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Novel Approaches

A VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

ISSUE 2

16 DECEMBER 2011

Welcome

Hello and welcome to the concluding newsletter for our virtual conference *Novel Approaches: from academic history to historical fiction*.

It's been a good fortnight since the week of the conference but we've noticed that many of you have continued to visit us, which is very pleasing to see. We very much hope that you enjoyed the week and that you will continue to make use of the resources available. As you might well have noticed by now we have added a few new posts to make the site more usable in the future.

Much of the discussion focused on the alternative purposes of the two forms of looking at the past. How does the historian see his/her

craft? How does the novelist view his/her task? In all, the conversation was lively, interesting, and I would say, focused on a variety of issues



implicitly found in this topic.

The site will remain up indefinitely so please do view the site as a place to return to and to continue the discussions around the resources. In the meantime this concluding newsletter brings

you a host of short articles, new details of our upcoming workshop, and a few other bits and pieces. We hope you enjoy it!

Well, all that it remains for me to say is a big thank you to everyone who took part and made the event possible. From IHR staff members, to the speakers and writers who kindly produced the content, and most especially to you, the audience. Thank you for making this event a success!

- Matt Phillpott, History SPOT Project Officer

Additional: videos from the conference are now available at History SPOT ([click here](#))

Conference survey

Now that our part of the conference is over we would like to find out more about what you thought. Did you enjoy the conference? What could we have done better? What would you change if we decided to do another one in the future?

Please take a moment of your

time to fill in our end of confer-



ence survey to let us know what

you think. Thank you.

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/M7NLF06>

Workshop News



Elizabeth Chadwick website:
www.elizabethchadwick.com/

"Once you have been thoroughly kipped cooking a cauldron of pottage over an open fire, you know exactly what it's like and you know darned well that no-one with hanging sleeves ever got cooking pot duty!"

-Elizabeth Chadwick

The IHR will be running a one day workshop next year on the subject of *historical research for writers of historical fiction*.

Bringing our own expert knowledge to the table alongside several guest speakers, we will better enable you to access and carry out the detailed research that a good historical fiction novel requires.



During the course of the day we will look at topics such as costume, transport, location, and material culture. We will have on hand prize winning author **Elizabeth Chadwick** who will talk about her research methods including using books, documents and re-enactment and will be there to answer questions.

A museum expert will also give a talk on using museum exhibitions for research (further details forthcoming). A tour of the IHR reference library will also be included in the day.

The workshop is not about creative writing but about research skills. We will show you how to better discover and access online resources, archives, special collections and secondary literature. It is also worth noting that the workshop will only focus on pre-industrialised British history (although many resources discussed will be useful for studying other countries and times as well).

Date: 13 April 2012

Time: 10am-4.30pm

Cost: £95 per person (concession rates available: £65)

Costs include lunch, two tea & coffee breaks, and

access for the day to the IHR library. Our guest speakers will include a published author and an expert from a museum.

Numbers are limited to fifteen so please register as soon as possible to ensure that you do not miss out.

Approximate schedule

10am Tea & coffee
 10.30am Dr Simon Trafford on historical resources
 11.30am Elizabeth Chadwick on researching for historical novels
 12.45pm Lunch
 2pm Dr Simon Trafford on doing research
 2.45pm IHR library tour
 3.15pm Tea & coffee
 3.30pm Museum expert (TBC) – how to use a museum for research
 4.30pm Day ends

Registration will open soon. Please keep an eye out on the IHR website:

www.history.ac.uk. We will also send another email soon.

History SPOT

History SPOT is brimming full of podcasts from IHR seminars, conferences and lectures from 2009 to the present. Many of these could well be useful for researching history or as preparation for writing historical fiction. Below is a tag cloud from History SPOT of various topics our podcasts cover (click an item to access the relevant list).



Podcasts on
 History
 SPOT

[urban](#) [fund raising](#) [archives](#) [politics](#) [newspaper](#) [cities](#) [voluntary](#) [USA](#) [environment](#) [society](#) [live stream](#) [law](#) [military](#) [medicine](#) [interwar](#) [early modern](#) [city](#) [poverty](#) [London](#) [Germany](#) [digital](#) [20th century](#) [sport](#) [Britain](#) [Medieval](#) [health](#) [historiography](#) [Colonies](#) [religion](#) [Old Bailey](#) [charity](#) [football](#) [cartography](#) [philanthropy](#) [immigration](#) [Scotland](#) [Australia](#) [ideology](#) [children](#) [book](#) [England](#) [empire](#) [France](#) [Christianity](#) [global](#) [canada](#) [community](#) [Asa Briggs](#) [education](#) [economics](#) [crime](#) [Victorian](#) [culture](#) [recreation](#) [university](#) [army](#) [women](#) [19th century](#) [WWII](#) [holiday](#)

Registration for History SPOT is quick and FREE. <http://historyspot.org.uk/>

A brief history of the IHR

The Institute of Historical Research has not always occupied its current home. When it opened in 1921 it was based in temporary wooden buildings along Malet Street. Although lacking the grandeur of Senate House, these 'Tudor style' huts were purpose built, and the layout of the library would be familiar to anyone visiting the IHR today.

The buildings, as reported by *The Observer* in June 1938, had been erected using the latest techniques: 'the temporary quarters, the gift of a generous anonymous donor, were constructed at the peak of the high building costs, on the principle of an army hut, on a concrete base with a timber frame and filled in with sheets of asbestos'. The same paper noted that their 'ephemeral appearance gave a refreshing camp-like air to the grimmer permanences of Bloomsbury learning'. The whole cost £20,000 to design and build, the result of a generous donation from an anonymous benefactor.

It would not be long before even this temporary accommodation came under threat, as the University of London faced the loss of the entire Bloomsbury site in 1926.

In 1926 the government proposed to sell back to the original vendors, the



Bedford trustees, the entire Bloomsbury site which had been set aside for a range of new University of London buildings. The IHR was given notice to quit and a vigorous press campaign followed. The Council of the Historical Association, for example, 'passed a resolution declaring that the destruction of the Institute of Historical Research by the demolition of its buildings and the dispersal of its library, which is threatened by the decision of the Government to return the Bloomsbury site to the Duke of Bed-

ford, would be a national calamity' (*Daily Telegraph*, 2 June 1926). At one stage, the Institute's Director, A.F. Pollard, admitted that 'the legal position was practically hopeless. All they could do was to try to bring influence to bear on the Government to approach the Duke to see if he would consider representations on the matter of the Institute ... He did not see what they could do if they lost the present building, as the University had not a foot of Land anywhere' (*The Times*, 1 June 1926).

The IHR was ultimately reprieved when the University took the decision to purchase the whole site instead.

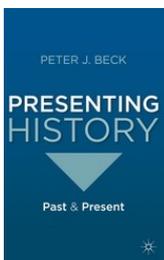
The *Birmingham Post* (2 February 1927) reported a degree 'of satisfied relief' in the IHR's annual report and noted that 'The danger has not been without compensations. It has drawn from historians at home and abroad ready testimony to the value of the work the Institute has done, and the necessity for its continuance'.

By Jane Winters, IHR Publications.

"Despite the continued prominence of Tudor history in schools and universities, a growing number of people draw their knowledge of the Tudor period directly from historical novels, television documentaries, and Hollywood films."

- Peter J. Beck

Presenting History: Past and Present



This new study looks at the borderlines between academic history, popular history, and historical fiction. Emeritus Professor of History at Kingston University, Peter J. Beck looks at how *History* is presented and why it matters in today's world. Who reads academic histories? Should historians reach out to the general public? Why is historical fiction (as novels, television, and film) more successful at presenting the past to a wider audience? These are all questions that were examined in our *Novel Approaches* conference so if you would like to look a little more at these issues this book would certainly be a good place to start. Of particular interest as far as our conference goes is Chapter 10 which is focused on Philippa Gregory as a case study for the popularity of historical fiction and its relationship to academic and popular history.

[Peter J. Beck, *Presenting History: Past and Present* \(Palgrave: Nov. 2011\). RRP: £52.50 \(hardback\); £17.99 \(paperback\) **CLICK HERE FOR FURTHER DETAILS.**](#)



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A Selection of IHR Projects (*click on the image*)

History SPOT

Seminar Podcasts and Online Training from the IHR

Reviews in History

Covering books and electronic resources across all fields of history



BRITISH HISTORY ONLINE



Making History

The changing face of the profession in Britain



VCH Explore

Explore England's Past

www.history.ac.uk



Historical Novel Society Conference



For further information see
the Society website:

[http://
www.historicalnovelsociety.
org/conference.htm](http://www.historicalnovelsociety.org/conference.htm)

If you have enjoyed our conference then it might be worth noting that there is a **Historical Novel Society Conference** in the works for 2012. The conference will take place at the University of Westminster (Regent Street site) on the 29th and 30th September. As well as booksellers, agents and editors / publishers they are expecting the following authors (among others) – Bernard Cornwell, Elizabeth Chadwick, Sarah Dunant, Barbara Erskine, C.J. Sansom and Sarah Waters – plus the Napoleonic Association in full uniform!