



Press release

02 November 2004

Unleashing the archive

How do we make sure that political events are recorded factually for future generations? Who ensures that individuals do not remake history to portray themselves in a good light? On 12 November journalist Richard Norton-Taylor will be discussing the importance of records in the Bloody Sunday Inquiry and Orange Prize-winning novelist Andrea Levy will talk about her personal experiences of archives. Unleashing the archive, a FREE conference organised by the School of Advanced Study of the University of London and The National Archives in Kew, aims to promote the historical importance of archives.

Andrea Levy, commenting on her experiences with archives said:

'I can still remember the look of fear on the archivists' faces when I breezed in and said "Just point me to your boxes - I'll have a good rummage through."

'Archives - comprising personal texts detailing everyday activities and emotions, as well as the formal records of government, businesses and other organisations - play a part in all our lives'

'For thousands of years they have contributed to maintaining continuity in human affairs. Yet archives are not simply repositories of collective memory. Without archives there would be no propaganda. At the same time they support the search for justice and truth.'

says Nicholas Mann, Dean of the School of Advanced Study and Pro Vice-Chancellor of the University of London.

Sarah Tyacke, Chief Executive of The National Archives said:

'In many parts of the world there is now a more widespread engagement with archives than ever before, as people seek to construct stories and explanations about themselves and the world in which they live. Archives offer limitless opportunities for exploration and discovery and are striking the imagination in new ways.'

The conference addresses these issues in four sessions:

- Archives as evidence - using the Bloody Sunday Inquiry as an example
- Archive and epic - addressing the way in which many of the great works that shape national identity are created using archives
- Archives as personal exploration - contrasting biographers and novelists' use of archives to explore the experiences of individuals
- Archives as constructions and manipulations - contrasting the way archives were created and interpreted in the ancient world to the present day

Artwork, by two artists who have a close involvement with archives, will also be revealed at the conference.

Unleashing the archive is one of a series of events being held in 2004-5 to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the University of London's School of Advanced Study.

The conference will be held at Senate House, Malet Street, London, WC1. It is FREE, but reservations must be made in advance. To book please contact Olwen Myhill on Olwen.Myhill@sas.ac.uk or 020 7862 8790

Notes for editors:

- The School of Advanced Study brings together the scholarship and resources of eight prestigious postgraduate research institutes of the University of London in the humanities and social sciences. Its subject areas include history; law; classics and the classical tradition; English, Germanic and Romance studies; and studies of the Commonwealth and the Americas. For more information please go to <http://www.sas.ac.uk/>
- The National Archives, in Kew, west London, was formed in 2003 by bringing together the Public Record Office and the Historical Manuscripts Commission. The National Archives is an associate member of the School, and is strengthening its links with the academic research community. But it seeks also to stimulate wider awareness of, and support for, archives as a nationwide resource on which people in many different walks of life can draw for information, learning and inspiration. For more information please contact Siobhan Wakely in The National Archives' press office Siobhan.wakely@nationalarchives.gov.uk or 020 8392 5277
- During the conference there will be a display of video works by the artists Ruth Maclennan and Uriel Orlow. Ruth Maclennan was artist in residence in the archives of the Library at the London School of Economics in 2001-2002. Uriel Orlow was artist in residence at the Wiener Library in London

in 2000-1. They each made videos of interviews with the archivists, and in very different ways, they address questions of memory retrieval, structures of organisation, and institutional control.

Tenth Anniversary Conference 12 November 2004 School of Advanced Study, University of London and The National Archives

'Unleashing the archive'

Programme

The conference aims to open up new thinking about the cultural and historic significance of archives and their use.

Friday 12 November 2004

Introduction

09.30 - 09.50

Speakers:

Nicholas Mann, Dean of the School of Advanced Study and Pro Vice-Chancellor of the University of London

The Master of the Rolls, Lord Phillips of Worth Matravers

Ruth MacLennan and Uriel Orlow 'Artists and the Archive'

Session 1. archive and epic

09.50 -11.05

Archives and archiving in forging epics of group experience and identity

chair: Nicholas Mann (School of Advanced Study)

Alan Thacker (Institute of Historical Research), 'Bede and the creation of an English epic'

Louise Craven (The National Archives), 'Epic, group identity and the archive in the modern world'

Commentary: David Bates (Director, Institute of Historical Research)

Discussion.

11.05-11.30 Coffee

Session 2. The Bloody Sunday inquiry: archives as evidence

11.30 -12.45

Different approaches to the task of establishing 'truth'

chair: Sarah Tyacke (The National Archives)

Paul Bew (Queen's University Belfast), 'The historian's view'

Richard Norton Taylor, 'The journalist's view'

Cathryn McGahey, 'The lawyer's view'

Commentary: Pat Thane (Institute of Historical Research)

Discussion

12.45-2.00 p.m. lunch

Session 3. Archives as personal exploration

2.00 - 3.15 p.m.

Contrasting approaches to the use of archives in writing about both 'the everyday' and the 'heroic individual'

chair: Warwick Gould (Institute of English Studies)

Biographer: Katrina Dean (Geographical Sciences, University of Bristol),

'Biographical actors: on reading the scientific archive'

Novelist Andrea Levy (winner of the Orange Prize), 'Archives, fiction and autobiography'

Commentary: Peter Mandler (University of Cambridge)

Discussion

3.15-3.30 p.m. Tea

Session 4 Archives as constructions and manipulations

3.30 - 4.45 p.m.

The session will explore the political and cultural functions of archives in the ancient world as compared with their counterparts now

chair: Derek Keene (Institute of Historical Research)

Charlotte Roueché (King's College London), 'The ancient world: inscribing archives on stone'

Richard Cox (University of Pittsburgh), 'Archiving archives in the modern world: rethinking and revitalizing a Concept'

Commentary: Michael Moss (University of Glasgow)

Discussion

This will lead into a General Debate, with all speakers forming a panel chaired by Derek Keene (approximately 4.45 - 5.15 pm)

5.15 p.m (approx.)

Sarah Tyacke, 'Final remarks'

5.30 pm (approx.). Reception.