Newsletter August 2014

This newsletter (issued once a year) keeps you in touch with what’s going on at the Department. You’ll find much more at our website or on our Facebook page.

If you’ve got any questions, or would like to get in touch, then please do drop us a line: history@sheffield.ac.uk or, the old-fashioned way, write to the Department of History, Jessop West, Sheffield, S3 7RA.

We’re particularly interested in news from alumni: and we reserve the right to print any letters received in subsequent editions(!)

News in brief

Just a few things that we have been up to this year:

- Dr Caroline Pennock has received an Early Career Senate Award
- Dr Catherine Fletcher is consulting on the new Wolf Hall TV Series
- Our History Matters Blog was short-listed for a History Today’s Prize

Introducing our new academics

We are really pleased to tell you that we have two new academics who will also be joining the Department in September 2014!

Sarah Miller-Davenport is our latest American historian, working on 20th century US history including US foreign relations and cultural history.

Eirini Karamouzi is joining us to work on post-1945 Western European history including cold war history and modern Balkan history.

Eirini tells us a bit more about her background and what she thinks about coming to Sheffield:

Your undergraduate is in History and Archaeology, what made you choose the post-Second World War period for your MSc and PhD?

My BA was indeed in History and Archaeology but my major was in post-war European History, and in particular Southeast Europe. Taking such courses made me understand better the complexities of the international system, explore the forces of the past and their major implications for the world we live today. I was intrigued to further explore such contemporary themes in my postgraduate studies, initially focusing on Greece but also on the historical construction of European integration and the Cold War

Are you excited about joining the Sheffield History Department? What areas of study do you hope to develop for our undergraduate students?

I am thrilled and excited to join such a diverse department with its excellent teaching and cutting-edge research. I am eager to work in depth on the history of post-war Western Europe and explore the key approaches and debates that are redefining our understanding of the Cold War today. In the future, I would love to offer a course on the history of the Balkans that examines the political, social and economic evolution of the Balkan states since 1939.
What our students have been doing outside of their studies this year

Our students do some really great extra-curricular work that helps them to get even more out of their student experience. It can also help them gain valuable skills and experience in areas such as interviewing, research, film-making, and working with school children.

Some of these projects, like the Witness Project, are run each year and some, like the Philadelphia: Faith and Fear SURE project, are great one-off opportunities.

The Witness Project

“For the past three years, the Witness oral history project has given students the opportunity to discover Sheffield’s past. Focusing on World War II and the 1980s, participants record interviews with local residents, and then upload the audio to a web resource.

The website, which three student interns have just redesigned, will soon hold about sixty oral histories, ranging from conversations with women who worked in the steel industry during World War II to Conservative councillors who served in the heyday of the ‘People’s Republic of South Yorkshire.’ Historians of politics, work, family, music, and sport will find material in the archive, and both undergraduate and postgraduate students have begun to use Witness in their own research.

This year, Witness teamed up with a National Lottery-funded community heritage project in the nearby suburb of Walkley, and we’re hoping to continue the partnership - which has seen Witness participants explore the slum clearance programs of the 1960s and 1970s - over the next few months.”

Dr Andrew Heath, one of two academic co-ordinators for the project.

The new Witness website will be available next week. You can also follow them @SheffWitness - their new Twitter account.

Hands on History

Hands on History is a widening participation scheme run in conjunction with Museums Sheffield where students ambassadors take historical objects out into local schools to work with year 7 students to encourage them to engage with History and think about university-level study more generally.

“Hands on History is a great opportunity to do something a little different with skills acquired on the course. We took objects from Sheffield’s Western Park Museum into schools to run sessions with school pupils - I have enjoyed working with children and feel it has opened up more opportunities for my future. I will be helping present an exhibition on Soviet History for 6th Form history students in October for example.”

Hamish Rogers, BA History

Read what else Hamish has to say.

Parkside School review our students’ visit.

Faith and Fear in Philadelphia Project

As part of the Sheffield Undergraduate Research Experience scheme, each year students and academic staff can jointly apply to have individual research projects funded. This year one of our projects saw Dr Andrew Heath work with several undergraduate students and Payroll Union, a Sheffield-based band.

“I was lucky enough to be a successful applicant for an internship position on the ‘Fear and Faith in Philadelphia’ project which took place in the History department this year. It was a collaboration between a band, The Payroll Union, a filmmaker, Cathy Soreny, and an historian, Andrew Heath. It has been a great opportunity to explore the possibilities for creativity within the study of history. I have learnt a lot about the film-making process as an intern whose principal role was shadowing documentary film-maker Cathy Soreny, but I have also really broadened my understanding of what history can be if we allow ourselves to think about the topic more expansively.”

Nyasha Mangera, BA History

The Vice-Chancellor’s take on History and why it matters

To mark the graduation of our final year students recently, the Vice-Chancellor wrote a special blog on why history matters, to him (as a physicist!), for us as individuals, for society, and for the University.