

The British International History Group

(under the auspices of the British International Studies Association)

NEWSLETTER

Number 5 - June 1999

1999 Annual Conference

The Eleventh Annual Conference of the British International History Group will be held at University College, Worcester, between the 9th and 11th of September. The Programme and Booking Form will be with you very shortly. The numbers attending each conference continue to grow, and we look forward to welcoming newcomers and stalwart supporters alike.

The BIHG Thesis Prize

The winner of this year's Prize will be announced at the Conference. The quality of entries continues to be impressive, making the judges' choice very difficult. There were five entries this year - which equals the *total* number of entries received, for the same period, by BISA itself! Details of the submission procedure for next year's prize will be contained in the next Newsletter.

1999 BISA Conference

This year's BISA Conference will be held at the UMIST Conference Centre, Manchester, between the 20th and 22nd of December 1999. Unfortunately, the BIHG have been allocated only one panel this year, which can accommodate only three paper givers. Anyone wishing to offer a paper on the theme of '*International Alliances and Alignments, 1870-1970*' should contact Ted Johnson, at the Department of Public Policy, Faculty of Law and Social Sciences, UCE, Birmingham, B42 2SU, as soon as possible.

Sources of Information

The Editors are pleased to welcome a new series by Professor Peter Beck on 'Using the Archives' (see back page). One of the major hurdles for new (and often not so new) researchers is locating the necessary sources of information. We are in the process of requesting information on new releases of papers etc. from the PRO, Birmingham University, the Churchill Archive Centre, King's College etc. and will pass on all information via the Newsletter. Many institutions are, of course, taking advantage of the Internet to make information more freely and easily available. The Public Record Office, for instance, is gradually going to put all its catalogues on-line (<http://www.pro.gov.uk>), and some FRUS material can be down loaded from the State Department website (<http://www.state.gov>). If

any of you have information on forthcoming events, new releases of information, or new sources, please let us have it for inclusion in forthcoming editions of the Newsletter.

Research Assessment Exercise 2001: Guidance on Submissions - May 1999 Ref RAE 2/99

All Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have received this document from the Higher Education Funding Council of England (HEFCE) and its equivalents in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. It confirms that the assessment period for History is 1 January 1994 to 31 December 2000, while for Politics and International Studies it is 1 January 1996 to 31 December 2000. The census date for the exercise is 31 March 2001, and all information must be submitted by 30 April 2001. As in 1996, institutions are invited to list up to four items of research output for each member of staff whose research is to be taken into account and panels will be concerned 'only with assessing the quality of research presented'. At the same time, the councils emphasise that in making the decision which individuals they submit, HEIs should be aware that research funding is 'at present influenced by the volume of research activity (including staff) assessed in the RAE'. Moreover, they will be auditing the number of staff not selected as research active, including all units of assessment (UoAs) in which an HEI is academically active (teaching, research or both). Those not selected as research active should be 'assigned to the most appropriate UoA, whether or not the HEI is making a submission to that UoA'. Apparently, this information is required 'to assist panels in understanding the context within which research activity takes place'.

As in 1996, there will be a seven point rating scale, that is, 1-5* (1, 2, 3b, 3a, 4, 5, 5*) and ratings will be allocated on the variance between attainable levels of international excellence and national excellence so that, for example 5* is defined as 'quality that equates to attainable levels of international excellence in more than half of the research activity submitted and attainable levels of national excellence in the remainder', while, as another example, 3a is defined as 'quality that equates to attainable levels of national excellence in over two thirds of the research activity submitted, possibly showing evidence of international excellence'. The problem is one of drawing fine lines on the rating scale. A great deal hinges on what is 'international excellence' and the document is exceedingly vague on this extremely important issue: 'The international criterion adopted should equate to a level of excellence that it is reasonable to expect for the unit of assessment, even though there may be no current examples of such a level in the UK or elsewhere. In the absence of current examples, standards in cognate research areas where international comparisons do exist will need to be adopted.' This vagueness leads one to wonder how panels made their judgement of 'international excellence' in 1996.

It will be important this time round to ensure that panels are clear as to what constitutes international and national excellence and that this clarity is communicated to their various constituencies. In the case of the History panel, it would be extremely helpful if a briefing meeting could be arranged with all heads of history departments (probably in London or Birmingham) before the criteria are finalised which, according to the document, should be by the end of this year. This time around the councils are laying stress on the principle of transparency so that except where there is a need to preserve confidentiality (for example, in panels' discussions or when dealing with the names of nominees or with the strategic research plans of institutions) all decisions and decision-making processes 'will be explained openly'. The chairman of the History panel is the same as last time, that is, Professor Michael Prestwich of the University of Durham who is a medieval historian. The membership of the panel is to be announced shortly.

Glyn Stone
Secretary BIHG

Chief Executive of the AHRB visits Higher Education Institutions

The Chief Executive of the newly constituted AHRB (Arts and Humanities Research Board) is Professor Paul Langford, who is currently on secondment from Lincoln College, Oxford University. Professor Langford is visiting a number of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to inform and explain the operation, plans and priorities of the AHRB. He has confirmed that the Board, which has an annual budget of £50 million, is shortly to announce new schemes of support, including Research Centres which will enable substantial support to be targeted at collaborative teams of arts and humanities researchers to establish centres of international excellence within focused topic areas. This collaboration need not be confined to one but can span several HEIs. There is scope and opportunity here for collaboration between International Historians which may also alleviate the isolation felt by many colleagues. Professor Langford has also indicated that the AHRB is looking carefully at its current support of research students in Humanities, inherited from the British Academy, and is considering the possibility of introducing quota awards to institutions and project-based studentships. This could help to break down the dominance of the golden triangle (Oxford, Cambridge and London) in the allocation of student postgraduate awards and there is no reason why international history projects should not be eligible for such awards. All this demonstrates that, more than ever before, funds are available to enhance research in international history and that it is now up to all of us to take advantage of this windfall.

Glyn Stone

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Promotions

Dr David Stevenson has recently been promoted to a Chair in International History within the Department of International History at the London School of Economics.

Dr Martin Thomas has been promoted to Reader in History, within the School of History at the University of the West of England, Bristol.

Recent Publications by BIHG Members

Professor Martin Alexander (ed.) *Knowing Your Friends: Intelligence Inside Alliances and Coalitions from 1914 to the Cold War*, Frank Cass, 1998

Robert Boyce (ed.) *French Foreign and Defence Policy 1918-1940: The Decline and Fall of a Great Power*, Routledge, 1998

Professor Peter Beck, *Scoring for Britain: International Football and International Politics, 1900-1939*, Frank Cass, 1999

Professor Michael Dockrill, *British Establishment Perspectives on France, 1936-1940*, Macmillan, 1999

Dr Jill Edwards, *Anglo-American Relations and the Franco Question, 1945-1955*, Clarendon Press Oxford, 1999

Dr Carolyn Kitching, *Britain and the Problem of International Disarmament, 1919-1934*, Routledge, 1999

USING THE ARCHIVES - *The first in a new series compiled by Professor Peter Beck*, of Kingston University (Due to pressure of space, the following is a précis of Peter's piece: for the full item, please contact the editors.)

1. Modern Political Papers at the Bodleian Library, Oxford University

The initial release of the Harold Macmillan (Earl of Stockton) archive, comprising his diaries and constituency papers, must rate currently as one of the most popular archival sources. Certainly, Macmillan's diaries prove invaluable for international (and other) historians working on the post-1940 period, even if key episodes, like the 1956 Suez affair, suffer from gaps in coverage, allegedly because the pace of events rendered it impossible for Macmillan to find time to make diary entries. The Cabinet Office has also requested the continued closure of selected entries. Nevertheless, the diaries offer researchers an invaluable supplement to PRO and other archives, most notably in giving Macmillan's view of developments alongside illuminating brief sketches of major British and foreign political figures.

At present, the pre-1940 years are covered only sketchily by the available sources, and one has to look hard through the 1924-45 Stockton-on-Tees constituency papers for detailed material. Apparently, the Cabinet Office is responsible also for the delay in making available the rest of the archive. At present, the latter lacks any definite release date.

The Macmillan papers (MS Macmillan) are available in the Modern Political Papers Reading Room (room 132, New Library) of the Bodleian Library, which also houses several collections of value to the international historian studying the 19th and 20th centuries. Papers include those of prime ministers, ministers, backbenchers, officials, political parties, newspaper editors and journalists, and academics, among others. Their diversity renders it difficult either to provide a comprehensive listing of the archive, or to indicate the extent and likely utility of individual collections, but the following examples will, perhaps, give a flavour of collections available:

- ◆ Prime Ministers - Benjamin Disraeli, Herbert Asquith, Clement Attlee, Harold Macmillan
- ◆ Ministers - Viscount Simon, Viscount Crookshank, Viscount Monckton, Viscount Woolton, Lord George Brown
- ◆ Other politicians/backbenchers - H A L Fisher (Liberal MP, historian), Lord Ponsonby, Euan Wallace, Sir Neil Marten, Richard Stokes
- ◆ Diplomats - Sir Horace Rumbold, Baron Inverchapel, Lord Gore-Booth
- ◆ Journalists/editors - Geoffrey Dawson (editor of *The Times*), Arthur Mann (editor, *Yorkshire Post*), William Clark (Eden's press adviser)
- ◆ Political parties - Conservative Party Archives
- ◆ Academics/internationalists - Gilbert Murray, Sir Alfred Zimmern

Written permission is required to consult some collections (e.g. Lord George Brown), whilst certain collections have yet to be made available, most notably, the Lord Wilson, (Harold Wilson) papers, for which no release date is yet available. Pressure on space renders it essential to reserve a place in advance. Useful contact numbers are:

Modern Papers Room - Phone: 01865 277046 Fax: 01865 277182
Admissions Phone: 01865 277180 Fax: 01865 277105
E-mail addresses *modern.papers@bodley.ox.ac.uk*
admissions@bodley.ox.ac.uk

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