

London Group of Historical Geographers Seminar Series: An Anniversary Note

by Felix Driver (2011)

The London Group of Historical Geographers was established thirty years ago, in September 1981, by historical geographers in the University Colleges and Polytechnics of the London region. The product of an initiative by Richard Dennis and David Green, the Group initially convened occasional seminars at the Institute of Historical Research in the University of London (as reported in *Area*, vol. 14, 1982, p.156). Since 1989, when Felix Driver and Gillian Rose assumed responsibility for the series, the Group has organised fortnightly seminars across three terms of the academic year. This was enabled by the active support of a significant number of University Departments and research organizations, including Royal Holloway, Queen Mary, Kings and UCL, all of the University of London, plus the Open University, Sussex University, the HGRG, and the Institute of Historical Research itself. The series is now one of the world's best-known and most active regular seminars devoted to historical geography.



Senate House, University of London, home of the Institute of Historical Research, where the London Group of Historical Geographers have met since 1981. During the Second World War, the Ministry of Information had offices here: Senate House is supposed to have provided the model for the Ministry of Truth in George Orwell's 1984.

Now in its twenty-first year as a regular fortnightly series at the Institute of Historical Research, the historical geography seminar provides an opportunity for geographers, historians and others to discuss and debate current research on a wide variety of subjects. Each term's programme is usually organized around a general theme: over the years since 1989, these have ranged from 'national identity', 'making war and 'trade' to 'dream spaces', 'beyond the visual' and 'natural histories'. One term's series was published by the HGRG, with support from the British Academy, under the title *Nature and Science: Essays in the History of Geographical Knowledge* (HGRG publication no. 28). On another memorable occasion, the Group arranged a screening of Patrick Keiller's film *London*, followed by a discussion with the Director (S.

Daniels, 'Paris envy', *History Workshop Journal* 40, 1995). In recent years, the programme has included seminar series convened by guest convenors. The current convenors are Felix Driver and Miles Ogborn.

Speakers at the seminars have included a large number of historical geographers from the UK and overseas, as well as numerous current or recent postgraduates presenting the fruits of their doctoral research. The seminar is consistently one of the best attended and the most lively of the regular seminars held at the Institute of Historical Research. Amongst the best-known speakers from beyond Geography since 1989 are Catherine Hall, Peter Hulme, Patrick Joyce, Bruno Latour, Lynda Nead, Patrick O'Brien, Benita Parry, Chris Pinney, Griselda Pollock, Roy Porter, Jane Rendell, Raphael Samuel, Simon Schaffer, Jim Secord, Nancy Stepan, Dorothy Thompson, and Colin Ward.

A complete list of seminars since 1989, including seminar themes, speakers' names and titles, is currently available online at:

<http://www.rhul.ac.uk/geography/events/lghg.aspx>

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