

# UWE Regional History Centre and M Shed Seminar Programme

## 2013-14

**Venue: M Shed**  
Princes Wharf  
Wapping Road  
Bristol BS1 4RN

**18:00 - 19:30**

**Admission: Free**



**Thursday 24 October 2013**

*Peter Fleming (UWE)*

**Bristol's First Historian? Robert Ricart's Maire of Bristowe is Kalender and notions of history writing in 15th-c Bristol**

It is fairly well-known that 'Bristol's earliest historians were William Barrett and Samuel Sayer at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, but the city's engagement with its own past long precedes their time. In this talk Peter Fleming discusses the earliest Bristol chronicle writers, in particular, Robert Ricart, whose 'Maire of Bristowe is Kalender' was begun in 1478/9, and asks how and why later medieval Bristolians knew about, remembered, or fabricated, their history.

*Peter Fleming is Professor of History at UWE, Bristol.*

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**Thursday 21 November 2013**

*Nigel Somerville (Bristol Record Office)*

**The Dreadnought Journal: a Cruise Against the Enemies of Great Britain**

In 1757, a ship's surgeon on a privateering vessel kept a journal of a four month voyage from Bristol to the Bay of Biscay. His account, now held at Bristol Record Office but kept until recently in private hands, recorded attacks on French vessels, designed to disrupt trade and steal prizes. He also wrote of on-board disputes (and drinking) and the dangers of life at sea. The identity of the surgeon is unknown but his diary, examined alongside archival records and contemporary newspapers, reveals how privateers operated and the profits that could be made.

*Nigel Somerville is a retired solicitor and a volunteer at Bristol Record Office.*

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**Tuesday 10 December 2013**

*Nick Rogers (York University, Toronto)*

**Naval Impressment in the South West in the Eighteenth Century**

Naval impressment was essential to the manning of the British fleets, yet who was impressed and how successfully remain contentious issues among historians. This talk focuses on the ports of the South West to address these questions, and offers some regional comparisons. Although direct confrontations with press gangs remained an important source of resistance to forcible enlistment, evasion was arguably more significant; especially in the smaller ports of the South West where fishermen and coastal workers eluded gangs by joining the Sea Fencibles and carrying on an eighteenth century equivalent of 'draft-dodging'.

*Nick Rogers is Distinguished Research Professor in History at York University, Toronto.*

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**Thursday 16 January 2014**

*M Shed Curators' Roundtable*

**Moved by Conflict: Collecting and Curating the First World War**

How does a modern and forward-looking city museum plan and present a major exhibition marking the catastrophic global conflict of 1914-18? In a year in which the centenary of the outbreak of war is attracting high levels of public interest, what is it that draws us so forcefully towards collective expressions of mourning and commemoration and how can artifacts, memories and personal stories convey a sense of what it was to live through those years? Nobody is nostalgic for war and there is little in conflict to celebrate - so what exactly does the First World War mean to twenty-first century Britons, whether at the level of empire, nation, neighbourhood or family? In this roundtable session, M Shed curators discuss some of the challenges of commemorating war in a museum setting.

## Thursday 20 February 2014

*Mike Richardson (UWE)*

### **Bristol and the Labour Unrest 1910-14**

1910 witnessed a renewed outbreak of industrial strife in Britain, as significant sections of the trade union rank-and-file began to express their frustration at the lack of progress made in their struggle for better working conditions and a new social order. Strikes reached levels not seen since the 'new unionism' upsurge of 1889-92. Workers unrest combined with clashes over Home Rule for Ireland, and the militant tactics of suffrage campaigners, which added to the problems of the ruling class. Confronted by these parallel rebellions the ruling class feared their convergence, and some warned of the danger of revolution.

This talk will focus on Bristol's experience of labour unrest between 1910 and the outbreak of the First World War. Rather than focus solely on Bristol's famous union leaders, Ben Tillett and Earnest Bevin, this seminar will examine the events from the union rank-and-file perspective.

*Mike Richardson is a Visiting Research Fellow at the Centre of Employment Studies Research, UWE, Bristol).*

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## Thursday 20 March 2014

*Richard Coates (UWE)*

### **Place-names and History in the Bristol Area**

Finding out the origin of place-names can often be a complicated task. But doing it can often provide confirmation of the history that can be discovered from documents, or can provoke questions that have not arisen before about the local area, or can dispel myths that would not otherwise lie down and die. It can also be interesting in its own right, since many

have now become obscure, but all were once created as meaningful in the language spoken locally, and can often be shown to be directly relevant to local geography or culture.

*Richard Coates is Professor of Linguistics at UWE, Bristol.*

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## Thursday 17 April 2014

*Kent Fedorowich (UWE)*

### **'Returning Home to Fight': Bristolians in the Dominion Armies, 1914-1918**

One issue that migration historians have ignored as a fruitful field of endeavour, is the experience of thousands of British-born migrants who either came back to the United Kingdom to enlist in British regiments or enlisted in the respective dominion forces and served overseas. For instance, of the 34,500 volunteers who made up Canada's 'First Contingent', and which sailed to Britain in October 1914, 65 per cent were British-born. This predictably patriotic response to 'King, Country and Empire' was repeated throughout the British World as thousands more British migrants rallied to the Colours, temporarily arrived back 'home', some forever remaining in foreign fields, never to return to either Blighty or their recently adopted homes. This paper examines the lives and wartime experiences of some of those Bristolians who returned home from their adopted countries to fight for their native land. Using census records, wartime personnel files, local war memorials, newspapers and family records, this paper maps the return of some of these men; men who were part of one of the largest return migrations in British history.

*Dr Kent Fedorowich is Reader in History at UWE, Bristol.*

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Thursday 15 May 2014

*Paul Tobia (UWE, Bristol)*

**Life Stories and the Photographic Image: Patients in the Bristol Lunatic Asylum in the Nineteenth Century**

The working practice and public image of lunatic asylums has been the subject of much academic debate, yet often, the patients who were incarcerated within the asylum's walls have either been overlooked or understood in generalised terms. Making use of a unique and comprehensive archive of restored portrait photographs from the Bristol Record Office collections, this talk will consider the stories of some of those committed to the city's nineteenth century asylum. Many of their stories are tragic, some have happy endings and some are simply reflective of the sort of torments the human mind can sometimes suffer. The photographs certainly evoke a sense of suffering, but by individualising asylum patients, they also convey a palpable sense of our common humanity.

*Paul Tobia is studying for a PhD at UWE, Bristol.*

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Thursday 19 June 2014

*Andrew Flack (University of Bristol)*

**Animal Commodities: Bristol Zoo, the Wild Animal Trade and Imperial Networks in the Nineteenth Century.**

During the nineteenth century, the increased reach of the British Empire and the development of animal collections in Europe ensured that there was an increasing market demand for exotic animals to display in menageries, to study and exhibit in zoos, and to keep as pets. This paper will examine the mechanics of this process within the context of Bristol Zoological Gardens in the nineteenth century. It was a complex process through which indigenous peoples, mariners, professional animal dealers, local worthies, Indian princes, circuses, travelling menageries and members of the Zoological Society working in the colonies combined to transform non-human animals into objects of commercial and scientific desire. And the Zoo did not merely acquire animals; it sold them on and, produced animal commodities of its own to insert into the market, a process which positioned the Zoo, and indeed the City, not only in a global commodity network of multiple connections, but also in a process which contributed to the depletion of the biodiversity of the Empire.

*Andrew Flack is studying for a PhD at the University of Bristol.*

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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](mailto:steve.poole@uwe.ac.uk) for directions see [www.mshed.org](http://www.mshed.org)