

“Coming Out” to Gay and Lesbian History’ Study Day

Saturday 8 February, 10.00-16.00, Building 85 Highfield Campus

10.00-10.10 Coffee

10.10-10.15 Welcome from Professor Mark Cornwall



10.15–11.00 Dr Julie Gammon: Sodomy in Eighteenth-Century Hampshire

From the gallows and pillories in provincial towns such as Winchester, Salisbury and Southampton to the court-martials that took place on board ships moored in Portsmouth dockyard, the visual and physical punishment of the ‘criminal sodomite’ was the subject of much public discussion in eighteenth-century Hampshire. Traditionally, early modern historians have focused on London records to explore the ‘gay subculture,’ but this talk will use newspaper and trial accounts to examine how a provincial case-study of same-sex acts can broaden our understanding of the lives of gay men outside of the capital.

11.00–11.45 Dr Michael Williams: “A Man Among Men”: Homosexuality, Ben-Hur (1925) and the Stardom of Ramón Novarro

This talk examines the Mexican-born Hollywood star Ramón Novarro and his role in M.G.M.’s spectacular silent production of ‘Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ’. Despite his public persona as a devout Catholic, Novarro was secretly gay, a fact that was artfully hidden in plain sight before his audience within the carefully coded pages of film fan-magazines. Fitting his role in an ancient epic famed for its queerness, one journalist described Novarro’s appeal as “a fascinating mixture of faith and paganism”. We will use film sources to place Novarro in the context of other gay screen stars of the 1920s, raising issues about sexuality and stardom that are still relevant today.

11.45–12.00 Coffee

12.00–12.45 Dr Joan Tumblety: Denis Rake: a Story of Homosexuality, Spies and the Resistance in World War II France

This talk focuses on the extraordinary life of an Anglo-Belgian homosexual agent in the Special Operations Executive, who survived to publish a colourful memoir of his wartime experiences in 1968. How far does his personal story challenge our understanding of homophobia and the French Resistance, in the 1940s and beyond?

12.45–13.45 Lunch

13.45–14.30 Dr Graham Baxendale: In Defence of Labouchère – Homosexuality in British Law after 1885

For introducing the crime of gross indecency into British law, Henry Labouchère has often been portrayed as the greatest villain in British homosexual history. This talk, based on the latest research, will explore this reputation and show that none of the accusations against Labouchère can actually be supported by historical records.

14.30–14.45 Tea/coffee

14.45–15.30 Professor Dan Healey, Oxford University: From Stalin to Sochi: The Historical Roots of Homophobia in Contemporary Russia

What is behind the recent political homophobia in Putin's Russia? What is the background that led to Russia's new law against 'propaganda for homosexuality'? Beginning with a look at Stalin's anti-gay laws and continuing up to the prospect of international LGBT protests at the Sochi Winter Olympics (7-23 February 2014), this illustrated talk by the leading British expert explores the history of homophobia in Russia today.

15.30–16.00 Questions & Discussions