Welcome!

I am delighted to introduce this newsletter, my first since becoming WRoCAH Director in August. Having held posts in Leeds, Sheffield and York during my career, I know what a huge privilege it is to take on this role, and am looking forward to working over the next four years with colleagues and students from across the three universities.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the former Director, Prof. Julian Richards, for his hard work over the last six years in setting up and running WRoCAH and ensuring its successful operation in that time. He was supported throughout by the WRoCAH office team of Caryn Douglas and Clare Meadley, who continue their sterling work supported more recently by David Barrow and Sarah Bell. I would also like to thank Prof. Frank Finlay, Executive Dean for the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Cultures at Leeds, for his support for WRoCAH over this time, and I am looking forward to working with the incoming Dean Prof. Andrew Thorpe, who is joining Leeds from Exeter in January. Prof. Thorpe is a Sheffield graduate, and was Exeter’s lead on the successful application for the AHRC DTP of the South, West and Wales, so I am sure we will have much to learn from him about doctoral training.

In October we welcomed the new cohort of students and launched WRoCAH2. All the key elements of the first five years of WRoCAH doctoral funding and training have been retained, but we are now incorporating an internationalisation agenda into the training programme. To this end we are collaborating with Arts & Humanities colleagues in two continental universities: Aarhus University in Denmark, and Utrecht University in the Netherlands. You will be hearing more about these collaborations over the coming months, but if you would like to know more about our new partners, in the meantime, see their webpages at https://arts.au.dk/en/about-arts/the-faculty-of-arts/ and https://www.uu.nl/en/organisation/faculty-of-humanities.

Colloquium 1 for the new cohort will be taking place in Utrecht, and we will be focussing on inter-cultural research, public engagement and international collaborations. We are currently planning this event with the Dean of Humanities at Utrecht Prof. Ted Sanders, and looking forward to our students joining Utrecht research students for our three-day event in April. Learning from each other and sowing the seeds for future collaborations between WRoCAH and Utrecht will be the key aims of the colloquium. Meanwhile, colleagues from the Arts PhD Administration team from Aarhus, Anna Louise Dolan Plaskett and Steen Weisner, paid a visit to WRoCAH in September, as members of our Training & Engagement committee, and Partnership Advisory Board. Again, our aim is to share good practice and to learn from each other, as well as fostering future collaborations. Colloquium 1 for the 2020 WRoCAH students will take place in Aarhus.

Closer to home, and following the Welcome event for the new cohort, we held the fifth annual WRoCAH conference at the De Grey Rooms in York on 17th October. It was a hugely successful day, and the quality of papers was phenomenal. The conference organisers decided to add variety to the day by introducing a series of workshops to the programme, which provided opportunities for WRoCAH students to introduce aspects of their research to fellow students, whether that was designing early medieval coins, transcribing the code of Anne Lister, or discovering what human remains can reveal about the past. There was also a thesis SLAM, won by Taryn Bell and her battered old teddy Norris! Many congratulations to the conference organisers, Eleanor Green, Gabriel Jones, Milena Schwab-Graham, and Marta Donati, on such an imaginative and successful programme.

It has been a real pleasure meeting the WRoCAH students at this term’s cohort events and hearing about your research and career ambitions, and I am looking forward to working with you all over the coming years.

Professor Dawn Hadley
Director
WRoCAH Small Awards Series

This collection of blog posts shares the innovative and productive ways in which WRoCAH students have used the Small Awards scheme. You can follow up on any of the links below to see how Small Awards have helped with these students’ research projects and/or professional training. These are great examples of the diverse research that is being undertaken every day by WRoCAH’s fantastic students.

New posts will be added to this series throughout the autumn term 2019 and beyond.

Francesca Curtis
ART GALLERY RESEARCH TRIPS

“WRoCAH’s small awards dramatically shaped the ways in which I conducted research in my first year. Keeping up with the contemporary art world is not always an easy task, but the research trips that I have undergone have meant that my work so far has not been conceived in isolation. This would not have been possible without WRoCAH’s support, and I am hugely grateful for the opportunity to have seen so many wonderful exhibitions and events in multiple incredible cities.”

https://wrocah.ac.uk/wrocahsmallawardseries-francescacurtis/

Megan Henvey
MY LIFE IN SMALL AWARDS

“3 years, 12 conferences, 6 research institutions, 1 language course and a PhD (pending!) that couldn’t have been done without the 17 WRoCAH Small Awards that funded them! Overall, Small Awards have enabled me to learn new languages, attend workshops, visit archives, attend conferences to present my work, and fatefully, have put me in the right place at the right time to capitalise on further opportunities.”

https://wrocah.ac.uk/wrocah-small-award-series-meganhenvey/

Clare Danek
SILK SCREENS AND WOBBLY POTS

“When you see videos of people throwing pots on wheels, they somehow make it seem effortless, the clay slipping gracefully through their hands as an elegant vessel emerges from a sticky lump of mud. The reality, for a novice potter, is not so simple. Clay gets everywhere except where it’s supposed to be; the result is a set of small and slightly wonky pots, kindly funded through WRoCAH’s Small Award scheme.”

https://wrocah.ac.uk/wrocah-small-award-series-clare-danek/

Gabriel Jones
MUSICAL PERFORMANCE

“Earlier this year, I received two small awards from WRoCAH to take part in a project investigating the effect of facial gestures in performance of solo classical piano music, for both performers and audiences. These were unusual small award applications, highlighting the benefits of thinking outside the box and taking opportunities as they come, knowing that WRoCAH will be there to support you (provided you demonstrate the benefits for your research).”

https://wrocah.ac.uk/wrocah-small-award-series-gabriel-jones/
AHRC/WRoCAH Innovation Placements
This Autumn saw the conclusion of all six of the AHRC- and WRoCAH-funded Innovation Placements, which provided opportunities for post-doctoral collaborations with non-academic partners. Placements at the National Trust’s Hardwick Hall and the Royal Armouries both featured in two-part blog posts on the WRoCAH website this term. Read more about them below.

Lauren Butler
HARDWICK HALL
“‘Lauren, come through here! Have you seen this one?’ One of the veteran guides at Hardwick Hall leads me through the entrance hall and disappears behind a column. ‘Look!’ His torch casts a raking light over the surface of the stone. It picks out the shadow of a crudely-scratched name, ‘JERVAS WATS’. There is no date, but from the style of writing and the spelling of the name I guess that it’s 17th or early-18th century. It is another tantalising glimpse into the rich but hidden social history of an extraordinary property. Jervas was one in a long line of workers, tourists, staff and children who wrote their names on the walls of Hardwick Hall, taking their cue from the building’s first owner, Bess of Hardwick, who crowned the building with her own initials during its construction at the end of the 16th century.”

Part 1:
https://wrocah.ac.uk/innovation-placement-at-hardwick-hall-part-one-research-by-lauren-butler/
Part 2:

Alexander Shaw
ROYAL ARMOURIES
“Working at the Armouries has been a consistent pleasure and an enjoyable challenge. A year ago I hadn’t expected to be learning how to fire a Bren gun – but one of the advantages of working at an institution like the Royal Armouries is the opportunity for experimental, as well as theoretical, research. The team I worked with ensured things were never dull and always welcoming, and it is with sadness that I now leave them to finish off the war alone and without me… a bit like Britain in 1940. If you believe that particular war myth… However, like the Grand Alliance between Britain and the United States, our relationship will continue after the Innovation Placement is over. I am going to be writing a book about the British infantry section and its weapons, and I await with eager anticipation the opening of the exhibition which I have been proud to help create.”

Part 1:
https://wrocah.ac.uk/how-they-fought-hitler-by-dr-alexander-shaw/
Part 2:

The WRoCAH Annual Report 2018/19 is now available to view from the homepage of the WRoCAH website: https://wrocah.ac.uk/
By Gabriel Jones
On behalf of the WRoCAH Conference organising committee: Marta Donati, Milena Schwab-Graham and Eleanor Green.

On 17th October, the fifth annual WRoCAH conference was held at the De Grey Rooms in York. This was a special day for WRoCAH and for us as an organising committee, marking the end of more than six months preparation. This piece tells a little of our story.

After the 2018 conference at the University of York’s STEM Centre, a number of us volunteered to organise the conference for the following year. From initial emails and first meetings, the group established itself as Marta Donati, Eleanor Green and myself, Gabriel Jones. Sensing that we needed some extra support and social media expertise, I asked my friend Milena Schwab-Graham whether she’d be interested in joining the team. Thankfully, she agreed, and the committee was formed.

“Above all, we aimed to diversify delivery of content, allowing people to present their research in a variety of ways, whilst keeping our audience engaged.”

From the outset, we felt like a cohesive group, with each person bringing something unique to the table. We decided not to take official committee roles. However, over time, Eleanor became an acting chair, keeping us on-track and leading each meeting, Milena managed our social media promotion and Marta and I looked after the preparation of conference materials, including artwork and the conference booklet. These positions remained fluid throughout, contributing to the easy-going, productive camaraderie of the group.

Our first important decision was to include breakout workshop sessions and thesis SLAMs (dynamic, ten-minute PhD overview presentations) in a revamp of the traditional conference structure. Above all, we aimed to diversify delivery of content, allowing people to present their research in a variety of ways, whilst keeping our audience engaged. The workshops and SLAMs were a challenge to plan as neither had been done at a WRoCAH conference before, making the call for papers somewhat complicated. Initially we were a little nervous about what kind of response we’d get, but thankfully we received plenty of proposals (Milena’s social media promotion helped a lot). Finally, after much discussion, we were able to put together an exciting provisional program.

We were thrilled to be able to hold this year’s conference in the De Grey Rooms in York. Apart from its stunning building and stylish premises, the venue benefited from a central city location, making proceedings around the conference a lot more vibrant and exciting. As the day approached, we had a number of sessions liaising with the venue, and trying to envision how the day might look. We were particularly keen to find spaces for our breakout workshops that would accommodate groups of different sizes. Thankfully, the venue proved an ideal fit, with the added bonus of abundant golden pineapples. I wonder how many people spotted them?

“We were also delighted to welcome Andrew ‘Bone’ Jones, a retired archaeologist from the University of York, to be our keynote speaker on the day. We were all relieved to hear that Bone had agreed to speak, but couldn’t have anticipated how positive and inspiring a choice he would be. More on that later...
The evening before the event, Eleanor, Milena and I arrived at the venue to help with the setup and run through our plans for the day. This was our first encounter with the gigantic sixteen-foot screen we’d hired for presentations in the main hall. Having organised the rental and witnessed the extensive setup procedure, I was a little concerned that we’d overdone it, but it turned out to be the perfect size. The following morning, we arrived early, setting up our sign-in desk and going through last-minute preparations. Delegates and speakers soon began to arrive. It felt incredible to witness the conference coming together after so much hard work and preparation. Aside from my failure to alphabetise our sign-in sheets (sorry guys), things ran smoothly, and the day kicked off with a good level of attendance.

The SLAMs proved an ideal way to start the conference, with each speaker adopting a different approach to presentation, covering a huge range of subjects and methods. The ten-minute format kept people engaged and the competition element added an extra level of interest. As the chair for this first session, I was in charge of running our online ‘mentimeter’ poll for best SLAM, with the audience voting in real time to award the top prize to Taryn Bell, whose presentation, ‘My Friend Norris’, delivered above and beyond the brief. After a coffee break, we had our first workshops. These also ran smoothly and were very well-received. In the morning, I got to sit in on Lucy Moore’s fantastic coin-making session, witnessing the production of some brilliant contemporary stycas (with zero finger amputations). Later in the afternoon, I got to enjoy Paula Ponce’s skeletal remains workshop, getting hands on with some human skeletons (and mistaking a shoulder blade for a pelvis). As our most ambitious innovation, these workshops were a big success – well worth the logistical challenges they posed. Finally, to round off the student presentations, we had a ‘traditional’ paper session, showcasing some brilliant and innovative work, and highlighting the enormous diversity of WRoCAH-funded research.

This left an increasingly frazzled organising committee with just the keynote speech to present. We already had a good feeling about the presentation, but none of us could have anticipated Bone’s levels of commitment, generosity and humour. As a speaker, he could not have been more accommodating, giving me a PowerPoint with more than a hundred slides and asking me how long I wanted the presentation to be. Ten minutes? Half an hour? An hour? Amazed at his spontaneous flexibility, I asked for forty minutes, bringing us in exactly on time. Needless to say, he obliged in style, delivering an unforgettably informative, inspirational and hilarious keynote speech, covering his career as an archaeologist and experience with public outreach, that will live on in the memory for a long, long time.

With the day over, we debriefed and said our goodbyes, extremely proud of what we, WRoCAH and the cohort had achieved. It was a wonderful experience, well worth the time, effort and occasional stress (it seems you think so too – check out the word cloud of feedback). Speaking on behalf of the committee, we’ll miss our team meetings, and being part of this fantastic process. But for now, we’re looking forward to the 2020 conference, and seeing what direction the next committee will take.
Kate Harrison-Ledger

**BODY AS PERFORMING SUBJECT, BODY AS COMPOSITIONAL OBJECT: THE PIANIST’S EMBODIED PRACTICE IN THE CONTEXT OF COMPOSER-PERFORMER COLLABORATIONS**

I was attracted to WRoCAH and the PhD programme as I felt it was clear the College is totally committed to its students. It is important to WRoCAH that we are able to receive the most effective PhD experience, from the academic to the emotional. I appreciate this level of care and guidance when embarking on such a huge project.

I am amazed at how many opportunities are available within the WRoCAH programme, and the open-minded approach it has to all types of research and their specific needs. I really appreciate the structured progression and learning days dotted throughout the whole three years. This allows us to catch up with fellow cohort-members, discuss different approaches and gain insight into how other researchers conduct their work.

I love the collaboration aspect of the programme. My research is heavily reliant on collaboration and WRoCAH makes this happen easily. I have already met new people very relevant to my research situated at the other WRoCAH universities. The methods used to organise us into collaborative pairings are effective and fun. I am already feeling a supportive and open vibe within the cohort and look forward to more learning days ahead of us.

The funding opportunities are fantastic. I am considering applying for training courses that are less conventional, but allow me to push my research questions beyond their immediate limitations. This makes the development of my PhD very exciting and experimental but ultimately grounded in research. I have even already reaped the benefits of Large Award funding.

My research will investigate the relationship between sound production and accompanying bodily gesture through co-collaborated explorations of conventional technique and habitual movement at the piano. My approach to piano performance will consider traditional piano technique, new somatic applications and the Feldenkrais method. This will then be applied to a current interest within contemporary performance practice in the use of the body (and its potential failings).

I am looking forward to the aspects of the WRoCAH programme that encourage us to think differently and put us in situations we are not able to predict. Although I am happy with my current place and what I foresee for the next few months, I am also excited about the many parts of the PhD I do not know yet. The wider thinking that I am already practicing and the opportunities I am already taking are changing the way I move through the programme. The funding and support of WRoCAH is allowing this to happen.

Anna Hawthorne

**ANNE LISTER (1791 - 1840): LIFE WRITING AND INTERTEXTUALITY**

There is a video recording of my first birthday. Watching it infuses me with a strange sense of cohesion. In the video, I am given presents, and as I’m only one, and my siblings are three and five, most of these presents are taken out of my hands and pawed over by them instead. They are polite enough to give me the wrapping paper as something to consider, which I handle with mellow confusion. My mother manages to find one present that they are not interested in and hands me a picture book. She lays it on the floor in front of me and opens it to the front page — and this is the moment — I, only one, lean over onto my podgy elbows and look avidly at the page.

I look and look, moving my head from side to side, seemingly already aware of the motion of reading. My sustained attention is impressive.

When I watch it, I feel an eerie sense of affirmation. ‘Yes, you have always been attracted to books. Yes, look, even before you knew what one was, you were consumed. Even before you knew you were you, you were being you.’

A gift, to be sure.

Because making it in the storytelling business requires an unswerving sense of belonging. We all know that doubt is the archenemy to storytelling.
Wahida Shaffi
POLICY LESSONS FROM AN HISTORICAL ETHNOGRAPHY OF MUSLIM WOMEN’S ACTIVISM IN THE U.K.

My research has emerged directly out of my own peace- and community-related activism as well as my professional practice as a social worker, community researcher, programme developer, trainer and film producer.

After completing my MA in International Politics and Security Studies at the Department of Peace Studies in Bradford I travelled to numerous countries facilitating and exploring issues related to identity, belonging, conflict, peace, inclusion and faith. I recently completed a travel fellowship in Pakistan, Nepal and Bosnia exploring what faith-inspired peace-building means to community activists.

Having amassed over 20 years of experience - which has included co-producing policy-relevant research with diverse communities, editing a book published by Policy Press, co-organising the first interfaith women’s conference to be held at Lambeth Palace and leading several local and national programmes focusing on women and young people - my hope in securing the WRoCAH PhD studentship is not only to have an opportunity to reflect on my individual practice intellectually, but also to explore a historical ethnography of Muslim women’s activism in the UK more broadly.

My research will investigate different generations of Muslim women activists’ responses to state, society and community discourses from the 1970s to the 2010s. My hypothesis is that Muslim women’s activism today is still responding to the socio-psychological impact on young Muslims of growing up in a ‘post-9/11’ world. This longer view of the dynamics of activism will hopefully produce an impactful, community and policy-relevant analysis and provide important lessons for the future.

I look forward to tapping into some of the opportunities available to me at WRoCAH such as collaborating with other academics and students from the universities of York, Leeds, Sheffield and Utrecht. As well as leading external organisations from sectors including museums, galleries, archives and libraries; arts and heritage organisations; creative industries; media; and charities and the public sector. More importantly I hope to explore how research can be made accessible through more experimental and practice-based methods and why knowledge produced within community settings is often less valued compared to knowledge produced within academic institutions by academics.

I am not sure how I will be feeling a couple of years from now, but at the moment the prospect of conducting my research and taking up some of the exciting opportunities afforded to a WRoCAH PhD student is definitely an exciting one.
Forthcoming Training Events

Practice as Research Training Workshop
9-10 DECEMBER 2019 (@STAGE, UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS)
This two-day training covers the following areas: Situating Practice (as) Research; Disciplinarity, creative process and research methods; Knowledge generation vs knowledge sharing/presentation; Data and documentation; Collaboration and ethical considerations; Writing about/as practice.

Publicising Research through the Media
2 APRIL 2020 (HORIZON, LEEDS)
This one day workshop run by two ex-BBC journalists is intended for researchers and academics who want to get their research into the general media, or explain their work to non-academic audiences in a variety of contexts.

Preparing and Delivering Effective Podcasts
3 APRIL 2020 (HORIZON, LEEDS)
This interactive practical one day course focuses on communication, presentation and narrative skills that are crucial for creating effective podcasts (teaching, promoting one’s research/department/university etc) regardless of the technical capabilities that vary from university to university.

Fast Track Impact – Training by researchers for researchers
14 MAY 2020 (UNIVERSITY OF YORK)
This session will give you everything you need to generate real-world impacts from your PhD. You will leave with practical tools you can use immediately in your research, no matter what discipline you come from, or where you are in the research cycle. The training is based on the latest research evidence and takes a unique relational approach to deliver wide-reaching and lasting impacts.

WRoCAH Travels Map
After five years we have finally run out of room in the office to display all the brilliant postcards we receive from students. So to keep them in our minds, we’re very proud to present the WRoCAH Travels map.

Every point displays a postcard we have received from a WRoCAH PhD student conducting a research trip, attending a conference, undertaking training, or running an event of their own.

View the map at: https://wrocah.ac.uk/research/wrocah-travels/