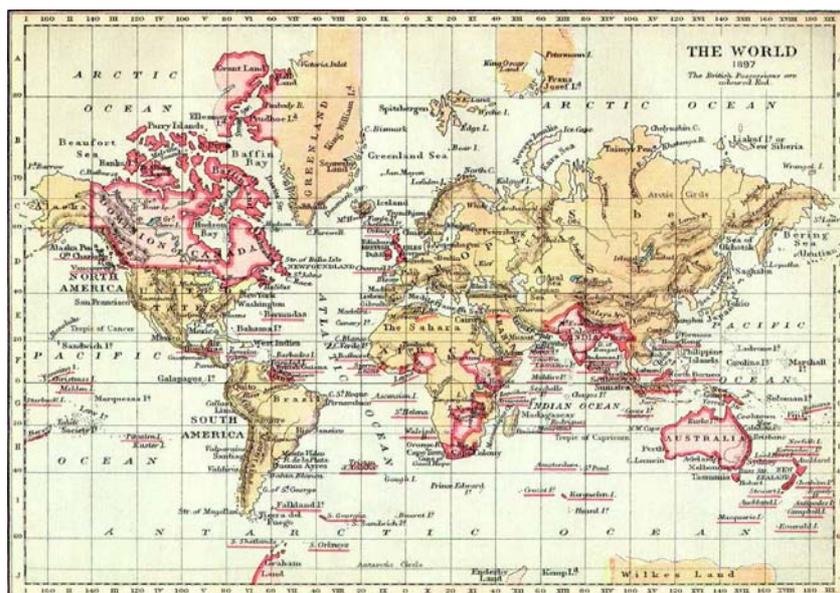


# IMPERIAL BENEVOLENCE: VOLUNTARY ACTION AND THE BRITISH EMPIRE



Report on a workshop for new researchers

University College London, 4 June 2010

The Voluntary Action History Society was established in 1991 to advance the historical understanding of charitable organisations amongst both academics and those working in the sector. Today its main activities are its seminar series held at the Institute of Historical Research in London and a biannual conference.

In order to build upon an impressive number of postgraduate participants at the 2008 VAHS conference, a new researchers sub-committee was established in late 2008.

Members to date have included:

Dr. Elma Brenner, University of Cambridge  
Dr. Georgina Brewis, University of East London  
George Campbell Gosling, Oxford Brookes University  
Elizabeth Harvey, UCL  
Lucy Hewitt, University of Edinburgh  
Christopher Moores, University of Birmingham  
Stephen Soanes, University of Warwick  
Lynsey Cullen, Oxford Brookes University

The core activity of this group is a series of workshops. At these workshops postgraduate and early career researchers give papers, not only presenting research findings, but raising problems and issues they have come across in their work. These are then the basis of a roundtable discussion led by senior scholars in their field.

This format was trialled in February 2009, with a workshop on the theme of "Medicine and Charity in History". On the basis of this successful event, an application was submitted to the Economic History Society for a grant of £1,830 to fund a series of workshops over the 2009-10 academic year. "Imperial Benevolence" was the third workshop of this new series.

**Some of the senior academics involved in this workshop:**

- Professor Alan Lester  
*University of Sussex*

- Dr. Zoe Laidlaw  
*Royal Holloway University*

- Dr. Rebecca Gill  
*Huddersfield University*

## Programme

Room G.09 - 25 Gordon Square (History Department), UCL

- 9.30 - 10.00 Welcome: tea and coffee
- 10.00 - 10.30 Introduction: Professor Alan Lester and Dr. Zoë Laidlaw
- 10.30 - 11.30 Panel session 1: International Humanitarianism
- Chair: Dr. Rebecca Gill*
- Emily Baughan** - “‘But While There are Petticoats to be Made, One Can Go On’”; Imperial Benevolence, International Humanitarianism and the Boer War Concentration Camps, 1989-1902’.
- Richard Huzzey** - ‘National Interest and British Abolitionist Mobilization’.
- 11.30 - 11.45 Break
- 11.45 - 1.15 Panel session 2: Missionaries and Imperial Benevolence
- Chair: Emily Manktelow*
- Chris Vernon** - “‘He could wish they were better Christians’” John Wesley, Benjamin Ingham and missionary work in early Georgia’.
- Esmé Cleall** - ‘Performing Imperial Benevolence: practices of benevolence in the c19th missionary movement’.
- Hilary Ingram** - ‘A Complicated Call: Missionary Motivation and Professional Ambition among Early Graduates of the London School of Medicine for Women’.
- 1.15 - 2.00 Lunch
- 2.00 - 3.30 Panel session 3: The Twentieth Century and Decolonisation: the end of imperial benevolence?
- Chair: Liz Harvey*
- Kate Law** - ‘Furthering the “colonial project”? White Rhodesian Women and Cultures of Philanthropy’.
- Anna Bocking-Welch** - ‘Implicit and explicit imperial benevolence: The Women’s Institute at the end of empire’.
- Charlotte Riley** - ‘Selfish or Selfless?: the British Left and Colonial Development, 1929-1951’.
- 3.30 - 3.45 Break: tea and coffee
- 3.45 - 5.15 Roundtable Discussion: Questions of Imperial Benevolence

For the first time a booklet was circulated among the participants with information about the new researchers committee and what we do. Although at previous workshops committee members have given brief talks publicising future events, it was useful to provide this information in a booklet which participants could then take away.

Following the workshop, participants were asked to give feedback on the day. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive with participants praising the encouraging and friendly nature of the workshop. In addition, many participants mentioned the usefulness of the roundtable discussion which was directed by Professor Alan Lester and Dr. Zoe Laidlaw.

Some participants commented upon the broad range of papers during the day, which enabled them to think about themes and issues which they had not necessarily considered before. The theme for the workshop "imperial benevolence" was designed to be deliberately broad and papers were presented on various topics from missionary activities to anti-slavery campaigns and philanthropic societies in the British empire. The papers spanned many different imperial sites from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries. It has been noted from previous workshops that broader themes have attracted a greater number of speakers.

As this was the fourth workshop organised by the committee, there were very few detailed suggestions for improvement. One participant raised the idea of circulating abstracts among the participants prior to the workshop which would be a useful addition to future workshops. Another participant suggested that future workshops begin later in the morning so that overnight accommodation near the workshop venue would not be required.

#### **Future workshops planned for 2010:**

"Charity and the City: Ancient, Medieval and Modern" - Cambridge University, 23 September 2010 organised by Dr. Elma Brenner.

We have recently been awarded a grant of £1,920 from the Economic History Society for a series of workshops for the academic year 2010-11.