



University of the
West of England



UWE Regional History Centre and M Shed Seminar Programme

2016-17

Venue: M Shed

Princes Wharf
Wapping Road
Bristol BS1 4RN

18:00 - 19:30

Admission: Free



Thursday 22 September 2016

Prof Peter Malpass (UWE, Bristol)

Brunel's Temple Meads terminus: the wrong building in the wrong place?

Today Brunel's original terminus is widely regarded as a magnificent example of early railway architecture. But soon after its completion in 1841 people began to complain about how far it was from the town centre and the wealthier suburbs, and within twenty years there were calls for a new station better designed to serve the three main railway companies operating in Bristol. This presentation looks at the alternatives to the Temple Meads site and the implications of building a permanent terminus there at a time when the future potential of railways was still unclear.

Peter Malpass is Professor emeritus at UWE, Bristol, and a Visiting Research Fellow at the Regional History Centre.

Thursday 20 October 2016

Dr Edson Burton (independent historian, poet and dramatist)

From Colour Bar to Black Mayor: The Black British Journey to Civic Office in Bristol

A cocktail of hostility and curiosity greeted the first generation of Caribbean migrants. Barred from housing, employment and culture, penned within the decaying wards of the inner city, involvement in Bristol's civic life seemed a long way off for members of the Caribbean community. Yet by 2016 Bristol had elected the first Black Mayor of a major European city.

The success of Labour candidate Marvin Rees did not happen overnight. As Edson Burton will explain, the road to the mayoral office was built upon foundations laid down by a plethora of figures drawn from the statutory, union, and church sector, whose actions changed the perceptions of the Black community in the minds of White Bristolians, and in the process made what was once considered unthinkable possible.

Edson Burton is a Bristol-based historian, poet and dramatist

Thursday 17 November 2016

Dr Mike Richardson (UWE, Bristol)

The Maltreated and the Malcontents: Working in the Great Western Cotton Factory 1838-1914

The history of Bristol's Great Western Cotton Works in Barton Hill, which opened in 1838, is little known. The story of its workforce – manly low-paid women and children – has never been told. From the 1830s until the early twentieth century, Barton Hill workers endured long working hours, wage reductions, high rates of industrial accidents and ill-health from the cotton dust and humidity. Although the balance of power in the factory was skewed in favour of the works managers, there were frequent acts of worker rebellion and resistance, often led by women, and a range of tactics that included the theft of inferior cotton to offset wage losses. Despite the legal bias against them, workers also took their grievances to court.

In this talk, Mike Richardson shows how employees at the Great Western Cotton Factory fought for better conditions at work, taking action both inside and outside the framework of formal organisations like the Gas Workers and General Labourers Union, which they joined during the city-wide unrest of 1889.

Mike Richardson is a Research Associate in the Bristol Business School, UWE, Bristol.

Wednesday 7 December 2016

Professor Ronald Hutton (University of Bristol)

The Historic King Arthur

The existence of a historical Arthur has been one of the great battlegrounds of historical debate ever since the Victorian period. This talk is designed to review the evidence and also the changing interpretations and public images of it over the past half a century in particular. It asks why, for example, most academic historians and archaeologists were inclined to believe in Arthur's historical reality around 1970, and generally refused to do so by 1990.

Ronald Hutton is Professor of History at the University of Bristol

Thursday 19 January 2017

Professor Sheila Rowbotham

Bristol's Radical New Women in the 1880s and 90s

Amidst the turmoil of Bristol's 1889 new unionist upsurge three middle class women from Clifton, Helena Born, Miriam Daniell and Gertrude Dix came to the support of the strikers and joined the Bristol Socialist Society. Committed to ending class inequality and the social and cultural emancipation of women, Born, Daniell and Dix played a vital part in the labour politics of Bristol while displaying great personal courage in defying the prevailing constraints on women's freedom. Their life stories feature in Sheila Rowbotham's most recent book *Rebel Crossings: New Women, Free Lovers and Radicals in Britain and the United States* but this talk describes their activism and aspirations for individual emancipation in Bristol during the late 1880s and early 1890s.

Sheila Rowbotham, who helped to start the women's liberation movement in Britain, is known internationally as an historian of feminism and radical social movements. She lives in Bristol.

Thursday 16 February 2017

Dr Rose Wallis (UWE)

Justice, Community and the Courts: Keeping Law and Order in the late Georgian South West

The local and regional courts were the seats of administrative and judicial authority at the turn of the eighteenth-century. They provided a forum in which all sectors of society met, argued, and in which social relationships were tested and redefined. While petty and quarter sessions, and courts of Assize, were convened in every county, the precise arrangement of county government was regionally contingent. The structuring of the courts and the administration of the law were shaped by historical precedents, and by the local magistracy, who organised judicial meetings according to their different regional contexts. This in turn framed the ways in which communities interacted with authority.

Rose's paper considers the different arrangement of the courts in three south-

western counties in the tumultuous last decades of the eighteenth century and first decades of the nineteenth century. Exploring how the local and regional authorities responded to the challenges posed by economic depression, political upheaval, war and demographic growth, via the operation and reformation of judicial structures.

Rose Wallis is Senior Lecturer in social history at UWE, Bristol

Thursday 16 March 2017

Professor Neil Wynn (University of Gloucestershire)

'Welcome to Britain?' Black GIs in Bristol and the South West during World War II

The South-west was to experience the one of the largest concentrations of American servicemen and women during World War II. Among them were several thousand black G.I.s for whom the experience of serving abroad was to have a dramatic effect, but equally the presence of African Americans had a significant impact on their British hosts, many of whom had never previously encountered people of another race. The often warm welcome white Britons afforded the black G.I.s was frequently resented by white Americans and there was much race friction within the U.S. armed forces. This led to numerous violent clashes, one of the worst of which occurred in Bristol. This talk will examine the way in which the war highlighted race issues among Americans and the British population in Bristol and the South West between 1941 and 1945.

Neil Wynn is Professor emeritus of American history at the University of Gloucestershire

Thursday 20 April 2017

Professor David Evans (UWE)

The Health of Bristol, 1948-2013: Public Health from Local Authority to NHS and Back Again

Who has been responsible for the health of the people of Bristol? How has that responsibility changed since the foundation of the NHS? And what do we know about the impact on the health of the population?

Three key dates are 1948, 1974 and 2013. The establishment of the NHS in 1948 led to major changes in the public health role of the city of Bristol. Then in 1974 public health responsibilities were transferred from local authorities to the

NHS; some historians say public health lost its way for a time after this. In 2013 public health was transferred back from the NHS to the local authority.

Until 1974 the medical officer of health produced an annual report on the health of the city. Between 1974 and 2013 there were continual changes in NHS organisational structures and the location of public health within the NHS; during this period the extent to which the health of the population was publicly reported on was highly variable.

This seminar will scope what we know about the health of Bristol over period 1948-2013 and explore how we can piece together the impact of local public health authorities on the health of the people of Bristol during this time of enormous social, economic and organisational change.

David Evans is Professor in Health Services Research at UWE, Bristol.

Thursday 18 May 2017

Professor Steve Poole (UWE)

Mahoney's Gibbet: Dark Heritage and the Criminal Body in Eighteenth Century Bristol.

Following a sensational and widely reported trial in 1741, three men were executed at the gallows on St Michael's Hill for the murder of Sir John Dineley Goodere on board his own ship as it lay at anchor in the Bristol Channel. Two were given regular burial but the body of the third, an Irish sailor named Matthew Mahoney, was taken to the mouth of the Avon and there hung in chains ('gibbeted') from a tall post erected on the sands of the Swatch. By 1749, three more convict corpses had been consigned to gibbet cages and exposed to permanent view on Durdham Down, and a second gibbet was added to the riverside at Broad Pill in 1761. A proposal that several pirates executed in London be brought up to join them was rejected but only on grounds of cost.

What was the purpose of hanging dead felons in chains and placing them on public view in eighteenth century Bristol? What was their impact upon popular imagination at the time, and how did the relics of public execution continue doing their 'memory work' in the city a century or more later?

Steve Poole is Professor of History and Heritage at UWE, Bristol and Director of the Regional History Centre

Thursday 15 June 2017

Professor Peter Fleming

'Fings Ain't Wot They Used T'be': How Fifteenth-Century Bristolians saw their Past

History was of clear practical value to fifteenth-century Bristolians, even if their grasp of the history of their own town was shaky in the extreme. Lacking constructions of the past based on archival research, they were dependent on the accumulation of reportage, and this soon faded into oblivion and myth. Nevertheless, the version of their past that was available to them was taken very seriously, at least by the burgess class, who recognised its potential for defending privileges and liberties, and for influencing behaviour. Memory was of great importance to fifteenth-century chroniclers and bureaucrats. To a significant extent written accounts of the past were made to create or stimulate memory, as opposed to existing in their own right as records to be filed, catalogued and referred to when needed. Being remembered, for the right reasons, was an essential part of the economy of salvation. The threat of not being remembered, or of being remembered for the wrong reasons, could be a powerful means of encouraging compliance to authority. Part of the apparatus of control available to Bristol's elites was the ability to create and preserve a version of history that justified their dominance. They would not have demurred from Orwell's assertion that "He who controls the present, controls the past. He who controls the past, controls the future".

Peter Fleming is Professor of History at UWE, Bristol.

These are public events at M Shed and open to everybody. If you would like any further information about the series or the Regional History Centre at UWE, please contact steve.poole@uwe.ac.uk for directions see www.mshed.org