

UWE Bristol Regional History Centre and M Shed Seminar Programme, 2018-19

Princes Wharf, Wapping Rd, Bristol BS1 4RN
18:00-19:30

Admission: Free

Thursday 27 September 2018

Dr Rehan Hyder (UWE Bristol)

Searching for the Bristol Sound: Music, Memory & Myth

The emergence of Bristol as one of the UK's most notable 'music cities' around the turn of the century has become a key element in shaping notions of heritage and creativity in the city. In particular, the rise of the so-called 'Bristol Sound' - a term used to describe internationally acclaimed artists such as Massive Attack, Portishead and Tricky – has become central to the imagining of the city's sense of culture and creativity.

At the heart of the idea of the Bristol Sound is the notion of inter-ethnic mix and cultural exchange which has come to epitomise representations of the city's unique musical identity. Drawing on a range of in-depth interviews, this talk will focus on the experiences of ordinary Bristolian clubbers attending the 'legendary' Bamboo and Dug-Out nightclubs. By examining the processes of cultural exchange within these mythic clubs, the talk will also consider the role that such histories play in shaping the contemporary music culture of Bristol.

Dr Rehan Hyder is Senior Lecturer in Media and Cultural Studies at UWE Bristol and a curator of the M Shed exhibition, Bristol Music.

Thursday 18 October 2018

Dr Paul Green

The Great African Blondin

Carlos Trower (1850-1889) escaped slavery in America to become known as 'The African Blondin', one of the world's greatest ever high-rope walkers. In the 1870s, Carlos Trower lived at 7 Christmas Steps, Bristol and he performed for thousands at Colston Hall in 1888, walking forwards and backwards, blindfolded and in shackles on a rope 50 feet high and reaching 120 feet from the organ to the President's gallery. His daring performances supported the emancipation of slaves and championed many charities helping those in need throughout his career. He died from a painful illness in 1889. Reading from his forthcoming

book *High-Rope: A Poem of the African Blondin*, Dr. Paul Green unveils the little-known story of this African-American hero as he balanced the narrow way towards a better world.

Dr Paul Green is a circus historian, performer, and honorary research fellow at the University of Wolverhampton.

Thursday 15 November 2018

Rose Hewlett (University of Bristol)

1607: The Great Severn Estuary Flood

The flood of 1607 is generally acknowledged to have been the greatest natural disaster to affect communities along the Bristol Channel and Severn Estuary. Enduring images from the news pamphlets of the day ensure that it is remembered more than 400 years later, and its cause is still being debated. Was it a tsunami? Was it a storm surge? Rose Hewlett is currently researching the response and recovery aspects of the event. Using manuscript sources created at grass roots level in the aftermath of the flood, she will bring new evidence and provide a more balanced understanding of its cause, extent of the inundation and its social and economic impact.

Rose Hewlett is studying for a PhD on the 1607 flood at the University of Bristol.

Wednesday 5 December 2018

Dr Andy Flack (University of Bristol)

The Wild Within: Animals, their People and the Making of Bristol Zoo, 1836-c.2000

Opened in the summer of 1836, Bristol Zoo is exceptional. Not only did it survive while many other British provincial zoos quickly collapsed, it remains today the fifth oldest zoo in the world and the oldest surviving zoo outside of a capital city. Its history – over 182 years of it – is complicated and sometimes confusing. This talk relays a version of that history. It does so by focusing in on some of Bristol's most famous animals, and the people who occupied the zoo alongside them. From enchanting chimpanzees in the late 1830s, through to celebrity gorillas who became famous across the English-speaking world and, later, disturbed polar bears who paced their faux white wilderness, evoking visions of torment and a yearning for a more innocent wildness, the talk will not only consider the origins of Bristol's own 'living laboratory', but will also contend that Bristol's Zoo was made by the 'wild' animals within it.

Dr Andy Flack is a Teaching Fellow in Modern History at the University of Bristol.

Thursday 17 January 2019

Dr Helen Frisby (UWE Bristol) and Dr Stuart Prior (University of Bristol)

Grounds for Grave Concern: Bristol Municipal Cemeteries Past, Present and Future

Cemeteries. They're contested, contradictory spaces, where the profound and prosaic meet and often collide. The original urban green spaces, they memorialise the dead, provide recreation for the living, host a surprising variety of wildlife - and are also places of work. In this talk, Dr Helen Frisby and Dr Stuart Prior tell the multifaceted story of Bristol's municipal cemeteries past, present and future. As well as charting how Bristol has disposed of its dead in the past and nowadays, they will ask what the future might hold for our local cemeteries as our lifestyles and deathstyles continue to change.

Dr Helen Frisby works in the Graduate School at UWE Bristol and Dr Stuart Prior is Reader in Archaeological Practice at the University of Bristol.

Thursday 21 February 2019

Dr Laura Harrison (UWE Bristol)

'There wasn't much to do ... at least not here': Youthful leisure and identity in rural south west England in the early twentieth century

Stan was born in 1911 in a small village near the north Somerset coast. He felt that 'there wasn't much to do in the evenings ... at least not here', and spent much of his free time knocking about outside with friends. Drawing upon evidence from personal accounts of growing up in the south west of England in the early twentieth century, this talk will explore the leisure experiences of young people in rural communities. How were young people's activities shaped by an awareness of the rural landscape, and how did rural culture and community contribute to a sense of youthful identity? Considering how young people interacted both with one another, and with their rural locality, this talk will provide a snapshot of the ways young people lived and socialised in rural communities in the south west of England in the early twentieth century.

Dr Laura Harrison is Senior Lecturer in Modern History at UWE Bristol.

Thursday 21 March 2019

Dr Bob Pryce

Victorian to Present Day Bristol in Three Dimensions

Looking at stereo photographs was a popular Victorian pastime. Millions of commercial stereo photographic cards of images from all over the world were produced. The Bristol Archive has a collection of ca. 270 stereo (3D) photographic cards relating to Bristol and its surroundings in the nineteenth century - chiefly in the 1860s and 70s. We have digitised

these images and restored them photographically and stereoscopically to give a collection of 142 useful 3D pictures. Images of the town with sailing vessels up to Baldwin Street and St. Mary Redcliffe without its spire show Bristol and Clifton off in a new light. Stereoscopic photography also recorded the evolution of the Clifton suspension bridge from its earliest days to its completion in 1864. Now, together with some new stereo photographs of Bristol and Clifton related to the Victorian views, Bob has created some new 3D audio visual shows for the big screen, depicting the city past and present.

Dr Bob Pryce is a retired professional chemist and academic and a member of The Stereoscopic Society.

Thursday 18 April 2019

Dr Clive Burgess (Royal Holloway, University of London)

William Canynges, late merchant of Bristol: Constructing an After-life before Death

William Canynges (c.1402 – 1474), parishioner of St Mary Redcliffe, wealthy merchant and five-times mayor of the town is one of Bristol's most famous late medieval citizens. But there is more to the man – both in life and as he prepared for death – than might be readily apparent. Not only was he well-connected, with siblings who rose to positions of some eminence elsewhere in the realm, but towards the end of his life he also forged a close association with John Carpenter, bishop of Worcester, who himself was similarly well placed. As he prepared for death, and seemingly under Carpenter's guidance, Canynges made a series of spiritual investments and choices revealing the strategies on which a wealthy late medieval merchant might rely; but Canynges' plans also suggest something of the networks of influence that determined the devotional programme to which an eminent Bristolian might aspire both for the benefit of his soul and of the broader community that he had served for so long.

Dr Clive Burgess is Reader in History at Royal Holloway, University of London.

Thursday 16 May 2019

Dr Ryan Hanley (University College, London)

From Carolina to Kingswood: Boston King's Story of Slavery, Salvation and Sedition in Eighteenth-Century Bristol

Kingswood School, established by John Wesley just outside Bristol in the 1740s, holds an unlikely place in black British history. Here, in 1794, a veteran from the losing side of the American Revolutionary War sat down to record his life story, from his slavery in the Carolinas to his freedom in Canada and his missions to Sierra Leone. Today, Boston King's memoir is regarded as one of the classic 'slave narratives' of the eighteenth century. But how did this story of survival and resistance come to be published? Why did the Methodists at Bristol, historically a centre of the British slave trade, want to promote King's abolitionist

message? And how, in a decade of social and political turmoil, did a former slave help this group of religious 'enthusiasts' escape the suspicions of an increasingly paranoid and draconian Home Office? This talk will examine King's life and afterlife in the Bristol area, touching on Atlantic revolutions, domestic radicalism, the evangelical movement, and the fight against slavery.

Dr Ryan Hanley is a British Academy Post-Doctoral Fellow at University College, London.

Thursday 20 June 2019

Professor Peter Malpass

'Homes for Heroes'? Bristol and the Housing and Town Planning Act, 1919

In 1914 there were fewer than 100 council houses in Bristol but in 1919 a plan was approved to build 5000. What had happened to change the stance of a council that had previously displayed nothing but resistance to municipal housing provision? And what did the council do to implement its new plan? These are the main questions addressed in this paper, which seeks to set local policy and practice in the wider political context created by, first, the war and second, the transition to peace. The 1919 Act provided a generous financial inducement to local authorities and Bristol built good quality houses on four estates, at Hillfields (Fishponds), Sea Mills, Knowle and St John's Lane (Bedminster). But only 1180 houses were completed before the scheme was terminated by central government. Key conclusions are that the housing scheme should be seen as a temporary response to an immediate crisis, and that it did nothing to help the poorest and least well housed.

Peter Malpass is Professor Emeritus at UWE Bristol.