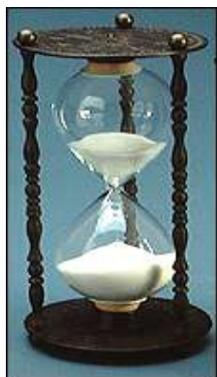


# ***Historical Geography Research Group***

(ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY with THE INSTITUTE OF BRITISH GEOGRAPHERS)



<http://hgrg.nuigalway.ie>

## **HGRG Newsletter, New Year Issue 2006**

In this issue:

- ◆ Calls for Papers for RGS-IBG 2006
- ◆ Thesis abstracts
- ◆ Forthcoming conferences and seminars

Copy for the HGRG newsletter should be sent to:

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HGRG Honorary Publicity Officer  
Institute of Geography and Earth Sciences,  
University of Wales, Aberystwyth,  
Aberystwyth,  
Ceredigion, SY23 3DB  
UK

Copy should be submitted either on floppy disc (PC, MS Word files preferred) or via e-mail to [p.merriman@aber.ac.uk](mailto:p.merriman@aber.ac.uk)

**Copy deadlines** are: **25 May** for the Summer edition, **25 September** for the Autumn edition, and **16 December** for the New Year edition.

HGRG Electronic Mailing List: if you would you like to be added to the list, please contact Peter Merriman, [p.merriman@aber.ac.uk](mailto:p.merriman@aber.ac.uk)

Address changes: Please notify David Lambert: [d.lambert@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:d.lambert@rhul.ac.uk)

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**Please inform the Membership Secretary if you change your postal address, and the Membership Secretary and Publicity Officer if you change your e-mail address.**

## *Calls for Papers, RGS-IBG Annual Conference, London, 30 August- 1 September 2006:*

### *Landscape, mobility and practice*

A series of sessions organised by Peter Merriman and George Revill on behalf of the HGRG

In this session we aim to bring together geographers and academics from related disciplines who are concerned with human movement in the landscape. In the past few years there has been a resurgence of work on mobility in disciplines such as sociology and geography, while over the past decade geographers, anthropologists and others have been increasingly drawing upon non-representational theories and phenomenological writings in an attempt to cultivate more performative and practice-oriented accounts of the way people encounter, move through and inhabit landscapes. This session aims to juxtapose these more recent conceptual engagements with the dynamism of landscape with studies of the long and varied historical geographies of attempts by writers, artists, travel writers, landscape practitioners and others who, along with academics, have developed and expressed sensibilities to movement in the landscape, whether by providing critical commentaries on the experiences of travel, or developing artistic techniques for representing the dynamism of movement.

This session will provide a forum for papers which explore a range of sensibilities to movement, embodied movements and mobile practices in the landscape, bringing together researchers who use a diverse array of methodologies and theories from across geography and related disciplines.

We welcome papers on a diverse array of themes. These might include, but are not limited to, papers which engage with:

- Embodied human movements in and through the landscape, from railway travel and walking, to rock climbing or parachuting.
- Aesthetic styles or techniques for representing or expressing the dynamism of landscape.
- Historical and cultural geographies of travel and transportation.
- Technologies of visualising and sensing, from perspective drawing and cinema to CAD.
- Practices of landscape design, gardening or engineering the landscape.
- Different sensibilities to stillness, materiality and the knowable, and their relation to sensibilities to movement, flow and the sublime.
- Theoretical engagements with the dynamism of landscape, using approaches from phenomenology and Marxist-humanism, to performance and non-representational theories.

Please send abstracts of no more than 200 words to both of the convenors by Friday 13th January 2006:

Dr Peter Merriman, University of Wales, Aberystwyth, UK, e-mail: [prm@aber.ac.uk](mailto:prm@aber.ac.uk)  
Dr George Revill, Open University, UK, e-mail: [G.Revill@open.ac.uk](mailto:G.Revill@open.ac.uk)

## ***Counterfactual geographies: Worlds that might have been***

Paper session sponsored by the HGRG and the HPGRG.

The aim of the session is to explore the geographies of ‘what if...?’ Whilst counterfactualism has been dismissed by E. H. Carr as a mere parlour game and described by E. P. Thompson as unhistorical crap, the recent success of Philip Roth’s *The Plot Against America* and Kim Stanley Robinson’s *The Years of Rice and Salt*, as well as more scholarly texts, reveals a continuing fascination with alternative histories. Counterfactual claims also have particular political resonance at present as they are mobilised by those seeking reparation for past wrongs such as the dispossession of aboriginal peoples or Atlantic slavery. Moreover, counterfactualism may have much to offer to the discipline of geography in terms of recent debates about emergent properties, conceptualisations of space as ‘the sphere of the possibility of the existence of multiplicity’ (Massey, 2005) and efforts to explore explanatory modes that bridge the physical/human divide.

This session will consider theoretical, substantive, interpretative, methodological, political and ethical issues surrounding what it means to bring a geographical imagination and a spatial politics to bear on counterfactualism, alternative histories and speculative claims about worlds that might have been. Counterfactual histories tend to focus on moments and events that might have happened differently, causing the subsequent ‘path of history’ to be altered. Are there productive ways in which this way of thinking might be spatialised? Perhaps the conceptual building blocks of a counterfactual geography reside in thinking about in trajectories that might or might not have met, in notions of spatial coincidence and chance encounter, or in the idea that events might have taken place *elsewhere*.

We envisage that the papers will be organised around two strands: firstly, papers that propose, develop or critique particular examples of counterfactual histories and geographies; and, secondly, papers that consider counterfactualism in conceptual and philosophical terms.

Themes that might be addressed include...

- the use of counterfactualism as a creative mode of thought to consider particular ‘worlds that might have been’
- geographical critiques or readings of existing counterfactual claims, from fictional worlds like Kim Stanley Robinson’s ‘world without Europe’, to the ‘Africa without slavery’ that is mobilised by the global slavery reparations movement
- how geographers might (already?) utilise counterfactual claims, for example in notions of ‘underdevelopment’
- the theoretical framework in which a spatialised counterfactualism might be developed
- the potential role of popular counterfactualism in ‘popular geography’ and the dissemination of geographical knowledge

**Please send abstracts of no more than 200 words to both convenors by no later than 16th January 2006:**

Dr. David Gilbert, Royal Holloway, University of London, [d.gilbert@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:d.gilbert@rhul.ac.uk)

Dr. David Lambert, Royal Holloway, University of London, [d.lambert@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:d.lambert@rhul.ac.uk)

## ***Documentary Film and Historical Geography***

Organised by Luciana Martins and Felix Driver

This session seeks to investigate the uses of documentary film in historical geographies. In recent years, geographers have turned to film to address questions about the representation of place, space and identity, especially in urban settings. However, less attention has been paid to the uses of documentary film in the production and consumption of imaginative geographies. We aim to include papers that address the role of film in the recording of scientific information, especially in the field; the significance of film in the popularisation of geographical knowledge; and the relations between projects of documentation, expertise and government. Papers are welcomed on documentary film and geographical exploration; on educational films and social change, in both urban and rural settings; and on viewings of documentary film, memory and senses of place.

Papers in the session will be 20 minutes long. An abstract of 200 words should be sent to Luciana Martins by Friday 13 January 2006.

Dr Luciana Martins

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London WC1H 0PD

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## ***Postgraduate Research in Historical Geography***

Sponsored by the HGRG

This session aims to provide an informal and relaxed forum for postgraduates undertaking research in historical geography to present at a major conference. Building upon the successful HGRG postgraduate sessions in London 2005 and Glasgow 2004 it is hoped that a friendly and supportive atmosphere will produce stimulating debates on the issues raised and provide postgraduates with helpful feedback on their work. There is no chronological or geographical limit to papers and they can be theoretical, empirical or methodological in orientation. Papers will be welcomed from postgraduates at any stage of research.

Offers for papers, comprising author, address, title and abstract (of not more than 200 words) should be submitted by e-mail or hard copy no later than 18<sup>th</sup> January 2006 to Merle Patchett (Postgraduate Committee Member). Presentations are expected to be around 20 minutes in duration.

Merle Patchett

Postgraduate Committee Member

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## **Other Forthcoming Conferences:**

### **The Arboretum: "Conversing with other nations"**

#### **Call for papers for an international interdisciplinary conference to be held at the Linnean Society, London, 6-8 September 2006**

This conference will examine the cultural history and geography of tree collections and the different types of arboretum. Spaces where trees and shrubs are grown for pleasure and instruction started to be called arboretums around 1800. They became an important model in the nineteenth century for institutional and private gardens, and for public parks.

Themes for discussion include the philosophical, aesthetic, horticultural and educational theories underlying the planning, layout, organisation, and management of arboretums. The links with botanical gardens, the horticultural trade and the scientific development of forestry will be explored. The conference will consider the role of international networks, exploration, trade and imperialism in tree collecting. It will trace the interconnections between horticulture, botany and forestry, the role of institutions and the relationships between arboretums and their local social, cultural and institutional context.

This conference is part of a major three-year AHRC-funded project on the cultural history of English nineteenth-century arboretums at the School of Geography, University of Nottingham, directed by Professor Charles Watkins and Professor Stephen Daniels.

Those interested in giving a paper on arboretum history or related subjects or in attending the conference are invited to contact the project researcher: Dr. Paul Elliott, School of Geography, University of Nottingham: [paul.elliott@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:paul.elliott@nottingham.ac.uk) or Professor Charles Watkins [charles.watkins@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:charles.watkins@nottingham.ac.uk)

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## **Thesis Abstracts:**

HGRG are keen to provide a forum for disseminating abstracts of recently completed doctoral theses in historical geography. We encourage graduates from geography and related disciplines to submit abstracts for publication in our tri-annual newsletter. Abstracts of no more than 250 words (with relevant contact details, and following the format below), should be sent via e-mail to the HGRG Publicity Officer, Peter Merriman, [p.merriman@aber.ac.uk](mailto:p.merriman@aber.ac.uk)

Ruth Hughes, **Housing the Workers: Company Housing Provision in South Cumbria c1850-1939**, Abstract of PhD submitted to Lancaster University, August 2004.

A relatively under-researched topic in housing history has concerned the provision and role of company housing, especially from a regional and longitudinal perspective. The forces that heralded a change in the patterns of housing tenure between the mid-nineteenth century to 1939 impacted on the provision and utility of company-provided housing over the same period. Why companies built housing, when they did, and how that housing was managed once built are the two central questions this thesis attempts to answer. The study employs a comparative and longitudinal approach to

assess the effects of economic, social and political change on company housing policy over a 90-year period.

The thesis focuses on the housing activities of three south Cumbrian companies. It argues that each company had specific reasons for embarking on housing provision that reflected the economic, political and personal objectives of the companies concerned, and that the housing, once built, was absorbed into and became part of the management structure of the companies. The role of company housing to mitigate the effects of the challenges posed by the rise of trade union membership, and the emergence of local authorities as housing providers, is also assessed.

The study concludes that only by employing a pluralistic approach can the motivation governing company-housing provision be fully understood, and the consequences of political and economic change to the utility of company housing as a management tool be fully appreciated.

Contact details: Dr Ruth Hughes, Email: [ruthhughes@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:ruthhughes@tiscali.co.uk) Tel: 01539532591

Alison J Williams, **Aviation Technogeopolitics and the Materialisation of the Pacific as United States Space, 1918-1941**. Ph.D. awarded by the University of Hull, October 2005.

This thesis develops and explores the concept of a 'technogeopolitical project' - a means of analysing the processes and mechanisms through which a recursive relationship between a given technology and geopolitics emerges. The technology used to illustrate this thesis is aviation, and the specific case studies analyse the United States Government's 'project' to use developing aviation technologies to materialise the Pacific as United States space during the interwar period. Several processes and mechanisms are analysed and discussed to illustrate this. First, international treaties and US legislative documents are examined to explore the legal structures that underpinned this technogeopolitical project. Second, the development of the US Navy's 'War Plan Orange' is interrogated. These plans included detailed deployment listings, and surveys of possible locations for military facilities across the region. Third, the thesis analyses other surveys of potential military air-bases across the Pacific. Finally, it examines the planning and construction of Pan American Airways' transpacific commercial air routes. It demonstrates how the links between the company and the US Government - that circumvented the restrictions on air-base construction specified in the 1922 Washington Naval Treaty - were imbued with geostrategic imperatives. Taken together, these processes constituted a technogeopolitical project that territorialised and materialised the Pacific Ocean as United States space in the interwar years.

Contact details: Dr Alison J Williams, Research Associate, International Boundaries Research Unit, Geography Department, Durham University.  
Email: [a.j.williams@durham.ac.uk](mailto:a.j.williams@durham.ac.uk)

*Seminar Series:*

**LONDON GROUP OF HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHERS  
and the UCL Urban Laboratory**

*Seminar Programme, Spring Term 2006*

**MATTER AND ELEMENTS**

Guest convenor: Matthew Gandy (UCL)

31st January 2006  
(ST274 in Stewart House)

**Steven Connor** (Birkbeck College,  
University of London)

*A grave in the air: Death, burial and the elements*

14th February 2006  
(ST274 in Stewart House)

**Peg Rawes** (Bartlett School, UCL)

*Sonic spaces*

28th February 2006  
(Wolfson Room in IHR)

**Adrian Forty** (Bartlett School, UCL)

*Concrete and culture*

14th March 2006  
(Wolfson Room in IHR)

**Thomas Blom Hansen** (Yale University)

*Fire: Passion and purification*

28th March 2006  
(ST273 in Stewart House)

**John Scanlan** (University of St. Andrews)

*Garbage: Matter, metaphor, spectre*

These seminars are held on **Tuesdays at 5pm** at Senate House, University of London. For further details, contact David Lambert, Royal Holloway (01784 443640) or Miles Ogborn, Queen Mary (020 7882 5407). We are grateful to Queen Mary, Royal Holloway, Kings, UCL, the Open University, Sussex University and the IHR for supporting this series.