



HISTORY CENTRE NEWSLETTER

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‘ENVIRONMENT, HEALTH AND HISTORY’ Centre hosts 2007 conference of European Association for the History of Medicine and Health

The biennial conference of the EAHMH was held in London this September. It was organised by the Centre for History in Public Health and took place at the Brunei Gallery, SOAS. Proceedings were opened by President of the Association, Virginia Berridge. *[below]*



The conference explored common ground between historians of medicine and science and environmental historians studying material, cultural and social relations embedded in place. A wide variety of papers were given, spanning the range of time periods and disciplines with national, cross national and international dimensions. Themes included the more traditional concerns of environment and health, such as mortality, hygiene and health in the city, and infectious disease control in both global and European contexts, along with more novel areas such as the contemporary history of environmental

politics, and climate, health and risk in history. *(contd. over)*

FORTHCOMING : History Centre Annual Lecture

‘THE STRESS OF LIFE: Hans Selye and the search for stability’

This year’s Centre Lecture will be given by Professor Mark Jackson, Director of the Centre for Medical History, University of Exeter

Date: Thursday 21st November 2007 at 5.30pm – 6.45 pm. Followed by drinks.

Venue: LG 80 Bennett Room

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Abstract: Since the mid-20th century the notion of stress as a determinant of chronic disease has found acceptance both within psychology and clinical allergy, and within popular culture. The vocabulary of stress has thus achieved a powerful presence in everyday speech as a means of explaining the impact of work, personal history and emotional experience on health. The syndrome which came to be known as ‘stress’ was first described in 1936, by the Hungarian scientist Hans Selye (1907-82). This lecture explores the development and reception of Selye’s theories within the context of post-second world war concerns about international political stability and Selye’s own struggles for personal stability. It then evaluates the legacy of Selye’s formulation of the aetiology of chronic disease.

'ENVIRONMENT, HEALTH AND HISTORY' (contd.)

Keynote speakers included Centre member, Chris Hamlin, *[below]* (Notre Dame) on 'Environment and Disease in Ireland, 1815-1852', Dieter Schott(Darmstadt) on 'The 'Handbuch der Hygiene' - a manual of proto-environmental science in Germany of 1900?' and Chris Sellers (Stony Brook) on "Cross-Nationalizing the History of Industrial Hazard"



This programme prompted rich discussions of approaches to researching the interface between environment and health, in ways which are sensitive to the past but also speak to present day concerns. Delegates also enjoyed a reception in the Atrium of LSHTM which included a talk on the School's history by Dr Ros Stanwell Smith, and the inauguration of artworks sponsored by the Public and Environmental Health Unit.

Martin Gorsky

Art Exhibition

As part of a PEHRU initiative to revive the School's art collection, we helped to organise an art exhibition to coincide with the EAHMH conference. Each department has been invited to think about its art, and CHPH's contribution

was a selection of photographs from the Ronald Ross archives, blown up large and mounted on canvas. For its inauguration the collection was hung in the Globe Atrium, along with a Library display. The delegates admired the works, Paul Wilkinson gave a rousing speech *[below]* and the pictures have remained there since.



News from the Archives

Staff: Richard Meunier started as Assistant Archivist on 10th September. Richard will be responsible for running the archive search room, cataloguing a large number of collections and answering enquiries, while Victoria Cranna conducts an information audit of the School.

Exhibitions : Permanent exhibition space is now available in the library and new exhibitions will be displayed every few months. One recently commemorated the 110th anniversary of Mosquito Day, when Sir Ronald Ross discovered the mosquito transmission of malaria. The current exhibition shows how study and research has changed and developed at the School over the last 100 years. Future exhibitions will celebrate the anniversaries of births and deaths of prominent individuals, and cover discoveries and overseas expeditions.

Accessions : A number of new accessions have been received, including papers belonging to Christopher Draper, who worked at the School for many years and carried out important research in malaria across the world. A description of this collection will be added to the online catalogue in the coming months.

Archives promotion : Bookmarks to promote the Sir Ronald Ross collection have been produced and are available in the Library for staff, students and visitors to take away.. Letters, bookmarks and postcards have been sent to UK history of medicine courses to promote the archives at the beginning of the academic year.

Space: The issue of space in the library and archives has been temporarily alleviated by securing off-site storage at the University of London depository at Egham. Only records management and pre-1970s journal will be moved from the School. This will allow more space for the growth in records management and archive material.

Victoria Cranna and Richard Meunier.

Public Health History in Film

In addition to the ever-popular History Research Seminars, this year the Centre has organised the showing of historical films to audiences from across the School. Modern historians are faced with an embarrassment of riches when it comes to sources, but film remains an often overlooked resource. Film helps to convey a sense of what it was like to live in a particular period or through a specific experience, something that was powerfully illustrated by the first of the

Centre's film showings last May. Sue Crockford's moving film 'Somers Town' (1985) about 1930s slum conditions just round the corner near St Pancras, fascinated students and staff with its rare archival footage of fumigation, bedbugs, Father Jellico, and some amazing old ladies in a pub. It was shown again as part of the 'Environment, Health and History' conference hosted by CHPH in September.

The second film, shown in October, introduced this term's seminar theme of mental health. 'I Love Being Mad', a BBC 3 documentary, followed the experiences of four people dealing with mental illness in contemporary Britain. The film was of particular historical interest as it explored the recent development of mental health user activism, contrasting this with the often hostile attitudes to mental health patients in the past. But, as the film indicated, people with mental illness still encounter problems as a result of the stigma surrounding this condition.

Both film sessions were extremely well attended, with rich discussion sessions involving a varied audience.

Alex Mold and Ginnie Smith

New Books

Virginia Smith, Clean: a history of personal hygiene and purity (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007)

In May, Honorary Research Fellow Virginia Smith's new book was launched with a party for family, friends and colleagues in the Atrium. *Clean* explores the global history of human body-care from the Neolithic to the present, and looks at the way in which different cultures have interpreted and

striven for personal cleanliness. Using first-hand accounts and sources, it unfolds the long history of personal hygiene and purity, from pre-historic grooming rituals to New Age medicine, from ruthless medieval ascetics to the 21st century cosmetics industry, and shows how the striving for purity has brought great benefit as well as tragedy (ie. as with 'ethnic cleansing'). Following good reviews in the national papers both here and in the USA, and local radio coverage and phone-ins ranging from Ireland to New Zealand, global sales started well and have remained steady, although academic reviews are yet to come in!

Virginia Berridge, Marketing health : smoking and the discourse of public health in Britain, 1945-2000. (Oxford, :Oxford University Press,2007)

This book takes a different angle on the smoking story in the UK. Based on interviews and access to previously unused archives under new open access to government documentation, it argues that smoking as a public health issue has been emblematic of the changes in the ideology of public health post second world war. Smoking symbolized the change to chronic disease and 'risk factor' epidemiology in the 1950s. The reports and activities of the Royal College of Physicians and of the newly formed ASH in the 1970s saw a new media based activism in which medicine reached out to the public and to politicians. Harm reduction and working with the industry as public health tactics gave way to a more prohibitionist approach based on the regulation of space. But harm reduction as a strategy has continued through 'pharmaceutical public health'-the rise of NRT as a part preventive part treatment option This

parallels the use of medical interventions as preventive tactics in other areas, for example the prescription of statins or of methadone.

The book has been featured in *History Today* and on Radio 4 and a short paper summarizing the new attitude of politicians to health issues is on the history and policy website. www.historyandpolicy.org

New Research in the Centre

Students

The Wellcome Trust Enhancement Award which underpins the Centre's activities gives us M.Sc and Ph.D studentships. Last year Louise Bradshaw and Lucy Burghard were our history students taking the M.Sc in Public Health .Louise took the history and health module in term 3 and then wrote a report on the history of shock tactics in mass media health education. Lucy had a baby during the year and so will complete the course this year. She plans a report comparing responses to HIV/AIDS in the UK and in Brazil. This year's new student is Nadja van Ginnege who plans to work on the history of community health workers in South Africa. Her joint tutors are Simon Lewin and Virginia Berridge.

Jane McGregor is a PhD student funded by Wellcome through the Enhancement Award. Her topic is drinking in Nottingham since the 1970s-examining the intersection between local policy implementation and the national level of policy through a matrix of community/public; medical and criminal justice responses . Jane successfully upgraded in July and is now researching intensively on Nottingham local records and undertaking interviews. She is on

secondment from Nottingham University where she lectures in drug and alcohol studies and so is ideally placed for contacts and connections with the local scene.

New Grants

Medical Research Council. Virginia Berridge with Rachel Herring as research fellow.

‘Treating childhood leukaemia: the role of the MRC’. From 9th March 2007 – June 2007.

Economic and Social Research Council. Martin Gorsky (joint application with Professor B. Harris and Dr A. Hinde, University of Southampton).

‘The Health and Morbidity of Friendly Society Members in the Late 19th and 20th Centuries’. From 1st May 2007 to 30th April 2009.

Wellcome Trust Fellowship for Alex Mold, Virginia Berridge sponsor. ‘Constructing the patient consumer: patient groups and health consumerism’. From 1st July 2007 – 30th June 2010.

Wellcome Trust International Collaborative Research Initiative award ‘Posters and Public Health in Twentieth Century Poland’ with Martin Gorsky, Virginia Berridge, and Krzysztof Krajewski-Siuda of Silesia University, Poland. From 1st October – 30th September 2008.

Leverhulme Trust, Emeritus Fellowship for Susanne MacGregor.

‘The Politics of drugs: global and local influences’. From 1st October 2007 – 30th September 2009.

HISTORY AND POLICY

Our collaboration with the University of Cambridge and the Institute of Historical Research in this initiative continues and will be launched at the Cabinet War Rooms in Whitehall on 5 December. www.historyandpolicy.org

FORTHCOMING EVENTS:

Seminars

Professor Edgar Jones (Institute of Psychiatry/Kings College, London). “*War of the mind: Shell Shock and its Treatment During the First World War*” Thursday, 15th November 2007, 12.45 – 2.00 pm. Venue: The Lucas Room (LG 81), Keppel Street Building.

Dr Edmund Ramsden (London School of Economics) “*Confronting the Stigma of Eugenics: Lionel Penrose and the Genetic Demography of Mental Ability*” Thursday, 29th November 2007, 12.45 pm – 2.00 pm. Venue: Room G3, 50 Bedford Square.

Public Health History Walks

‘Children’s Stories’

Friday, 16th November 2007, 12.45 pm – 2.00 pm.

A walk through the London of Charles Dickens, Captain Coram, abandoned babies and mad King George. This walk will finish at the Foundling Museum at about 2.00 pm. Easy walking distance from the School

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