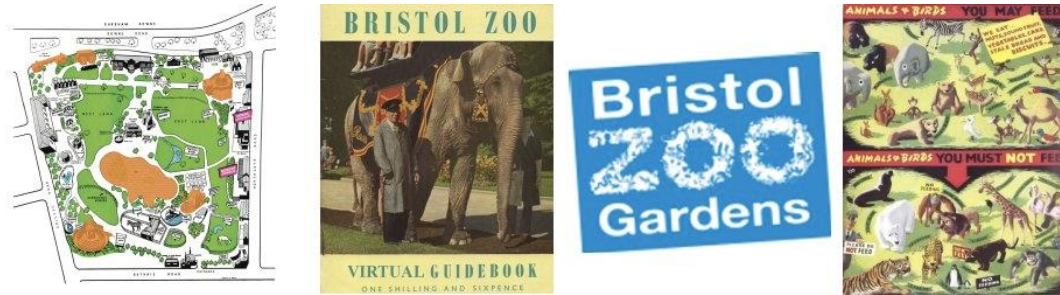
In Our Minds project was supported by the Friends of the National Archives and UCA.

## **III: Anthony Rhys**

(Thursday evening only)

I am an artist whose work blends Victorian Welsh social history, photography and portrait painting. My last two art shows have been a close blend of history and art. 'Notorious' at Carmarthen used the local gaols unique 'Felon's Register' as a centre point (it was brought to the show daily by the local county archives team) and consisted of paintings relating to social and criminal aspects of the town's history from 1850-1880. My '1868' show in Merthyr Tydfil took everyday events from the year and used these to create a portrait narrative. My new project involves a 60,000 word book on thirty years of the history of two Cardiff streets as told through thirty people who lived there. It involves a creative history narrative based on historical sources.

## **'Zoovenir': Bristol Zoo's Guidebook Heritage App**



### **What stories are hidden within the zooscape?**

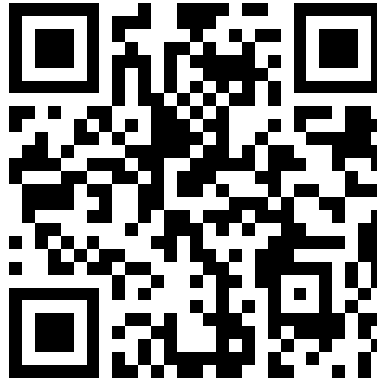
Bristol Zoo is the oldest surviving provincial zoo in the world. Today it occupies the same twelve acres of land on which it was established in the summer of 1835. Hidden within modern enclosures and among architectural features remain traces of the zoo's past.

You can find out more about the history of this multi-layered zooscape via your smartphone with the 'Zoovenir' app.

'Zoovenir' is a virtual guidebook, presented in 1950s style. It gives visitors the chance to see photographs and hear memories about the zoo's history across six of the zooscape's historic regions: the Main Entrance, the Ape House, the Bear Pit, the Elephant House, the Monkey Temple, and the Lake.

### **Installation Instructions:**

1. Begin by downloading the 'Appfurnace player' application from the Apple or Android app store.
2. Click 'scan and add'. Scan the following QR code:



3. **Or** paste the following URL: <http://the.appfurnace.com/test/mzMEE/>
4. Download.
5. Press PLAY and enjoy.

For more info, contact Dr Andy Flack: [Andrew.flack@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:Andrew.flack@bristol.ac.uk)

# Ground rules for discussions

We hope that the events and conversations at the conference feel welcoming to different voices.

Research into inclusivity in academic settings suggests that small, practical changes can encourage a wider range of participation, so we ask that you assist our panel chairs by following these ground rules in discussions (taken from the suggestions on the British Philosophical Association website: <http://bpa.ac.uk/resources/women-in-philosophy/conferences-seminars>):

1. In each panel/performance there will be a **two minute** thinking break between presentations/performances and questions.
2. The chair has discretion to take questions out of order. Questions are not addressed on a first-come-first-served basis.
3. If you have a new question, please raise your hand. If your question follows immediately from something that is being said, raise one finger.
4. Please only ask one question at a time. There is no automatic right to a follow-up question.
5. Please think carefully about the tone and length of questions and comments. The shared goal of the team behind the conference is to have an open, stimulating, but respectful dialogue.

# Directions and Map

The Clifton Pavilion entrance is on College Road. The West Car Park is situated on College opposite The Pavilion entrance.

**The Clifton Pavilion, College Road, Clifton, Bristol BS8 3HH**

## **By bus**

Frequent services: 8 and 9 buses run between Temple Meads Station, the City Centre and the Zoo. Call the Traveline on 0870 608 2608 for further details. An open top bus service tours the city from 1 April - 24 September and starts at 10am til last bus at 4pm, they normally run every 90 minutes, with a 45min service in school holidays. Discounts to the Zoo are available on the bus.

## **By train**

There is a local train service to Clifton Down Station (10 minute walk to the Zoo), From Bristol Temple Meads Station take an 8 or 9 bus to the Zoo main entrance. Call National Rail Enquiries on 08457 48 49 50 for further details.

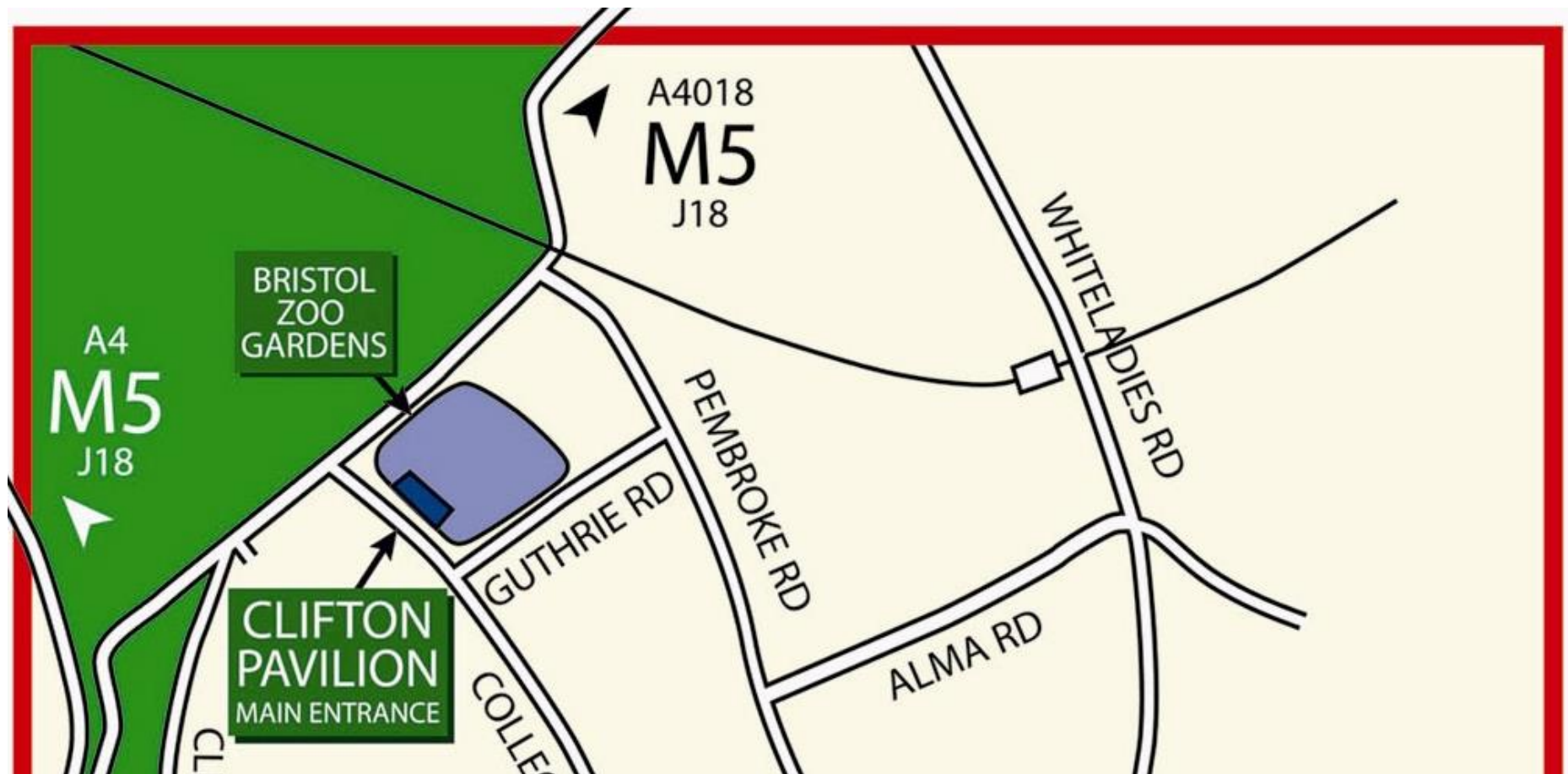
## **By bicycle**

Cycle racks are available.

## **By road**

From the M5: J17 take the A4018 then follow brown elephant signs.





## Accessibility

The lecture theatre in the Clifton Pavilion has a lift for wheelchair users, and disabled toilets can be found on the ground floor of the Pavilion. Access to the Garden Room for wheelchair users is via a ramp.

There is an induction loop in the Lecture Theatre: please do contact [creative.histories.bristol@gmail.com](mailto:creative.histories.bristol@gmail.com) to let the organisers know if you would like to make use of this.

## Abstracts

Larissa Allwork, 'Creating an Evaluative Framework for the First World War Engagement Centres: A Case Study of the Centre for Hidden Histories'

This paper will chronicle the development of the construction of a methodological framework for the evaluation of the impact of the AHRC First World War Engagement Centres, specifically the Centre for Hidden Histories based at the University of Nottingham (2014-2017). It will show how through evaluative processes such as academic and community partner 'Shared Reflection Workshops', and community focused 'Reflection Workshops', the historical, social, cultural and economic 'impact' of the centre has been uncovered, recommendations for community/academic partnership working have been discussed and what Facer and Enright would call the 'embodied legacies' of the Centre have been revealed.

Lito Apostolakou, 'London Rocks – Narrative Flows, 2017'

See exhibitions, p.11.

Gisele lecker de Almeida and Guilherme Bianchi, 'Historians out and about: historical practice in contemporary Brazil'

In the past decade, Brazil has seen increased participation of historians in public life through the use of self-publishing tools such as social networking sites and blogs, blurring the fine line that separates the historian from the citizen within. From debates over the country's truth commission to more recent discussions on president Rousseff's impeachment process, historians on all sides of the political spectrum have drawn on their historical knowledge to voice their opinion on contemporary developments and examine any parallels between past and present. This contribution critically assesses the 'boom of political participation and public engagement' by historians in contemporary Brazil by looking at the conceptual, technical and historical conditions of the last decade which propelled historians to engage with the public sphere. To conclude, we make a tentative proposal towards the prolonged participation of historians in public life, namely, that history is at its best when ethically responsible intellectuals raise a plurality of questions about pressing issues of the present and include in their answers all the relevant information and as many perspectives as possible so as to lead others to develop their own points of view.

Nick Barratt, 'The Relevance of Personal History'

In this paper, I will explore ways that history can deliver meaningful impact for individuals and communities, focusing on the creation and curation of micro-archives that generate new narrative constructs in which people can express a self-determined identity drawn from the past. This new approach moves beyond the popularisation of 'family history' through broadcast media and online access to datasets; using case studies, I will demonstrate the power of personal heritage in particular settings – from dementia care, rehabilitation in prisons, empowered education and skills transfer for disabled groups. I will offer a more practical vision for public history, where an application of historical research technique, fused with a greater understanding of one's link to the past through people, places or communities, can result in transformational benefits.

Guilherme Bianchi

See Gisele Lecker de Almeida.

Leanne Bibby, Steve Nash and Karen Dodsworth, 'The True, the Real, and the Possible: Thinking and Writing through Hayden White'

In this session, three colleagues with interests in creative histories, working in two institutions and across the disciplines of English literature and creative writing, will explore the uses of imaginative thinking about historical discourse in approaching everyday academic work. Partly a performance and partly a practical demonstration, the session aims to interrogate historian Hayden White's distinction between the historically 'true', or the past that can be presented in discourse, and the historically 'real', or the past that can be presumed to have happened and that thus can be imagined richly in literary discourse (White 2005), and to examine the implications of this suggestion for interdisciplinary research, teaching, and creative work.

In the first part of the session, award-winning poet and author of *The Calder Valley Codex* Dr Steve Nash (Leeds Beckett University), historical fiction specialist Dr Leanne Bibby (Teesside University), and neo-Victorianist Karen Dodsworth (Teesside University), will briefly present historical source material associated with their respective research projects. The twist to these presentations is that the source documents are embellished imaginatively with additions and commentaries demonstrating the nature of what White called the permeable 'boundary between the real and the possible' (2005, p. 148), as a framework not only for understanding the functions of narrative form in historical thinking, as White explained it, but also for appreciating the 'possible' in our thinking about the past more

broadly. In the second part of the session, the presenters will reflect critically on their performance, offering fresh insights into a selection of White's key ideas.

Robert Bickers, 'Better looking than he really is'

It was bewildering when the subject of a worthy but otherwise largely unexceptional passage in an essay on British legal practice in China between the 1840s and 1940s turned up in a Hackney living room in the late 1990s. And not only that, the man now lives online in museum and art collection repositories, and in essays and artists' books. The afterlife of C. A. -- boxer, fraudster, murderer, latterly artist's model and community elder' -- demands a telling of his life that fits. Serial liar, though not before 1956 successfully so, he lies still, today, tomorrow, staring out from the Saatchi Collection, the Museum of London, the Arts Council archive. He's there in the work of photographers Tom Hunter, Peter Marlow, and Catherine Yass. He's caught on film, in photographs, and in an installation. But he's also there in the *North China Daily News*, the *China Press*, *Shanghai Evening Post*, *Hong Kong Telegraph*, Foreign Office documents and police and judicial files in Washington DC and in Shanghai.

And did I mention his family?

Sonja Boon, 'The Research as/at the Site of the Research: Vulnerability, Creative Histories, and the Undoing of the Self'

I began the grant proposal on which my current research project is based as follows: "This project considers the relationships between migration, memory, and identity as these are mapped onto conceptual and material landscapes in The Netherlands, Suriname, and Newfoundland. Specifically, I will conduct an autoethnographic case study to interrogate the politics and possibilities of (post)colonial subjectivities and identities in what Mary Louise Pratt (1991) has termed the 'contact zone,' the site of colonial encounter that emerges in the spaces between historical, geographical, and political borders."

It's clear. It's tight. It's focused. It did what it was meant to do – it got me the grant. But then, instead of writing a scholarly monograph based on this archival research and memory work, I decided to write a memoir. Suddenly things got messy. If memoir is about emotional truth, how could I best integrate the personal into the academic, the academic into the personal? What stories would I include, and how would I include them? What right did I have to tell these stories? What did it mean to be so deeply embedded in my research project?

In this paper, I consider memoir as a venue for the writing of creative histories. Drawing on excerpts from my memoir-in-progress, field notes from my research journal, published research blog posts, archival materials, and scholarly literature in life writing and autoethnography, I consider in particular three key concerns that emerged during my writing process: ethics, vulnerability, and fragmentation.

Anne Booth

See Lydia Syson.

Ann Chow, 'In Our Minds'

See exhibitions, p.11.

Katy Branch

See Openstorytellers.

Sam Burns

See Circle of Spears Productions.

Francesca Church, "Revisiting an old rhetoric"? Participatory research and a creative engagement with the CPRE archive'

Participatory research continues to be embraced by academics in the field of historical geography (Bressey, 2014; Cameron, 2014; DeLyser, 2014; Geoghegan, 2014; Mills, 2013). Whilst the term is not readily used in the history discipline, this paper argues that it can provide a valuable, compelling, and creative approach to engaging with archives, and to the practices of historical research. This paper examines the ways in which participatory approaches complement public history, history from below, and co-produced histories, whilst

providing a critical reflection on interdisciplinary and creative methodologies.

Drawing on research from a workshop focused on the archival collection of the Council for the Preservation of Rural England (CPRE), organised with and for contemporary CPRE members, this paper demonstrates the ways in which participatory research can provide a meaningful and creative means of interrogating and interpreting archival materials, enable an 'opening out' of the research process, and challenge ideas of traditional academic outputs. This paper also examines the difficulties bound up in using such creative approaches; selecting participants, understanding the role of the academic (particularly as a PhD researcher), and ensuring a project is truly participatory. This research contributes to discussions of historical research practices, and encourages an active engagement with creative histories.

### Circle of Spears Productions, 'WITCH'

WITCH: 50-minute original historical drama by Tracey Norman (© 2016).

WITCH is based on original witch trial transcripts but examines them from a social history perspective - the social interactions and conditions which gave rise to accusations of witchcraft. Torture and the trial process do not feature at all – instead, the story follows a destitute woman, who must defend herself when she and her accuser are brought before the local magistrate for an informal deposition soon after her arrest. The magistrate listens to both parties, then determines how the case should proceed.

The play is specifically designed to stimulate discussion and asks more questions than it answers – it does not progress neatly from A to B with a character whose guilt/innocence is clearly defined. The characters and their situations are fictional, but their words and experiences are lifted directly from my research. The play arose from a desire to preserve those experiences, make them more accessible and to examine them from a different point of view.

The play premiered at the Museum of Witchcraft and Magic, Boscastle, in July 2016. Since then, we have performed (as TIE) for school and university groups and will tour in 2017.

Performers: Tracey Norman, Mark Norman and Sam Burns

Tim Cole

See Beth Williamson.

Nell Darby, “History is just journalism”: how the history of journalism can help us write a more creative history’

Journalists have often used a creative form of reportage to provide gripping accounts of events. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many unnamed provincial reporters took a creative approach in producing accounts of poverty and slum-dwelling, mixing fact with fiction, imagined dialogue and stock characters, all designed to provoke a reaction from readers.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the ‘New Journalism’ movement, personified by the likes of Tom Wolfe and Hunter S Thompson, similarly broke with the conventions of journalism, using fiction-writing techniques in order to write more creative, subjective accounts of American life.

What can we, as historians, take from the ways in which our journalistic predecessors have written about their present? And can journalism help us produce a more creative, perhaps better, body of historical work?

This paper uses my own experience as a journalist - having trained as a newspaper reporter after my first degree, and returned to work as a journalist and history magazine editor post-PhD - to look at how journalism differs from traditional academic historical writing, and how it can benefit it.

This takes into account the way journalists are still taught to write - putting the who, where, what, why and when at the centre of our work, and telling stories to draw readers in - but also the key aspects of journalistic writing - and journalistic convention-breaking - that can help historians be more creative.

Julie Davis, Ally McConnell and Leighton Gosai, ‘Creative Wiltshire: Collecting Cultures’

Creative Wiltshire: Collecting Cultures is a 5 year HLF project which aims to collect and celebrate the work of the county’s creative people – past and present - to widen collections and ensure that creativity is better represented in our history books.



We seek to break down barriers around traditional views of history being dry, irrelevant and overly intellectual, and foster the understanding that it's a dynamic, fun and living process – one which we're continually unfolding together.

The project is also about challenging how our archives and museums collect, ensuring we acquire objects which reflect the true stories of our communities and social histories. In this sense we're taking a proactive stance, rather than the reactive approach of traditional historians.

We're focusing on new ways of engaging with history, highlighting how creativity has inspired and continues to inspire; it's not merely about objective facts, but woven into the fabric of life. Then by engaging with communities and allowing them to view history through the items we collect, the creative past comes to life, in ways that are colourful and fun. Interaction within arts and heritage also contributes to greater well-being.

As we widen our creative collection, the stories surrounding each piece become the archive of its creator. This allows for greater interpretation of the work itself, an increased sense of its value, and further opportunities for research. We can also weave those stories and our own interpretation of the piece together, through further creative expression.

Our presentation will inspire historians, archivists, curators and creatives in taking history forward in fresh, colourful and exciting ways.

**Contributors:** Julie Davies, Community History Advisor (Project Officer)  
Ally McConnell, Project Archivist  
Leighton Gosai, Collection Development & Community Engagement

Kate Dodsworth

See Leanne Bibby.

Marianna Dudley

See Beth Williamson.

Lucie Dutton, 'Maurice Elvey, a film about Nelson and quilting my research'

In 1918, British director Maurice Elvey made a film about Admiral Lord Nelson. This paper will explore how my research into this early biopic led to a quilting project charted on social media (Twitter, Instagram and my blog [www.isthereroomformetosew.com](http://www.isthereroomformetosew.com)), which introduced a group of people primarily interested in modern needlework to British silent cinema in the First World War.

I had been researching Elvey's early career for some time, and had delayed watching *Nelson*. I couldn't conjure up any interest in the subject and dreaded viewing a film about which I had read nothing good. But, duty called, and in the basement of the British Film Institute, notebook in hand, I sat down alone to watch it.

Two hours later, I had fallen for Elvey's *Nelson* touch. This very flawed film captured something of the spirit of Nelson; the more I researched, the more excited I became about Elvey filming on board *HMS Victory* and making Nelson relevant to 1918.

In museums, Nelson seemed to be everywhere. From 1798 onwards, following the Battle of the Nile, he appeared on pillboxes, urns, plates, wallpaper, and timepieces – and fabric. Samplers sewn to mark Nelson's funeral lodged in my mind and I joined a long line of people who have stitched Nelson.

I sewed a quilt based on William Beechey's 1800 portrait of Nelson, made up of 3,200 one inch squares stitched entirely by hand. The contemplative practice of sewing deepened my understanding of Elvey's film – and it was fun.

Nathan Eisenstadt

See Andrew Foyle.

Kylie Flack, 'Creating (fictional) histories for children: representations of the colonial frontier in Australian historical novels and picture books for children'

In recent decades, historians have interrogated the fictional nature of history as well as the uses of the past visible in works of fiction. As yet, however, few historians have paid attention to the creation of fictional histories for children. My view is that these histories are important discursive sites that reveal the historical understandings prevailing at the time of their creation.

This paper takes children's historical novels and picture books as a case study, showing how they may be seen as history-making projects, part of a body of work that has rich potential for historians interested in how the past is represented.

To explore these ideas, this paper traces how some Australian historical novels and picture books for children have contested dominant historical narratives regarding the colonial frontier, whilst other texts work within familiar tropes that support those dominant historical narratives. My research focuses on written, published texts that are predominantly the work of non-Indigenous authors but recognizes that alternative, non-written narratives exist that are visible at times, given expression in public life through demonstrations such as the Aboriginal Day of Mourning.

By interrogating works of children's historical fiction as historical, rather than literary, projects, and by broadening the scope to consider non-written narratives, this paper contributes to conversations around uses of the past beyond the academy and demonstrates that fictional representations of the past created for children are worthy of historians' attention.

Clemma Fleat

See Openstorytellers.

Catherine Fletcher, 'The Medici Vendetta, or, The Revenge of My Minor Characters: Historical Writing from Fact to Fiction'

This presentation will reflect on work-in-progress from a creative history-writing project. *The Medici Vendetta* (working title) is a novel that dramatizes the lives of a group of historical figures who featured in the margins of my recent biography of Alessandro de' Medici (c. 1511-1537), *The Black Prince of Florence*. The characters of the novel are predominantly individuals for whom the historical sources are highly limited and who, as such, could not be discussed in any depth within the confines of a source-led biographical account. Among them is Alessandro's mother, whose ethnicity (probably Afro-European) is a matter of considerable historical interest, but for whose life there are no straightforward sources. Through writing fiction I have been able to represent her – and several other people – in a narrative form that has been limited to elite protagonists in my biographical work (not least because the market for history books welcomes non-elite protagonists more readily in fiction than in non-fiction). Fiction has also offered surprising opportunities to address wider questions about the practice of history including archive survival and historical truth. However, it comes with its own challenges, not least the expectations of genre. For example, in the context of the sixteenth-century Italian Wars, mercenaries have a particular history, but in the literary context, the mercenary or ex-mercenary is a stock thriller character with a series of fictional predecessors for the writer to contend with. While fiction presents exciting opportunities to explore the past, its conventions are not without their

challenges.

John Foot, 'Story of a House: Piazzale Lugano, 22'

This film was made in 2003-4, as part of a collective AHRC project entitled Memory and Place in the Italian City. Five cities were identified and films were made by individual director-researchers with a camera operator/editor. The Milan film was based around oral history interviews, archive film, super8, photography and other materials, as well as film shot in the area. It uses micro-history and oral history to look into memories linked to a particular housing block in Milan over the period of more than a century. The film was shown extensively at film festivals and academic settings over a long period of time. The music was composed for the film by a musician who lives in the housing block.

Further reading connected to the film:

<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/place-and-memory/>

Andrew Foyle and Nathan Eisenstadt, 'Co-producing LGBT+ History: Mapping LGBT+ Bristol'

Mapping LGBT+ Bristol was a collaboration between local LGBT+ history group OutStories Bristol, Bristol City Council, Freedom Youth and University of Bristol. The project engaged local residents in the collection, recording, archiving and mapping of Bristol's LGBT+ past through the creation of a digital map, mobile app and set of schools resources. Funded by the AHRC as part of the Connected Communities program, the project differed from many university-community collaborations in that it was initiated by the key community partner, OutStories Bristol.

This enabled the project to commence quickly, making use of already-existing trust networks and visibility and ultimately to populate the map with large amounts of crowdsourced content in a short time-frame. Yet the project was not without some of the challenges commonly encountered in multi-stakeholder co-production – including differing capacities for time-commitment, issues of community engagement, levels of remuneration, issues of translation between technical developers and researchers and university systems insufficiently geared to working with community partners.

In this presentation we showcase the project and its key outputs and reflect critically on the process of co-producing LGBT+ history using digital tools. The paper will be presented by members of OutStories Bristol with support from the University team.

Nicola Gauld and Nikki Thorpe, 'What gets lost, what gets hidden really matters: Birmingham Women Past and Present Revisited'

The subject of our current project 'Birmingham Women Past & Present Revisited' has been a sponsored walk around the city that Catherine Hall devised for the *Feminist Review* in the late 1970s. The quote in the title is taken from a lecture that Catherine Hall delivered for us in 2016 and encapsulates what we have attempted to address with this project, which grew out of the passion and interests of the members of Women's History Birmingham for telling lost, untold and forgotten women's stories, and the continuing importance of 'history from below'.

It is clear that there continue to be gaps in the historical record that excludes the many varied and diverse contributions made by women. Our project has aimed to redress the balance, taking a creative resource and re-imagining it for the present day. We have revisited and updated the original walk for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, focusing on the stories of women's involvement in a number of areas in city life: political activism, civic life, education, health and welfare, the arts, science. The project is due to end in summer 2017 and so this presentation will be an ideal opportunity to reflect on the project as an example of creative learning and effective public engagement around women's history. In the discussion we will talk about the project itself, from the early planning stages to working with local schools and interviewing local women about their experiences.

Contributors:

Nicola Gauld is Coordinator of Voices of War & Peace, a WW1 Engagement Centre, led by the University of Birmingham. She is also currently working on a history of the Birmingham suffragettes.

Nikki Thorpe is a school archivist and a founder member of People's Heritage Co-operative and Women's History Birmingham. She has worked on youth and community heritage projects in Birmingham for the past 12 years.

Leighton Gosai

See Julie Davis.

Nicola Grove

See Openstorytellers.

Mark Hailwood, “As I went forth one summer’s day”: putting the story in early modern history’

Inspired by the 'Storying the Past' reading group this paper reflects on the role story telling currently does – and in future could – play in the work of historians of early modern England. Focusing in particular on the work of social historians the paper will highlight a number of ways in which story telling is currently deployed as a writing technique by academic historians – in the use of introductory anecdotes, in the construction of 'micro-histories', and even in the articulation of meta narratives of social change in the period – and considers how some of these approaches might be fruitfully developed in ways that would be both analytically beneficial to academic historians and open up this field more effectively to a wider public. It will argue that story telling is itself intrinsic to many of our sources – from ballads to court depositions – and indeed to early modern popular culture, and that this provides considerable opportunities for the deployment of more creative approaches to exploring this period, from creative writing to historical and digital reconstruction, as well as requiring us to reflect on 'story' as an analytical category. This Creative Histories conference provides an ideal platform to present my thinking on this topic to a diverse audience as I look to develop my thinking into a publishable 'rallying cry' – and I hope my focus on the early modern context will raise a number of issues of wider relevance to the overall themes of the event.

Miriam Halahmy

See Lydia Syson.

Erika Hanna

See Beth Williamson.

Charlotte Head

See Sally Rodgers.

Clare Hickman, 'Experiencing Arcadia in a Digital World'

*Experiencing Arcadia* is utilising archival sources to encourage a new narrative and digital led approach to interpreting historic gardens. Developed by an academic, Dr Clare Hickman and a garden history practitioner, Linden Groves, this is a collaborative project that uses first hand voices and images from the archives to encourage new approaches from those who are currently developing strategies to encourage different demographics of visitors, as well as opening up conversations about how gardens were used and experienced in the past. *Experiencing Arcadia* received a small pot of funding from the Finnis Scott Foundation in 2015 and so far we have developed a digital interactive map of an idealised eighteenth century landscape. From the comfort of their sofa, visitors can click on each feature of the map and be treated to stories from the archive, audio or visual material to bring garden history alive. As this is a pilot, we have focused on a website which is best viewed on a desktop computer or laptop, but learning from this, we are now working on the bigger challenge of producing a version that is compatible with mobile phones or tablets, and also as an app so that the digital can also be experienced on foot in the landscape. We would be delighted to share this approach and discuss new ways forward for digital heritage interpretation using archival sources.

Experiencingarcadia.org

Sharon Huebner, 'No Longer a Wandering Spirit: kinship imaginaries of *Minang* Noongar Bessy Flowers'

This paper tells the story of my 7-year collaboration with two Australian Aboriginal family groups – *Wirlomin Minang* Noongar families from the Great Southern of Western Australia and *Gunai Kurnai* Koorie families from eastern Victoria with a continued connection to the

Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust *Bung Yarnda* and the country of their ancestors. At the heart of this collaboration is the history of their ancestor Elizabeth *Bessy* Flowers (1849-1895) held in a colonial archive for more than 150 years yet markedly absent from the stronghold stories of her Flowers *Wirloomin Minang* Noongar kin and Bryant Koorie descendants. It is about the Flowers and Bryant families reclaiming a family stronghold for Bessy's memory through kinship framed imaginaries. Inspired by the childhood portrait of Bessy that was taken by a colonial settler in the early 1860s both families share the collective experience of remapping their ancestor's past by revisiting the historical sites of her biography. In doing so, they emotionally reinstate memories of Bessy as part of an everyday cultural story. Most significantly, Bessy is spiritually returned to the resting place of her *Minang* Noongar ancestors, a cultural place of breathtaking beauty in the Stirling Range that is Noongar *boodja* (country).

This paper examines how the digital project *No Longer a Wandering Spirit* widens our view about Stolen Generations experiences and invites reflections about current issues of Noongar and Koorie identity. The project demonstrates how digital methodologies help to rebuild cultural practices of memory and why a need exists for Aboriginal Australia to be acknowledged as the cultural custodians of ancestral histories and the creators and owners of sustainable Aboriginal futures.

#### Iqbal Husain, 'Loyalty and Dissent: South Asia in the First World War'

This presentation will share with delegates some of the exciting ways in which The National Archives' Outreach Team are developing resources and partnerships to explore the often difficult and messy relationship Britain had with its colonies during the First World War (with a focus on what is today South Asia).

The National Archives has embraced some of the challenges and opportunities of retelling this story, using the themes of loyalty and dissent, as a way of both stimulating and provoking debate and learning. Delegates will see how through an investigation of records held at The National Archives relating both to South Asia's radical diaspora at the time and the often complex motivations of those serving Britain's imperial army, a varied programme of activity was produced. These include an online learning resource, a series of interactive public history workshops and a theatrical performance of short plays inspired by the material.

This presentation explores a largely overlooked view of the war, which offers a potentially rich source of material that can be applied to topics such as migration studies. The material can also lend itself to more contemporary debates around radicalisation and community cohesion.



Meighen Katz

See Bronwyn Lowe.

Daphne Knott and Ghislaine Peart, 'Threads of Time: What We Take Away With Us: The Travelling Case of John Radcliffe'

A 30-minute talk on the Threads of Time project, and one of the artworks inspired by documents from the Hertfordshire archives.

Between 2013 and 2015, Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies (HALS) ran an innovative project to promote imaginative uses of Hertfordshire's extensive archive collection. 'Threads of Time' brought together more than 50 textile artists to develop original artworks, from quilts to clothing, from embroideries to installations. These were inspired by two of the collections at HALS – the Witteronge collection (Threads of Time, 2013-14) and the Delme Radcliffe collection (Threads of Time 2, 2014-15). Each stage of the project incorporated workshops, research trips and blogs, and culminated in an exhibition at HALS displaying the artworks themselves, workbooks created by the artists and some of the items which provided the original inspiration.

Daphne Knott, who started the project, will explain how it all came about.

Ghislaine Peart, who took part in Threads of Time 2, will talk about her artwork "What We Take Away With Us", inspired by the household accounts of the Delme Radcliffe family of Hitchin Priory who lived there for many hundreds of years.

Ghislaine was particularly taken with the description in the accounts of 1772 of "a small Mahogany travelling Case with 2 square cut Glass bottles & stoppers, & 3 Ivory boxes, lock and key." She began to think about how what we take with us when we travel says a lot about who we are. So what was important to John Radcliffe, to whom this case probably belonged? One thing was his garden, into which he poured money, time and design expertise. The travelling case she made contains trays of stumpwork specimens from John Radcliffe's garden.

[http://www.hertsmemories.org.uk/content/herts-history/leisure/threads of time 2-2/what we take away with us](http://www.hertsmemories.org.uk/content/herts-history/leisure/threads%20of%20time%202/what%20we%20take%20away%20with%20us)

### Joanne Krawec, 'Punching Hitler: comic books and their uses for the historian'

On 20 December 1940, two New York Jewish comic book creators demonstrated what they thought of US non-involvement in the Second World War by having their new character – Captain America – punch Hitler on the front cover of his first issue. Since that moment, comic books and graphic novels have been filled with histories of many kinds, from the global, political history as in *Captain America #1*, to local family history, such as Raymond Briggs *Ethel and Ernest* – an illustrated history of the author's own parents.

My presentation will cover why I think comic books are such a great source for the historian – from teaching aspects of history to actually presenting histories within their pages. I will also explain how my love of graphic storytelling has brought me closer to the figures in my own research. My PhD focuses on a factory magazine, in which the employees contributed many of their own illustrations and cartoons. They valued a creative life alongside their work life. Following their example, I am teaching myself to draw. This is with the aim that, by the end of my PhD, I will present both a thesis and a comic book of my research to the world.

About the presenter:

Joanne Krawec is in the second year of a part-time history PhD at the University of Birmingham. Alongside this, Joanne is also a published comic book writer. She has a passion for the history of Britain 1946-1960 and an absurd love of Batman. It is her life's work to prove that they are not mutually exclusive.

Twitter: @Joanne\_Krawec

Instagram: @ladybatmanblog

### Julia Laite, "'Choose your own adventure': creating interactive social and cultural history, inspired by video games, board games, and serialised children books from the 1980s"

The 'choose your own adventure' children's books were one of Bantam's most popular series in the 1980s. These slim and accessible volumes, invited 'you' to be 'the hero' of a particular story, and to exercise your agency through a series of limited choices that 'you' encounter every few pages. Depending on your choice, you are invited to turn to a different page, which in turn leads to more choices, and a series of different endings. As a seven-year-old in 1988, I adored them.

This paper will suggest ways in which the 'choose your own adventure' format might be a fruitful way of writing and teaching history

creatively. It will reflect briefly upon using 'choose your own adventure' as a thought-experiment in microhistory and history-from-below, in relation to my current book project, which is a microhistory/historical biography built around one case of sex trafficking in 1910. I will then turn to a project I am developing for schools, in which students will be invited to read and write 'choose your own adventure' histories, where they create and make choices for a 'hero' at a certain time and place, using a custom designed App (where options are presented, and once chosen, lead the storyteller/reader to a new outcome). This idea has emerged in response to the fact that, despite the creative leaps and bounds that social and cultural history has made in taking on the challenges of significant intellectual movements like postmodernism, critical race studies, and intersectional feminism, the history that emerges in schools bears little trace of these innovations. I see 'choose your own adventure' history as a playful and engaging way to get students thinking about choice and constraint, categories of experience (race, gender, age, class), and the way in which historians make decisions about causation and consequence in the past.

Bronwyn Lowe, Peter Minard and Meighen Katz, 'A Little Local Knowledge (is a dangerous thing?)'

An urban historian, a cultural historian and an environmental historian walk into a bar... and given that we're all historians, the bar was probably founded in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and was the site of a significant meeting, murder or liaison.

As a group, the three of us spend most of our professional lives writing about and lecturing on the history of specific places. We know when we create interpretations of our own city, whether for teaching, publication, or commission, our understandings are coloured by our own experiences, expertise and interests. We want to explore what happens when the shoe is on the other foot. What happens when we consciously become the audience, give up control, and follow someone else's interpretation?

Our contribution to the Creative Histories conference is an interactive experiment that brings together public history interpretation, social media, and questions about how significance of place is communicated and understood.

We'll be spending 3-5 days in Bristol just prior to the conference. During that period we will follow self-guided walking tours, entries in guidebooks, tourist maps, etc. As we go we'll document our explorations in photographs, video and a reflective blog, all of which we'll make publically available on-line.

During the conference proper, we will host an open conversation/workshop with Bristol-based historians (and anyone else who is interested). We want to compare their sense of what is significant, intriguing and interesting about Bristol with those sites, stories and interpretations that captured our imagination.

The intent of this experiment is not to critique existing interpretation but rather to identify the points of concordance and difference between strangers and locals, between those approaching the new and those traversing the familiar. We very much hope you'll join us for this discussion session to toss around ideas and experiences.

Participants: Dr Bronwyn Lowe (Cultural History), Dr Pete Minard (Environmental History) and Dr Meighen Katz (Urban History) are all early-career academics from the University of Melbourne. They also make up 50% of the public history company, Present Past.

Tim Lumley Smith

See Openstorytellers.

Ally McConnell

See Julie Davis.

Josie McLellan

See Beth Williamson.

Peter Minard

See Bronwyn Lowe.

Tony Moore, 'Death or Liberty: investigating Britain's political prisoners exiled to Australia in book, documentary and digital transmedia'

As an academic spanning history and media studies with a career background in media practice and book publishing, my paper explores the challenges and opportunities of translating an historical monograph into an accessible and innovative television documentary. As the subject matter is inherently transnational and focussed on mobilities, it lent itself to an international co-production, but in our case we still produced multiple versions, for Ireland, Wales, Australia, and cinema release- a capacity enabled by digital production technologies.

My original research for *Death or Liberty* continues to be built upon and translated, with the development of a new digital humanities project entitled *Conviction Politics*, that links Universities and archives in Australia, UK and Ireland to reproach and build a transmedia hub, coding mapping transported convicts journeys and impact on Australian political culture, with innovative outputs that include 100 micro-documentaries, a travelling digital exhibition as well as a new scholarly monograph.

A *Death or Liberty* CD soundtrack and DVD is to be released as a box set by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation in this half of 2017.

### Cheryl Morgan, 'Combatting Colonialism Through Steampunk'

Steampunk is a form of alternate history that seems an unlikely vehicle for social exploration. Set in a romanticised version of the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, with science fictional elements that owe more to Verne than to Heinlein or Gibson, it appears to valorise an era typified by extreme social inequality and rampant colonial exploitation. Nevertheless, it has attracted writers keen to tackle those social issues head-on.

One example is *Everfair*, by African-American writer, Nisi Shawl. It tells the story of a Utopian society established in the Congo in direct opposition to the brutal regime of Leopold of Belgium. Run by an alliance of African-Americans wishing to return "home", and idealistic Fabians from Britain, the colony must deal, not just with the villainous Belgians, but also local Africans whose land they are taking. There are tensions within the colony arising from the racism and sexism of the British, and the evangelism of the Americans.

Maurice Broaddus brings the technique back home. *Buffalo Soldier* is a story of, Desmond Coke, a secret agent from a Maroon-run Jamaica having adventures in a North America that is a patchwork of states, including some still run by Native peoples. Broaddus calls his work Steamfunk.

Another example is *Airship Shape & Bristol Fashion*, an anthology I published, for which I encouraged writers to examine Bristol's

Victorian history through a steampunk lens. The writers tackle issues such as racism, slavery and sexism in their stories. In addition to examining the texts I will also talk to the writers and editors of those works, and to Ann & Jeff VanderMeer who edited several successful steampunk anthologies, about the use of steampunk to examine and illuminate history.

Cheryl Morgan is a writer, editor and critic, and the owner of Wizard's Tower Press. She has won four Hugo Awards from the World Science Fiction Society. Her academic interests include the portrayal of transgender people in speculative fiction, and the history of transgender people. She has presented papers at both literary and historical academic conferences. As Co-Chair of OutStories Bristol she has been involved in staging LGBT History events at the M-Shed.

#### Steve Nash

See Leanne Bibby.

#### Mark Norman

See Circle of Spears Productions.

#### Tracey Norman

See Circle of Spears Productions.

#### Openstorytellers, 'The Fortunes of Fanny Fust'

Openstorytellers ([www.openstorytellers.org.uk](http://www.openstorytellers.org.uk)) are a company of Somerset storytellers with learning disabilities, who specialise in telling tales that relate to the lived experience of people with disabilities. We are collaborating with Professor Josie McLellan (University of Bristol) to research and develop the story of Fanny Fust, a young heiress who would now be described as having severe learning difficulties. In 1787 she was abducted by a fortune hunter and carried off to France. The story is one of excitement, comedy, detection

and ends with a landmark legal case, which has direct links with today's Mental Capacity Act. Through it all, Fanny comes across as her own person. There is strong local interest since the events begin and end in Bristol, taking in Clifton, Hotwells Pump rooms, Kings Weston and Bath. We think it relates to the themes of "History from below" and "Co-production" - the research will be led jointly by a professional historian and one of the storytellers who will learn how to conduct historical research. Our presentation will combine storytelling with discussion of the relevance of the story today, and reflections about the impact of the training on the researchers.

**Performers:** Alice Parsley, Clemma Fleat, Katy Branch, Tim Lumley Smith and Nicola Grove

Alice Parsley

See Openstorytellers.

Ghislaine Peart

See Daphne Knott.

Anthony Rhys

See exhibitions, p.11.

Andrew Roberts, 'Telling Not Showing: Storytelling in Historical Exhibitions'

Drawing on recent and upcoming interpretation projects from English Heritage's Hadrian's Wall portfolio, and wider heritage industry practices, this paper will assess the efficacy and legitimacy of storytelling techniques in historical exhibitions. This include the use of invented characters in family trails, the incorporation of poetry and prose works into the historical record of a site, live-action re-enactment events, and the use of creative non-fiction techniques and structures in exhibition text.

Success will be assessed against English Heritage's requirement for an 'authentic' historical experience based upon rigorous research, in addition to public expectations and enjoyment. This paper will argue that certain segments of the heritage visitorship desire overt aspects of storytelling in historical presentations, and that 'authenticity' and storytelling are not mutually exclusive. Finally, this paper will question the future of storytelling with respect to social media-savvy visitors. They are equipped with digital narrative tools and a propensity to narrate aspects of lives and curate personas to various audiences. How do we harness this creativity within our exhibitions to allow visitors to "tell themselves" in the past?

Sally Rodgers and Charlotte Head, 'Creative History in Tinsley, South Yorkshire, 2013-2018'

We propose sharing the creative methods used in the Heeley City Farm: Community Heritage Team's ongoing work in Tinsley. Today a post- industrial suburb of Sheffield Tinsley has a long, fascinating but very understudied history.

By bringing together the many elements of this work we will explain its community led development, share delivery methods and explain our aims including researching Tinsley's History and importantly, engaging current residents in the history of where they live, and through this increase feelings of belonging and pride. We have listened to the needs and interests of the very mixed community and developed projects accordingly using a variety of creative methods including storytelling, poetry, artists, practical workshops, excavation, oral history, 3D printing and others.

Our work in Tinsley includes the HLF funded projects '*Exploring Tinsley Manor*' (2013-2016) and '*Tinsley Time and Travel*' (2017-2018), a WEA local history course, work with the Archaeology, History and Engineering Departments of the University of Sheffield which included the '*Unravelling Tinsley's Court Rolls*' project and the successful funding of a Phd. All projects have a strong volunteer element (54 so far) and many local groups and city wide partners have been involved including Ignite Imaginations (Community Arts Organisation), Wessex Archaeology and Museums Sheffield.

Contributors: Sally Rodgers – Community Heritage Manager, Heeley City Farm  
Charlotte Head – Heritage Project Officer, Heeley City Farm.

Laura Sangha, "'The Many-Headed Monster": Blogging for and from Below?'



I am the co-author of 'the many-headed monster' (<https://manyheadedmonster.wordpress.com/>), a blog on early modern history that will be five years old at the time the Creative Histories Conference takes place. In this talk I want to use this experience as an opportunity to reflect on the relationship between blogging and creative histories.

Blogs written by historians based at universities are a space where the rigid conventions of traditional scholarship can be ignored in favour of creativity, experimentation and playfulness. Potentially they are also an open access platform with the ability to allow historians to share their work much more widely than is possible through the more established routes of conference presentations, scholarly journals and research monographs. More radically, it is possible that blogs could act as a catalyst, igniting innovation and change in the discipline of history from within, and influencing those established ways of sharing research. My talk addresses this question in particular: can blogging be used to reconnect our own research with the public, and how would that work?

My discussion will be focused around three related points:

- 1) What sorts of creative approaches to history are adopted in blogs? (history in public: reflecting on recent examples of blogs)
- 2) How successful is blogging in making our research travel to new audiences? (history in public, history for below: thinking about who reads my own blog with reference to statistical data)
- 3) How might I incorporate blogging and public responses to blogging back into my own research? (history in public > History)

### Lydia Syson Miriam Halahmy, and Anne Booth 'Catching them Young: Approaches to Historical Fiction for Children and Young Adults'

What do novels offer young readers beyond school history lessons?

Three writers of historical fiction discuss different creative approaches to bringing the past to life through storytelling for children and young adults. They address specific research demands, the sway of the curriculum and the tyranny of the marketplace.

**Miriam Halahmy** will consider how fiction can most effectively engage children using the example of *The Emergency Zoo* (Alma Books, 2016). She explores both the research techniques she developed to write it and responses to the book on school author visits. The novel was inspired by the little known story of the 750,000 domestic pets put down in Britain at the start of World War Two. People feared they would not be able to feed them on rations or control them in bombing raids. *The Emergency Zoo* pictures the reactions of children faced with this news during the first week of the conflict. With reference to her use of the Mass Observation Survey, Miriam addresses the balancing act involved in writing historical fiction for children and the need to build an imaginative response from a vast amount of research, much of which remains invisible. Her priority is to create convincing, three-dimensional characters with whom contemporary young readers will identify and empathise. School author visits offer a further springboard for the study of history 'from below', as

readers are able to discuss their own reactions, and put themselves in the position of the characters in the novel, with the help of WW2 artefacts and further research.

**Anne Booth's** first novel, *Girl with a White Dog*, published in 2014, introduces younger readers (9-12) to the rise of Fascism in Germany through a story about contemporary racism, told in the first person by Jessie, who finds solace in difficulties at home and school in her gran's new white puppy. The onset of her grandmother's dementia raises unsettling questions about her past, allowing Jessie to see links between the prejudice and discrimination then and now. Booktrust describes it as a 'deceptively simple little story [which] is powerful and thought-provoking...it draws on the fairy-tale tradition to explore a host of complex subjects, such as intolerance, difference, fear, courage and moral responsibility, with sensitivity.' Anne discusses her research in Germany and the Weiner Library, and how she weaves past and present to help suggest the relevance of history today.

**Lydia Syson** offers a practitioner's perspective on the peculiar challenges and responsibilities involved in narrating the Spanish Civil War through fiction for teenage readers, with a particular focus on an experimental digital edition. (The Spanish Civil War is rarely covered in school history lessons.) *A World Between Us*, (Carnegie-nominated, Highly Commended for the Branford Boase award, and longlisted for the Guardian Children's Fiction Prize, the Waterstone's Children's Book Prize and the UKLA Literary award), the story of three young British volunteers, follows the course of the war from the siege of Madrid to the Battle of the Ebro through the eyes of a nurse, an International Brigader and a journalist-turned-ambulance-driver. Responding to the *Twilight*/vampire trend dominating Young Adult publishing at the time, the novel uses medical advances in blood donation and transfusion as both theme and plot device. It draws on archive sources (recorded interviews, memoirs, letters, publicity material) and recent academic work on British involvement in the Spanish Civil War. The publisher (Hot Key Books/Bonnier) produced an enhanced iBook edition of the novel using Apple's newly-launched iBooks Author platform which includes maps, photographs, music, links to archives and interviews with historians (Paul Preston and Richard Baxell) and with the last surviving British-based Brigader, David Lomon. Lydia demonstrates the iBook, considers its successes and failures, and invites discussion on the relevance of digital humanities to history for younger audiences.

Nikki Thorpe

See Nicola Gauld.

Laura Tisdall, 'Academic Writing and Creative Writing'

Academic writers often struggle with creative problems. Historians can lose confidence in their own writing, find it hard to get words on a page, get stuck editing the same paragraph over and over again, and might be unable to judge when to let a piece of writing go. However, while beginning novelists and short-story writers, for example, are pointed towards a wealth of invaluable advice, academics are less likely to talk as openly about these failures of the imagination. Drawing on a recent workshop I co-ran at the University of Oxford with short-story writer Daisy Johnson (*Fen*, Granta, 2016) and novelist Kiran Millward Hargreaves (*The Girl of Ink and Stars*, Chicken House, 2016) I'll talk through some of the best advice given to creative writers, from Anne Lamott's 'turning off the radio' to Dorothea Brande's scheduled stream-of-consciousness sessions, and how it can help historians and other academics in the humanities and social sciences. On the other hand, historians' expertise in primary source research could help creative writers who want to blend fact and fiction, but aren't sure where to start. I'll also think more broadly about how storytelling and story structure can be made to work for historians, drawing on texts aimed at structuring fiction-writing, such as John Yorke's *Into The Woods*. Overall, this paper will suggest that establishing more dialogue between academics and other creative writers would be fruitful for everyone.

#### Polly Tisdall, 'Academic Speaking and Performance Storytelling'

Academics are expected not only to communicate creatively on the page, but also to do so 'on the stage' through presentations, lectures and talks. For historians in particular, communicating creatively with their audiences - be they other academics or the public - is of particular importance as they must successfully invite their listeners into an exploration of a past world, which often no longer much resembles our own. Since being named Young Storyteller of the Year in 2011, I have worked as a theatre director and performance storyteller for a number of organisations including Oxford Playhouse, Birmingham Rep, The Egg, and numerous festivals. I am currently working on a new Arts Council funded project in collaboration with a theatre company in Laos, which will explore how we seek to preserve our heritage through story. Drawing on my work, I will perform a short traditional story which has survived hundreds of years and will examine what makes this story such a strong piece of communication that it is still being told today. With reference to practical workshops I have previously run with academics at Oxford and Cambridge, I will suggest how both cast-iron structure and practical performance techniques can allow historians to transform their presentations into memorable stories and invite their listeners into their research. Specifically, I will consider world-building, character placement, story structure, physicality and voice as tools for developing strong communications and will ask historians to put their intended impact upon their audience at the heart of their presentations.

#### Claire Warrior, 'The Public Past and Private Present: Families and the National Maritime Museum (NMM)'

Museums have the capacity to create and sustain histories both through their collections and their displays, and would seem to be particularly public sites for doing so. Using the case-study of the NMM, Greenwich, and, in particular, focussing on polar exploration, I will look at the agents involved in generating particular historical narratives and the extent to which the Museum functions as a point of intersection between public history and family history, both through the objects it holds and the display that it mounts.

Polar history-making is closely connected to kinship, although familial relations have often been naturalised rather than questioned. This paper will investigate the various ways in which 'polar descendants' maintain or revive particular histories in public and in private, working hard to ensure that their ancestors are remembered, and will probe the intersection between memory and history, family and nation. Families undertake a variety of practices, some of which are connected to notions of responsibility towards ancestors, and some of which develop their own senses of self within the context of wider familial concerns. The construction of particular polar explorers as 'heroes', while others are forgotten, has a particularly strong influence on what families do, and they are often pulled into the public domain by the commemorative efforts of others. There is a confluence between family histories and national history within the context of the NMM, which raises questions about the nature of 'public' and 'private' history-making and the impact of family memory on the museum.

#### Lucy Williams, 'Fact or Fiction?: Creating convict lives with the Digital Panopticon'

The history of crime is, at its heart, a history of compelling personal stories. Of ordinary people and extraordinary events, of victims, and villains, of dastardly deeds, newspaper headlines, prison time, and redemption. The stories of offenders themselves have proved immensely popular in recent decades, and can be found in academic outputs, classrooms, museums, television, and beyond. The Digital Panopticon is a four year AHRC funded project which traces more than 66,000 of these stories, compiling histories of the men, women and children who appeared at London's Old Bailey and were sentenced to either imprisonment in England or transportation to Australia. Collecting criminal, civil, and public records for each individual, and using new digital technologies to connect them, we create something new, a 'life archive', neither the individual, nor the institutions that recorded them, ever intended. We create a cradle-to-grave stories, which seeks to narrate and explain the twists and turns of criminal lives, to educate, to engage, and to entertain. But what does it mean, to create a human story from a pile of pages? Where does an academic's intuition end, and fiction begin? Telling the story of convict, murderer, and mother, Mary Edith Palmer not once, but twice, this paper asks how do we separate fact from fiction when creating convict lives? And should we even try?

This paper looks at the creation of convict life narratives – a popular form of history from below for both academic and public audiences. I examine the 'ethical' and 'practical' considerations of creative history, and the arbitrary line between historical fact, and historical

fiction.

Beth Williamson, Erika Hanna, Josie McLellan, Marianna Dudley, Robert Bickers and Tim Cole, “Branscombe pickling”, or six go mad in Dorset’

On a sunny day in July 2016, six historians and art historians left Bristol for the Dorset village of Branscombe. We were all interested in exploring more creative ways of approaching research and writing. In just 24 hours, we walked on the beach, collected objects, wrote poems, poked around the local church, and started to explore Branscombe’s digital traces. Back in Bristol, we continued the process individually, coming up with six very different pieces of writing.

This was a research project that worked almost exclusively with found objects, starting with Branscombe, a place as random starting point, which none of us were familiar with. Here we picked up stones and flotsam on the beach, and used each other’s writing as a pushing-off point. Like all projects, there was an element of archival serendipity, as we found material and used it to generate our next research steps.

As the project evolved we realised that we were all working with different understandings of what it meant to be creative as a historian. Some were more interested in process - for them, methodologies could be creative without necessarily resulting in an unconventional end product. Collaboration, starting points and research questions were important here. For others, it was important that the end result came in a more creative form. But we all shared a pleasure in doing things differently, and in working as a group to bring the threads together.

The project will be presented in two sessions at the conference, a panel and a workshop

### **1. Panel: Playing with Branscombe**

A collective presentation of our project, including method, the resulting prose and poems, and our wider thoughts and reflections on what we learnt along the way about creative history. We offer all of this with a sense that it might be productive, pleasurable and fun, for others to do likewise!

### **2. Workshop**

We offer participants the opportunity to take part in a writing workshop using the methods that set us rolling towards and through our Branscombe project. Bring a laptop, or a notepad, a pen, a pencil: bring your imagination. Be prepared possibly to spend some time walking and looking, finding, bringing. (You'll have a map). No need to share, but we enjoyed sharing.

## Index of Participants

Larissa Allwork (University of Nottingham and University of Sheffield)

Lito Apostolakou (Artist)

Gisele Iecker de Almeida (Ghent University/King's College London)

Nick Barratt (University of Nottingham)

Guilherme Bianchi (Federal University of Ouro Preto)

Leanne Bibby (Teesside University)

Robert Bickers (University of Bristol)

Julia Blackburn (Author)

Sonja Boon (Memorial University of Newfoundland)

Anne Booth (Author)

Katy Branch (Openstorytellers)

Sam Burns (Circle of Spears Productions)

Ann Chow (The National Archives)

Francesca Church (University of Reading)

Tim Cole (University of Bristol)

Nell Darby (Historian and writer)

Julie Davis (Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre)

Kate Dodsworth (Teesside University)

Marianna Dudley (University of Bristol)

Lucie Dutton (Birkbeck College, University of London)

Nathan Eisenstadt (OutStories Bristol)

Andy Flack (University of Bristol)

Kylie Flack (Macquarie University)

Clemma Fleat (Openstorytellers)

Catherine Fletcher (Swansea University)

John Foot (University of Bristol)

Andrew Foyle (OutStories Bristol)  
James Freeman (University of Bristol)  
Juliane Furst (University of Bristol)  
Nicola Gauld (University of Birmingham)  
Leighton Gosai (Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre)  
Nicola Grove (Openstorytellers)  
Mike Gulliver (University of Bristol)  
Mark Hailwood (University of Exeter)  
Miriam Halahmy (Author)  
Erika Hanna (University of Bristol)  
Darren Hayman (Singer-songwriter)  
Charlotte Head (Heeley City Farm)  
Clare Hickman (University of Chester)  
Matt Houlbrook (Organising committee)  
Sharon Huebner (Monash University)  
Iqbal Husain (The National Archives)

Ronald Hutton (University of Bristol)  
Meighen Katz (University of Melbourne)  
Daphne Knott (Formerly Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies)  
Joanne Krawec (University of Birmingham)  
Julia Laite (Birkbeck College, University of London)  
Bronwyn Lowe (University of Melbourne)  
Tim Lumley Smith (Openstorytellers)  
John Lyons (University of Bristol)  
Ally McConnell (Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre)  
Josie McLellan (University of Bristol)  
Pete Minard (University of Melbourne)  
Tony Moore (Monash University)  
Cheryl Morgan (Writer, editor and critic)  
Steve Nash (Leeds Beckett University)  
Mark Norman (Circle of Spears Productions)  
Tracey Norman (Circle of Spears Productions)



Alice Parsley (Openstorytellers)

Ghislaine Peart

Will Pooley (Organising committee)

John Reeks (University of Bristol)

Anthony Rhys (Artist)

Andrew Roberts (English Heritage)

Sally Rodgers (Heeley City Farm)

Helen Rogers (Organising committee)

Laura Sangha (University of Exeter)

Richard Sheldon (University of Bristol)

Richard Stone (University of Bristol)

Lydia Syson (The Courtauld Institute)

James Thompson (University of Bristol)

Nikki Thorpe (Archivist)

Laura Tisdall (University of Oxford)

Polly Tisdall (Theatre-maker and Storyteller)

Alison Twells (Organising committee)

Claire Warrior (Royal Museums Greenwich)

Lucy Williams (University of Liverpool)

Beth Williamson (University of Bristol)