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HISTORY IN THE LIMELIGHT: PERFORMING THE PAST, c.1850 TO THE PRESENT

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ABSTRACTS

PLENARY SESSION ABSTRACTS (IN ORDER OF PRESENTATION)

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The redress of the past: historical pageants in Britain 1905-2016

Early twentieth-century Britain succumbed to what people called 'pageant fever'. Inspired by Louis Napoleon Parker's influential pageant at Sherborne, Dorset, in 1905, communities up and down the country staged outdoor historical re-enactments before audiences that could number in the thousands. Large casts performed chronological selections of scenes, real and mythical, authentic and fabricated, from the ancient, medieval and early modern pasts of towns, cities and villages. Until at least the late 1950s, pageants remained very popular, and indeed continued as a discernible element of British culture into the twenty-first century (Danny Boyle's much-lauded opening ceremony for the London 2012 Olympics was a historical pageant of sorts). This lecture describes the origins and development of historical pageantry, emphasizing the grand scale and wide spread of these community dramas, and exploring their social and cultural significance. It also highlights the importance of the sense of local pride and identity that was presented in historical pageants, and the success that they had in promoting local community consciousness and engagement with the past.

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Medes, Persians, and Pahlavis: reflections on the 1971 Persepolis pageant

In October 1971 the Shah of Iran staged a set of events billed as the commemoration of "2500 years of the Iranian monarchy". It included a pageant held at the site known as Persepolis, the remains of a series of palace buildings associated with the Achaemenid dynasty, which ruled over an empire stretching from Egypt and Anatolia across western and central Asia to northern India between the 540s and the 330s BCE. This lecture will examine the pageant from three perspectives. Firstly, it will examine the 'top-down'/official character of the event, which perhaps contrasts with the local or communal character of many of the activities discussed elsewhere in this conference, looking at it as propaganda or political management by the ruling regime. Secondly, it will complicate this analysis by considering how the pageant sat within a larger official agenda. Thirdly, it will situate the pageant within official and non-official Iranian engagements with the 'Achaemenid' past, and in particular with various contested discourses of cultural (?national) identity.

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The 1924 Pageant of Empire: Modernity, spectacle and re-imagining space

Pageants are often thought of as archaic, backward-looking and the antithesis of modernity. Scholars have also tended to overlook their identity as forms of visual culture and spectacle. In this paper I challenge these views by focusing on the distinctive pageants of Frank Lascelles, 'the man who staged the Empire'. I examine Lascelles' Pageant of Empire, held at the old Wembley or Empire Stadium in 1924 as part of a programme of music festivals and sporting events accompanying the British Empire Exhibition. I focus on the ways in which

Lascelles and his collaborators, notably the artist-craftsman Frank Brangwyn, transformed the architecture and space of Wembley Stadium. Through ambitious props and scenery that incorporated the 100,000 strong audience into the spectacle of the pageant, Lascelles and Brangwyn turned the stadium into an amphitheatre, staging tableaux of the British Empire. The enormous cast of over 15,000 volunteer 'pageanteers', including visitors from the Dominions and Colonies and an assortment of exotic animals, were drilled in a semblance of spontaneity into massed formations, making striking use of colour to abstract effect, to music by Edward Elgar and others rather than spoken words. Both pageanteers and audience were active participants in the spectacle of the pageant, re-imagining the stadium through different times and places. Focusing on the material and visual culture of the Pageant of Empire, I argue that the polymaths Lascelles and Brangwyn transformed Wembley Stadium into a new 'modern' form of spectacle that went beyond theatre and drama, drawing on their experience and innovation in architecture, interiors, decorative arts, craft and design.

PARALLEL SESSION PAPERS
(IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER OF FIRST-NAMED PRESENTER)

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New Pageants for a New Scotland? John McGrath's *Border Warfare* (1989) and *John Brown's Body* (1990)

In March 1989, the playwright John McGrath teamed up with Wildcat Stage Productions to put on *Border Warfare*, a large-scale piece of what is termed 'promenade' or 'epic' theatre. Over four hours long, it explored Anglo-Scottish relations from the time of the Picts right up until the present day and took place in the Old Transport Museum, now the Tramway in Glasgow. The following year, *John Brown's Body*, a history of the urban Scottish working-classes from the industrial revolution to the present time, was performed in the same space. Although neither could be described as historical pageants in the Parkerian sense, they can, nonetheless, contribute to our understanding of the performance of the past in historical pageants as well as in contemporary theatre. More importantly, they can give us insights into the potential cultural and social significance of the dramatic presentation of history. This paper will explore *Border Warfare* and, to a lesser extent, *John Brown's Body*, and reflect on what they tell us about personal, local and national identities, public interest in and engagement with the past, and the role of historical performance in the growing support for devolution in late-twentieth century Scotland.

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Historical accuracy in historical spectacles: the case of Roman equipment

In my paper I will discuss a problem of historical accuracy in British and continental historical spectacles in the period between 1900s and 1930s.

What made a reenactor a Roman gladiator or legionary? A helmet, shield, net, sword, trident or a style of fighting? Answer to this question seems to be uneasy if one looks at postcards depicting numerous efforts to stage the Roman period. Sometimes we can see groups of people who have non-ancient costumes and only a caption informs us that they are "gladiators" or "Romans". What was the source of knowledge about the equipment to be reconstructed? Did historical accuracy in the reconstruction of ancient dress and armor have any significance for the contemporary people? Did the reenactors realize historical accuracy of their reconstructions (like nowadays) between themselves? How practical factors (financial, distance to the audience, prop character and quality of reconstructed items) could influence their approach towards "authenticity" in historical performance?

The presentation will be illustrated by vintage postcards from the British pageants and the continental historical spectacles.

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Re-inhabiting the “Empty Spaces” of the Past: Soundscapes, audio guides, and recreating England’s Civil War.

Recalling her visit to Worcester’s *The Commandery* museum in 2015 one Tripadvisor reviewer was less than impressed. The Museum’s reliance on audio-guides to evoke the historic past ‘tended not to describe each room’ she wrote ‘but attempted reconstructions (think carriage sounds etc) to help you imagine what it was like. Except it didn’t help or tell us very much’. Other visitors, however, revelled in the sparsely-itemed space, feeling liberated by multiple layers of audio-guidance that offered a spectrum of time periods through which to interpret the building and its historical uses.

The use of audio-guides in historic properties, at living history events, and, in an increasingly digital age, delivered through mobile phones and websites to visitors who may be “off-site”, has been widespread in recent years, yet has attracted very little scholarship. The Commandery, the headquarters of the Royalist army during the 1651 Civil War Battle of Worcester, has sought to evoke the chaos and carnage of the battle through the recreation of a series of historic soundscapes. Nor is it the only museum or site associated with the conflict that attempts to recreate the aural landscape of the past – from museums to battlefields curators and performers have created both dramatic and “authentic” soundscapes.

This paper will study the techniques, content, and reception of audio-guides used to re-inhabit the spaces of the Civil War past with live voices, music, and sounds of battle.

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A national church tells its story: The English Church Pageant of 1909

This paper explores the way in which the large-scale historical pageant staged in London in 1909 sought to represent the Church of England to the public at a key juncture in the modern history of the institution. Drawing on surviving artefacts, images and a range of accounts of the pageant, it locates the event within a broader context of contested representations of Anglicanism in England and Wales at a point when church parties and wider political movements posed significant challenges to attempts to present a consensual understanding. The very rich records we have relating to the pageant make the event an ideal lens through which to observe these tensions playing out, made all the more interesting because of the involvement of some important cultural players at the time including Percy Dearmer and G. K. Chesterton, as well as a considerable number of lay and clerical participants. The approach taken to key events in national church history was in many ways unexpected and striking – for example the decision that Thomas a Beckett’s murderers should be portrayed by serving army officers. As interesting as what was included is what was left out. The pageant also stoked both protests and further explorations of church history which appeared in related publications. The paper concludes by presenting the pageant as emblematic of some key rhetorical strategies of church defence which have hitherto not received sufficient attention.

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Fact or fiction? Victorian novels and the past

When I was conducting my doctoral research into illiteracy in 19th century England, I made extensive use of Victorian novels (by Dickens, Gaskell, Trollope and Hardy) to uncover values and attitudes that seemed to elude more traditional documentary sources. I scrupulously avoided any later interpretations as 'inauthentic', believing that any work of art is a source only for the period **in** which it was created, not **about** which it was created. On this basis the many modern dramatizations – on stage, film or TV - of Victorian novels had to be excluded from my research.

However, modern interpretations of the past can give us significant information on the relationship between past events and modern mindsets. Indeed, it can be argued that fiction is how we try to make sense of the past.

In this paper I shall consider the power of fiction, and questions of interpretation and authenticity that arise. I shall compare three different ways of representing the Victorian experience, namely, novels written in the Victorian age; later interpretations of Victorian novels using other art forms; and modern novels with a Victorian setting. Their narratives may all be 'fictions' but, as the novelist and playwright Michael Frayn suggests, 'in our fictions we can show the hidden causes and results of external events – the thoughts, feelings and intentions that lie forever concealed from the reporter and the historian' (Frayn, 2012).

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Historical dramatization and 'democratic' history on BBC radio in the 1930s

On the 30 November 1934 the *Radio Times* hailed the arrival of a new kind of history on the wireless: 'Here in the realism of the Court-room, the echo of hoofs in Whitehall, the stamp of feet in the corridors, was drama all the more real and tense because it was based on facts and not conceived in fiction'. The programme described was 'The King's Tryall', 'an exact and most impartial presentation' of the High Court's trying and judgment of Charles I in 1649. This landmark episode marked the beginning of a series of 'Famous Trails', similarly billed, which effectively blended history and drama on British radio for the first time. Subsequent series during the mid 1930s, for both adult and school audiences, developed the trope. They utilized technological innovations in the use of pre-recorded sound effects amidst a wider atmosphere of avant-garde experimentation amongst producers and scriptwriters, considered to be British radio's moment of 'high modernism'. This paper will explore historical dramatization in the context of the BBC's broader project of presenting a 'democratic' form of history to its un-stratified audience before the Second World War. These programmes relied on making an explicit connection between historical episodes and the emotional and visceral responses of the listener as a human being, rather than as a national subject or local citizen. This paper will ultimately suggest that, even in the portrayal of elite lives or high political history, the dramatic form was being explicitly used to connect historical episodes with ordinary, everyday experience.

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Photographs, pageants and the 'as if' of history

In 1911 the librarian of York noted with satisfaction in the *Library Association Record* that his library had acquired a complete set of photographs of the 1909 York pageant 'embracing practically the whole history of the city from time prior to the Roman occupation'. This paper explores the role of photographs in translating historical pageants into popular and local history, through a process whereby such photographs came to stand for the memory and efficacy of the pageant form, tensioned between evidence and fantasy. Pageants were photographed extensively, and photographs, as vehicles of the pageant ethos, were widely disseminated as photographic prints, postcards, in souvenir booklets, the press and associated publications. Operating at the intersection of the practices of pageants, historical imagination and the nature of, and social expectations of, photography, I argue that photographs of pageants were not merely records of the pageant but, through the temporal complexity and reality effect of photographs, created a subjunctive 'as if' which worked both as historical evidence and spaces of historical imagination, both serious and ludic. Drawing largely on photographs made of the Warwick and Sherborne pageants I shall argue that photography was thus integral to the articulation of the pageant experience, reifying and concretising the 'as if' of historical imagination as they functioned both as photographs of the pageants, and photographs of the past. This paper is part of a larger project on photography and the emergence of public histories 1850-1960.

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'There is Power in a Union'? Gender, Sexuality, Class and Industrial Relations History in *Made in Dagenham* and *Pride*

Made in Dagenham (2010) and *Pride* (2014) dramatised the 1968 Ford sewing machinists' strike for women's equal pay, and the activities of the Lesbian and Gays Support the Miners group during the British miners' strike of the mid-1980s respectively. This paper compares these two films' depictions of industrial relations history, contextualising their readings of the past within the predominant political trends of contemporary Britain. It argues that while both films are firmly behind the strikers portrayed in the film, they are concerned less with issues of class than of gender and sexuality. Feel-good comedy dramas with conventional approaches to the social conflicts they represent, both *Made in Dagenham* and *Pride* marginalise the collapse of the post-war consensus and the withering of the trade union movement in favour of optimistic narratives of female and gay liberation. Moreover, their treatment of the past is celebratory and ironic rather than ideological, littered with easily recognisable cultural reference points including period fashion and pop music, with the adaptation of both for stage musicals further illustrative of how cultural industries commodify history in ways that frequently omit its more troubling elements.

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Shepherds' Plays and Silhouettes: Charles Marson in Hambridge

Christian Socialist Charles Marson was vicar of Hambridge, Somerset from 1895-1914. It was in Marson's garden that Cecil Sharp, the noted folksong collector, heard his first song. Folksongs, seen as national heritage expressive of the values of the common people, were quickly adopted by Marson for socialist ends. They were to educate the middle classes, thus generating support for trade unions through the resulting understanding of the culture of the workers. Yet Marson ultimately found folksong unsatisfactory. Eventually the people of Hambridge themselves became the focus, beginning with the Shepherds' Plays Marson staged from 1896. These plays were acted by the villagers in their own words, expressing their views of their day-to-day lives and placing the story of the nativity in a contemporary setting. This trend culminated in *Village Silhouettes* (1914). Illustrated with silhouettes he cut himself, the book bore 'testimony to [...] the greatness, the sweetness, the unexpectedness and the cleverness of God's common people.'¹

This paper will explore Marson's conception of the priest as the interpreter of his parish, charting his presentations of folksong as cultural heritage, his merging of tradition and contemporary reality in the Shepherds' Plays, and his final attempt to present the villagers themselves in *Village Silhouettes*. It will place Marson's efforts within the context of his Christian Socialism, and address questions regarding the ownership, interpretation, authenticity and preservation of cultural heritage both in relation to the folk revival and to this later work developed in response to Marson's experience with such difficulties in the revival.

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The urban-booster of Ayrshire: Matthew Anderson and civic publicity in Depression Britain

Towards the end of the 1920s there was a great outburst of British historical pageantry in the North and Midlands. Both new and old pageant-masters adapted to the needs of depressed places – both economically and socially – to mould a spectacular form of pageantry that was particularly suited to modern urban-industrial culture. Big city pageants were more likely to: use spectacular special effects; popularise or simplify historical narratives; portray more recent or industrial events; and explicitly use pageantry as a conscious form of 'urban boosterism'. My paper traces this pageantry shift back to the emergence more broadly of a civic publicity movement in the post-WWI period, and the British Empire Exhibition in particular, and explores urban pageants particularly through the life and work of Matthew Anderson – a pageant-master, journalist, and so-called 'publicity expert' from Ayrshire.

¹ C.L. Marson, *Village Silhouettes*, 2nd edtn., (London, 1916), p. iv.

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Religion, Education and Folk Culture in the Chittlehampton Pageant (1936)

The 1936 Chittlehampton Pageant was a joint enterprise between several groups, but mainly between the vicar of Chittlehampton, E.C. Mortimer and the Director of the University College of the South-West's Rural Extension Scheme, F.G. Thomas. The pageant, which told of the gruesome martyrdom of St. Hieritha, was underpinned by various conceptions of folk culture prevalent during the inter-war period. However, in contrast to most work on the inter-war folk revival, the Chittlehampton pageant shows that these conceptions overlapped and competed with one another. In fact, the pageant ultimately had to be separated into three distinct parts staged by three separate groups. Nonetheless, the 'folk history' presented in the pageant drew on a surprising array of sources: the scene put on by the church was full of pagan motifs, the ostensibly medieval English morality play was actually written by a twentieth-century German playwright. The Chittlehampton Pageant suggests that ideas of folk culture in the inter-war period were far more complex, more conflicting, and far less secular than was often presumed by champions such as A.L. Lloyd or F.R. Leavis, and that the interwar rural village community continued to exhibit a blurring of roles and identities.

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'A Chorus of Greek Poignancy': Memory, Popular History, and the South Wales Miners' Pageants of 1939

1939 marked the 100th anniversary of the Newport Chartist March, one of the seminal moments in the development of the labour movement in South Wales. It was commemorated by events organised both by the Newport Chartist Commemoration Committee and by the South Wales Miners' Federation. The most high profile of these the Pageant of South Wales held on May Day 1939 at Abertillery, Pontypool, Ystradgynlais, and in the Amman Valley. In a manner akin to the labour histories of the 1970s, the history pageants focused directly on what they saw as lived experience and the struggles for democracy and civil rights for working people – a choice amplified by the fact many of those attending or taking part had been on (or witnessed) hunger marches just a few years before. Audiences were given a programme which declared that out of the ideals of the Chartists sprang the fight for better conditions and a happier life, and that it was the SWMF who were the guardians of that struggle in their time. Drawing on the SWMF archives in Swansea, the paper argues that although the 1939 pageants deliberately echoed the Pageant of Wales thirty years earlier, rather than emphasise national identity, these were about the solidarities of class and how class consciousness was made (and remade) by using history and pageantry to focus on the realities of contemporary life.

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Restoration Theatre in the Cyber Playhouse: Play-Writing the 17th Century in *Age of Intrigue*

Historical role-playing games in the Internet are opportunities for virtual communities to convene and collectively renegotiate the past through performance. As opposed to live reenactments of historical events, which usually reflect local and national concerns, virtual communities are often of transnational composition and their playful engagement with history needs to be understood in these terms.

Age of Intrigue (www.ageofintrigue.com) is an alternative history role-playing game active since 2006 and set in London of the mid-1670s, revolving around Charles II's court. Members of the game develop and play fictional characters in the historical framework by writing their personal point of view of events and interacting with other characters, whether fictional or historical. The game can be seen (as others in its genre) as a collaborative, unfolding form of playwriting – in which *writing* is in itself a mode of *playing*.

Due to the close ties between stage and court during the Restoration, theatre holds an unusually central place in the plots played in *Age of Intrigue*, thus enabling the players moments of "meta-play" in which their own theatricality and performativity are echoed. In fact, theatricality, performativity, and playfulness are all crucial for the understanding of the Restoration's reverberations in a globalized twenty-first century. The proposed paper will argue this by focusing on several scenes (or threads) from the game in order to examine it as a ludic site in which Baroque and cyberspace notions of theatrical performativity coalesce and intertwine.

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'Show the World All the Love in Your Heart': Remembering Carole King's *Beautiful* Feminist History

Like many feminists before and after, singer-songwriter Carole King made the personal PUBLIC, feminism's crucial strategy. The repercussions of the album *Tapestry* (1971), and King's example, played a major role in the mainstreaming of feminism through the 1970s. The biographical jukebox musical, *Beautiful* (Broadway 2014; West End 2015), this paper will suggest, may have the potential to function similarly in musical theatre. *Tapestry*, like *Beautiful*, marketed women's possibilities without offending other audiences. The musical offers a trip down memory lane for spectators who lived through her music, but also a documentary of King's own feminist history. The presentation of an *actual* American woman, thriving and succeeding, urging her audience to think positively and define themselves from the inside out, is unprecedented on the musical theatre stage. The musical itself, through Derek McLane's scenic design revealing the structure of the Brill Building, reinforces its functionality as a container of history. The set literally contains multiple labouring songwriters and performers, including a range of women; the musical thus announces itself as a repository of their history. This paper reads *Beautiful* as a musical theatre contribution to feminist historiography, one that functions as more than an indulgence in nostalgia. Representing not only King's professional life, the musical charts the emergence of a liberated American woman, placing her self-esteem, body image, marriage, motherhood and independence centre stage in a way still rarely seen on the musical theatre stage.

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Pantomime's political purpose: Scottish pantomime and its national histories

This paper explores how Scottish and British history has been reimagined in one distinctive part of Scottish popular culture. Scottish pantomime was active in promoting a dominant unionist ideology in nineteenth-century Scotland and, then, equally significant in developing a different, distinctive and emergent Scottish cultural nationalism in the early twentieth century.

Pantomimes in Edinburgh and Glasgow in the 1860s told stories that were foundation myths of Scottish cities, deployed as unionist allegories that depicted Scottish identity as inextricably linked to the emergence of modern British society. Referring to scripts, descriptions and visual iconography, notably a key set of photographic portraits in the National Library of Scotland, the paper shows how mid-nineteenth century pantomime in Scotland was self-consciously unionist in text, look and tone. For example, in a medieval fantasy, *Harlequin, St George and the Dragon* (1869-70), national champions representing England, Scotland and Ireland featured in a chivalric tournament celebrating the unionist basis of British society.

In contrast, in the 1930s and 1940s pantomimes in Glasgow variety theatres drew on the appeal of Burns and Scott's national drama to harness the popularity of culturally nationalist elements. By framing exotic pantomime storylines of travel to distant lands, with Scots songs, music, patter and the increasingly standard Highland glen scene, the vernacular tropes of the Scottish music hall, these productions offered a robust celebration of modern Scottish cultural nationalism.

Referencing these two different moments in Scottish theatre history, the paper presents pantomime as an underestimated agent of the performance of history and an unexpected location of politicised national histories.

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'Though you travel far away/Killing people night and day': Education, Radicalisation and *Maid Marian and Her Merry Men*

Maid Marian and Her Merry Men (1989-1994) is a significant piece of contemporary historical dramatization. Written and starring Tony Robinson, and shown on CBBC, it laid groundwork for the 'Horrible Histories' series (1993). In its time it also reflected, and reinforced, a climate of political radicalism.

Socially, this is seen in the series' communist plots, always centred on the gang's exploits in robbing the rich King John and giving to the poor. The series also flips the gender script. Robin of Kensington is affectionately portrayed as a foppish royal underpants-tailor, and the gang is led instead by the dynamic Marian. They are, finally, depicted as scruffy woodland-dwellers, anticipating the era of Swampy and the Newbury Bypass.

Meanwhile, the series represents a 1990s-specific form of political education. As a young Kellie Bright (now *EastEnders*) says apropos of Richard I's return in the episode 'The Whitish Knight', 'they're all the same, these royals'. John, Robinson's Sheriff and soldiers Gary and Graeme stand for the whole of the system: ridiculous Windsors as well as sleazy Tories.

Finally, *Maid Marian* challenges the current anti-'radicalisation' discourse within education. Responding to terrorism threats, this discourse steers children towards a celebration of pseudo-historical national 'values' that further alienates minorities. As

Kundnani (2014) suggests, though, to combat radicalism we may need a radicalised education: one that addresses and creates, as *Maid Marian* does, politically-literate 'friendly critics' of our legitimisation narratives.

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Painting - performance - photography: re-enacting history in Russia and beyond

This paper will look at how history is performed in contemporary photography, concentrating on a specific genre: re-enactment of historical painting with the present-day sitters and unprofessional actors. I will compare different modes of engaging with the past in Russian and Western European staged photography.

Whereas Erwin Olaf in the projects like *The Relief of Leiden* populates history paintings with present-day sitters to represent large communities for museum viewers and others use irony to explore collective historical fantasies, Russian photographers remediate this genre mostly in the private or family contexts. In the later case pictorial formulae from the 19th century (or earlier) are used to return - with no irony intended - to the idea of 'Russia that we have lost'. This kind of resentment can be also seen in a variety of other history performances presented by groups, from balls re-enactments to live action role plays dedicated to Russian and Soviet history, sometimes 'improved'. In fact, such nostalgic LARPs have formed backgrounds of some participants in the recent Eastern Ukrainian conflict. Family 'history photography' shows most vividly the post-Soviet split between private and public spheres and a desperate search for the ideas and ideals that can be shared by bigger communities.

However, in spite of the differences, the blurring of the boundary between doc and art, between fiction, history and nostalgic group fantasies about the past is the shared global contemporary context. And this is one of the reasons why photography projects go beyond still image to performance and turn to history painting on the unprecedented scale.

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'I was a card and a leaf': memories and meanings in New Mill's pageants

The south Pennine Yorkshire village of New Mill held three pageants during the 1930s. Organised over a six year period, and involving large casts, dancers, hired and home-made costumes, plus a specially dug orchestra pit and wooden stage, they were ambitiously conceived events. Surviving silent film footage of the later two events has prompted a research project, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, and local volunteers are assembling a context for better understanding of the pageants and their role in community life. Although the casts were predominantly adult, younger performers were involved in children's masques at the 1933 and 1935 events, and memories from some of the surviving performers offer valuable details about being involved. Local primary school children are assisting with interviewing and local historical detective work. They are devising their own contemporary

pageant with new music, costumes and choreography and a new film that combines old and new footage will be made in time for a local film festival.

The project raises questions about past participation, work and leisure, funding, amateur creativity, communities of interest and local leadership, legacies of the First World War and links between myth, history and popular entertainment. New Mill's apparent 'pageant fever' raises questions too about the influence of other pageants and existing local traditions of amateur dramatics, choral singing, and other musical performances throughout the year. The project also raises issues about the value of heritage projects in a contemporary setting and this session would offer key findings for discussion.

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'Welcome to the Renaissance/Where everything is new': Finding Ourselves in Dramatisations of Theatrical History

Douglas Lanier sets out a central principle guiding fictions representing historical authors, whereby 'authorial biographicality ... is often positioned against rival models of authorship that the writer must reject to become 'authentic''. This paper will argue that a comparable journey – from rejection of past models to authentic (and implicitly proto-modern) self-fulfilment – is a recurring trope in plays and films which dramatise theatrical history, precisely because such works themselves represent the teleological end-point of their own narratives. The idiosyncracies of period underwrite emerging modernity.

A line from Antony Burgess's bio-fiction, *A Dead Man in Deptford* (1993), provides the model for this pattern, as Sir Walter Raleigh tells Christopher Marlowe: 'You are of us, who look to the future and are bent on disassembling the old way.' The works under consideration exploit anachronism and promote evolutionary narratives of theatrical history to present historical authors and performers who are already, or are becoming, 'of us'.

In Lee Hall's stage adaptation of *Shakespeare in Love* (2014), Jessica Swale's *Nell Gwynn* (2015), the Broadway musical *Something Rotten* by Wayne and Karey Kirkpatrick and John O'Farrell, and the 2015 film *Bill* by the team behind the BBC's *Horrible Histories*, dramatisations of the theatrical past are offered partly as origin myths for the modern entertainment industry. By performing theatrical history in, and with an eye towards, the theatrical present, they delight audiences with their appeals to our own participation in a continued tradition: we pay homage to our theatre's roots as we celebrate its current cultural value.

Adele Patrick and Donna Moore

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***The March of Women*: Glasgow Women's Library's living and breathing archive out on the streets**

Glasgow Women's Library's *The March of Women* was a participatory, public art project which utilised the Library's archive to bring together women from all backgrounds and from all over Scotland through a dramatic celebration of local history and social space, recognising and celebrating outstanding women in Scotland. It involved over a hundred women performing a re-enactment of Cicely Hamilton's Suffragette Play *A Pageant of Great Women* and being joined by other women to process to Glasgow Green. During a two year project in partnership with the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Glasgow Women's Library used the archive to give a voice to forgotten heroines from history, culminating in a

performance event and a procession that reflected the Suffragette processions of the early 20th century.

The project demonstrates GWL's feminist social praxis view that the archive is not just a passive depository of historical artefacts but is a living, breathing resource that can be used and enjoyed by everyone in many different ways - from suffragette play readings, through delving into the archive to discover the hidden histories of women, to revisiting the lost art form of the Suffragette pageant. Working with the archive is a conversation between history, present and future. Throughout history, women and their stories have been marginalised and sidelined and GWL aims to support women – including those women who have, traditionally, been removed from arts and culture - to creatively rework the past and improve the future by bringing those stories to life.

The entire project was documented by a professional film-maker and the film *March* is also available for screening. The trailer can be found here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IwH_fA5e64I&feature=youtu.be

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After the show is over...: Souvenirs and mementoes of early twentieth-century historical pageants.

This paper will relate the artefacts generated by the pageant movement to the literature on material culture. The diverse range of items, designed and manufactured or crafted for historical pageants, offers a distinct perspective on the promotion of the historical narrative conceived by the organisers, the creation of the historical performance, and the experience of pageanteers and their observers. The preservation of manufactured souvenirs and the creation of personalised keepsakes can provide an insight into the significance of pageant participation for individuals and into the contribution made by their personal role in the event. Scrapbooks, in particular, provide a voice for both male and female participants. These material remnants together with their associated stories are a valuable resource for recapturing the experience of 'pageantitis'.

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The Pomp of Obliteration: G.K. Chesterton's Engagement with the Edwardian Pageant Revival

When Louis N. Parker initiated the Edwardian pageant revival with the Sherborne Pageant of 1905, G.K. Chesterton was amongst the first cultural critics to recognise the movement's value and significance. Parker's emphasis upon localism, community, and popular appeal corresponded closely with Chesterton's sympathies. In particular, Parker's conception of the pageant as 'a great festival of Brotherhood' chimed with Chesterton's appreciation of the Mummers' play as a form of community 'ritual' in which the individual performers enact a 'pomp of obliteration' within the communal historical body. The pair's aesthetic preferences were equally well-matched. For Parker, the modern pageant should blend 'tragedy, comedy, [and] even farce', as well as 'authentic history [and] folk-lore', prescriptions which conform not only to Chesterton's burlesque fictional methodology, but also to his real-life pageant participation, in which he adopted guises ranging from Dr Johnson to Old King Cole. This paper explores Chesterton's journalistic, fictional, and practical engagement with the pageant revival, from the prosaic social reportage of articles such as 'Local Pride and

Pageants' (1908), to the visionary pageant of creation that concludes his novel, *The Man Who Was Thursday* (1908). I go on to argue that this engagement finds most intriguing expression in his quasi-fictional newspaper article, 'The Mystery of a Pageant' (1909), in which an account of his participation in the English Church Pageant leads to an exposition of the ethical value of the event, combined with a more troubled account of the psychological disorientation engendered by the format's almost hallucinatory condensation of time.

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Interrogating Stadal History: Patrick Geddes and Scottish Historical Pageants, 1900-1920.

Historical pageants tend to represent the linear development of a community through the various stages of its history, and the form lends itself well to representing that development as a teleological progression. David Glassberg argues in *American Historical Pageantry* that, in American pageants of the early twentieth century, societies were often portrayed as moving towards a 'community destiny', which implied that white conquest was a 'historical inevitability' (143).

However, not all historical pageants confirmed narratives of stadial progress in their representations of historical development. In this paper, I will examine two pageants that were produced in Scotland at the beginning of the twentieth century, when many key Scottish cultural figures and historians were questioning the idea of stadial progress. Several scholars, such as Colin Kidd and Murray Pittock, have noted how Scottish national identity was compromised by stadialist narratives, which tended to represent the nation as divided between industrious Saxons and indolent, backward Celts. There was a concerted effort to re-unify Scottish nationality c.1870-1920 and this involved undermining the idea of teleological development, which informed several of the pageants produced.

Sir Patrick Geddes, a prolific pageanteer who lent a rigorous intellectualism to historical pageantry in the early twentieth century, was one figure who spent his entire career critiquing stadial notions of historical progress, and this very much informed his pageants. In this paper I will discuss the Scottish National Exhibition Pageant (1907) and Geddes's *Masques of Ancient Learning* to demonstrate how his, and others', pageants were informed by the desire to undercut narratives of stadial history in Scotland.

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Cleopatra's Galore: Representations of the Egyptian Queen at Victorian and Edwardian Fancy Dress Balls

Fancy dress balls, many of them with a historical theme, were immensely popular in Victorian and Edwardian Britain. The most spectacular ones, such as the Devonshire House Ball held in honour of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897, were widely covered by the press and documented for posterity in lavish photographs. Though the names of Mary, Queen of Scots, Queen Elizabeth I or Marie Antoinette appear frequently in the lists of historical characters represented at a ball, it was the Egyptian Queen Cleopatra who seems to have been the first choice of many female guests. As a consequence, there was always the risk of not being the only Cleopatra (at the Devonshire House Ball there were three). In my paper I intend to discuss why the role of Cleopatra appealed to so many, and how those who appeared as the exotic queen interpreted and staged the historical character. In

order to do so, I will draw on a wide range of materials including contemporary photographs, newspaper reports, scrapbooks, memoirs and literary texts.

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Pageantry and pan-Celticism, 1867-1907

Pageantry has performed an important role in serving to connect the 'Celtic' nations. During the period under examination, 'Celtic' identity became increasingly 'pan-Celtic', largely through congresses and conferences in which delegates from the various Celtic nations mingled and discussed their kinship. Processions, re-enactments, concerts and other performative ceremonies stressed the shared Celtic heritage and harkened back to an ancient past when the Celtic race was supposedly whole.

This paper will examine the major Celtic gatherings and rituals and how they helped to foster fraternity amongst the disparate Celtic nations. Beginning with the banner year of 1867, when an informal Celtic Congress featuring Welsh delegates took place in St. Brieuc, Brittany, the paper will then trace the line of informal meetings and conferences over the next several decades that culminated with the official Pan-Celtic Congresses of 1901, 1904 and 1907. While its organiser described the first Pan-Celtic procession as an 'artistic triumph', one Irish nationalist sneered, 'Can a nation be saved by jack-acting?' The fact that some of these festivals based on Celtic traditions – the Welsh *Eisteddfod*, the Scottish *Mòd* and the International Celtic Congress – still exist today and continue to attract large audiences, suggests that the 'jack-acting' of this time was relatively successful in preserving and cultivating ideas of Celtic heritage.

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The Faux West: Learning from Historical Reenactors

A thriving mining community from 1881 to the mid-1890s, Calico Ghost Town, California, "lives again" as a hybrid historic site-theme park due to the 1950s restorations of Old West theme park entrepreneur Walter Knott, and current operation as a San Bernardino County Regional Park. The highlight for Calico's mostly foreign visitors is neither the refurbished adobes nor the authentic ruins of Chinatown, but the gunfights performed by the Calico Mountain Volunteers—reenactors supported by the National Rifle Association.

Gunfights and other reenactments in the park reinforce violence as entertainment and a staple of Western popular culture, but provide little educational value. During a November 2015 visit I observed young boys imitating the reenactors' duel and spraying the audience with imaginary bullets; this incident takes on new meaning when connected with a mass shooting that occurred in nearby San Bernardino days later. This episode questions the ethics of using history as theater, as these reenactors alter Western history and glorify the violence that continues to plague American society.

Historians have a tenuous relationship with reenactors, questioning the distortion of authenticity for the sake of entertainment. But much like those surveyed in *Presence of the Past* and *Confederates in the Attic*, reenactors provide insight into popular history and act as a litmus test for historical education.

This paper will examine the Calico Mountain Volunteers, as well as explore the relationship between public historians and historical reenactors as they both attempt to memorialize the Old West in California.

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Female citizenship, history and pageantry in Britain, 1909-1939

This paper explores the motivations of a number of women who staged pageants, 1909–1945; focusing on how the topics explored within these pageants often mirrored wider, shifting conceptions about the role of women. Pageant historiography has focused on the pageant movement as transmitting popular history to the public, and providing social cement for local communities amidst fears of a fractured modern society. Particular emphasis has been placed on the role of male pageant masters and community experience. Female input is little mentioned, although it has been suggested that in mainstream pageants women had subsidiary, traditional gendered roles. Separate to these debates feminist scholars have examined female-run pageants staged at the height of suffrage campaigning: most notably the ‘Pageant of Great Women’ and the ‘Pageant of Women’s Trades and Professions’ (both 1909). Female-organized pageants and historical plays from this period onwards remain curiously ignored, yet the varying expectations and societal contexts of male and female participants in pageants make gender a particularly useful tool of analysis for the field. This research seeks to rectify this: comparing suffrage pageants, where suffragists dressed as famed historical women to legitimate their political actions, alongside an appraisal of how, post-suffrage, the twentieth-century women’s movement used pageantry. The paper includes analysis of Constance Smedley’s ‘Pageant of the People’ (1911), the pageant and history plays organized by The Women’s Institute across this period, and the role women played at all levels of pageant organization to popularize these events: from making pageant ephemera through to writing topical articles for women’s magazines.

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‘The Watery Maze’: A Pageant for Exeter

This paper will provide an overview of the content and organisation of a Pageant performed during the Exeter Festival in July 1997, in the historic garden of the Bishop’s Palace. At the heart of the ancient city, this is bounded by the Roman Bank, and by the great Cathedral and Bishop’s Palace.

My first sight of the garden brought back a childhood memory of a Pageant in Blenheim Palace Gardens in 1938. When I learned of the ancient well, where Roman pottery had been found, the water theme, described in Andrew Marvell’s poem, presented itself. Past and present came together as children from some twenty schools presented scenes from Devon’s history. Each school chose a particular period or event, and with help from the Pageant team, where needed, did the necessary research. They chose their own form of presentation, through drama, music or dance. The whole was linked by a professional narrator, and specially composed live music.

Devon has been a county of seafarers, merchants and farmers. The first scene represented the primeval mud, and the girls’ High School provided a “water dance” between scenes. Successive episodes showed how Romans and Vikings came there by sea, Sir Francis Drake set sail from Plymouth, and William of Orange sailed to land at Torbay. Since the coming of the railways, Devon has become best known for all its wonderful coasts and seaside places. Devon’s history and life is indeed a “watery maze”, recorded in this Pageant.

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Deliver us from the fury of the Northmen: the Viking threat in English pageantry

The figure of the Viking (or 'Dane', 'Northman' or 'Norseman') has been a recurring presence in historical pageants and other public history events in England for well over a hundred years. Marked out by his wild appearance, pigtails, beard and helmet (variously horned or winged), the Viking sea-raider has loomed large in evocations of England's early medieval past, in episodes drawn from the period between the 8th and 11th centuries. Perspectives on episodes and personalities from England's Viking past have swung wildly between approval and disapproval throughout this time, and the Viking reputation has undergone constant revision, but popular interest in Vikings has remained intact, as has their dramatic potential, as witnessed by the ubiquity of the Viking brand in manifestations as diverse as action toys, video games, films and TV series.

This paper will examine the role of Vikings in open-air public history events, and will seek to establish how and why this may have changed in the course of a century. Reference will be made in particular to the Bedford River Pageant of 1929, and to the annual JORVIK Viking Festival in the first decade of the 21st century, with an attempt to compare the ways in which Vikings have featured. Consideration will be given to how appeals to 'authenticity' may have been instrumental in shifting attitudes and allegiances; how the switch from pageant to 'living history' event has shaped notions of Viking identities; and how a threatening 'other' can also be embraced as an ancestral paragon.

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'From the great wilderness and lakes the city has gained its living vigour': negotiating urban and rural identity in postwar historical pageants in Finland

Postwar historical pageants have only recently begun to attract scholarly interest, even though their scale and popularity were significant from and beyond the interwar period. Also in Finland, which still was a predominantly rural country, even though urbanising in an accelerating speed, the immediate postwar period saw an enthusiastic organisation of and participation in historical pageants. Urban pageants provided one platform to localise and urbanise national projects of identity and memory, traditionally often associated with idealized rural landscapes and agrarian traditions and values. By examining a selection of case studies from postwar Finnish cities, this paper explores the role of historical pageantry in the construction of urbanity, community and identity. How did urban historical pageants, through their representational programmes and audiences, and their construction of the past, present and future, participate in the negotiation of the co-existing and competing urban and rural, and local and national identities in postwar Finland? As the title of the abstract suggests, postwar cities too, in this case Helsinki in 1950, while expressing modernist future-oriented visions and a strong sense of urban localism, needed to display their historical and agrarian roots.

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‘Once every Preston Guild’: Dramatising the past and civic ritual, 1842-1922

The Preston Guild as a civic ceremony dates back to 1179, when King Henry II granted the town its first royal charter and established a Guild Merchant. More recently a week of events has been held in the town once every twenty years linked to the Preston Guild and provides the inhabitants of the town with the opportunity to engage in civic ceremonial and articulate various aspects of their identities, particularly linked to locality, region, religion and occupation.

The event has a significant processional dimension, in which representations of the past often feature prominently. The paper proposes to investigate the guilds between 1842 and 1922 and to explore how the past was dramatised on Preston’s streets through these key customary moments, plotting change over time and examining the context in which these re-enactments of the past were undertaken.

Particular emphasis will be placed upon analysis of contemporary newspaper reports and the official souvenirs, notably printed guides, that were produced to celebrate these once-in-a-generation events.

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‘Oneness of the Past with the Present’: The Historic Pageant of Mount Grace Priory

Lady Florence Bell’s Historic Pageant of Mount Grace Priory in 1927 brought thousands of people from across Durham and Yorkshire, alongside national ecclesiastical and political figures, to the historic country estate of the Bell manufacturing dynasty. The extensive gathering of some 1,500 players and thousands more spectators transformed the industrial elite family’s North Yorkshire residence from a quaint setting into a hive of activity, in doing so uniting all in celebrating the story of the Carthusians who centuries earlier had occupied the priory - the ruins of which provided the stage for the performances.

This paper explores the role of the historic pageant as a mechanism for industrial elite patronage, performance and power beyond the manufacturing town. In exploring the pageant from its development to its fruition, it will be contended that by engaging a wide range of participants from across the Bell’s business, cultural philanthropic and political networks, The Historic Pageant of Mount Grace Priory reflects the multifaceted engagement of this leading industrialist family and showcases the role pageantry played in wider associational and cultural relations in interwar Britain. Moreover, it will be contended that the performance and dissemination of the industrial elite’s cultural interest in and knowledge of history highlights the role of the Bells as leading figures in local cultural engagement and as champions of the importance of the past.

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Solving the ‘Fields of Rippling Wheat’ problem: Lion TV’s re-enactment history format

History is difficult to film: particularly outside the C20th. TV is a visual medium, but there’s often nothing authentic to point a camera at. So how can we make history watchable? One

format which juggles performance, authenticity and re-enactment is that used by Lion TV to produce programmes such as 'Victorian Farm' and 'Wartime Farm'.

It centres around a small team of presenters (who are trained historians/archaeologists) doing things on camera: making things, solving problems, growing food, etc. The drama and narrative development is inherent within the task, which allows a surprisingly large amount of information to be got over at the same time. It relies on making use of existing heritage infrastructure and its broader knowledge base. It can easily bring in academics as well as enthusiasts. Because the central point is the process, not the revelation of historical fact, the format is resistant to exaggeration.

The presenters express empathy with the actors in the past whose experience they are exploring, but they are not embarking on a reality TV attempt to 're-live' a particular era or event: their participation is limited to the sphere of production. The format owes as much to experimental archaeology as to text-based history. It is peculiarly suited to history from below, and to exploring the everyday experience of workers: it's not good for the history of private life, political events or elite activity.

Is this performance/re-enactment format a 'magic bullet' for social history on the TV?

Whatever its limitations, it allows entertaining and historically-accurate television to reach a wide audience.

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Family, locality and nationality: Veronica Mason, an English village pageant and the creation of Australian national identity

In August 1912 Miss Veronica Mason, described as a 'lady of literary ability', scripted a 'Dream Pageant of the Olden Days' for the village of Halton near Lancaster in the North of England to educate 'the village folk in the historical development both of their own locality and that of the nation'. Six months later in May 1914 her play, *Lancaster Sands*, firmly rooted in the history and topography of the area, was performed in Lancaster. One of its leading characters was an antiquarian engaged in 'drawing up a history of antiquities in the village for the day there is a museum in Lancaster'.

Yet, in January 1914 when Australians in London celebrated 'Wattle Day' marking the 126th anniversary of the first settlement of their continent, central to this was a performance of 'The Wattle Song' the words of which, the *Mercury*, the Hobart newspaper, proudly reported 'were written by Miss Veronica Mason, and the music was by Miss Lowthian, both of Tasmania'. Better known as 'the graceful swaying wattle' or 'the bush was grey' it became almost an anthem, chanted or sung every year in Australian schools for the next half century as part of the annual Wattle Day. It was set to music by at least three other composers. Mason had captured the essence of what it was to be Australian.

Mason died in obscurity in Reading in 1947. This paper explores who she was and the events which led her to be associated with an early English village historical pageant while simultaneously being celebrated as an embodiment of Australian nationalism.

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Performing history in the co-operative movement in mid twentieth century Britain

Throughout the twentieth century, the consumer co-operative movement was described as a 'third wing' of the 'labour movement'. But its distinctive message, based upon democratic

consumer control, could be muffled by broader allegiances within a labour movement which, by the mid twentieth century, had come to focus upon state action and a particular idea of common ownership. During the inter-war years the movement emphasised culture and education as a means of generating loyalty and a sense of belonging. Educational classes, lectures, study groups, choirs, film, dance and theatre groups were all organised.

The films, pageants and historical performances that were organised within the co-operative movement gave rise to a number of issues. A particular version of co-operative history was used as the lens for understanding the past more generally yet tensions with different ideas about progress and the future were also apparent. Class, gender and age distinctions became visible. The organisation of these events gave rise to a tension between voluntary activity and professionalism as the movement attempted to marry its voluntarism with a concern for quality performances. In the long-run the movement was criticised for being inward-looking as it went into decline – the sense of cultural separateness was at the heart of these debates.

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Animals, Artistry, Authenticity: historical re-enactments at Belle Vue, Manchester, c.1852-1924.

This paper investigates the extraordinarily popular historical re-enactments that took place between 1852 and 1924 at Manchester's Belle Vue zoological gardens. The first re-enactment (1852) was an immense fireworks show with a performance of the Bombardment of Algiers; the last (1924) focused on reconstructing the Mexican Civil War. Belle Vue was the largest commercial animal collection in the UK outside London. Its owners were staunch imperialists. Unlike other zoos, Belle Vue was orientated towards multi-platform spectacular display: zoo, circus, amphitheatre, fairground, auditorium, museum. For the owners, the zoo was a microcosm of empire; its animal collection a hybrid of biblical arc and grand statement of imperial modernity. Re-enactments used spectacular display to fuse representations of British global might and civilising mission. Performances featured both real soldiers and real animals. Sometimes re-enactments were historical (Waterloo, Gibraltar, Crimea, Indian Mutiny); sometimes they were contemporaneous (Omdurman, Ladysmith, western front). To generate authentic displays of Africa, India and other colonial locations, animals become stars of the show - not only to provide crowd-pleasing (and revenue-enhancing) spectacular display but their bodies lent authenticity to dramatic reconstructions of geographical space and chronological time. My paper will use recent theorising about historical empathy to explore how these performances adapted and retold the news both for profitmaking and propagandistic purpose. They tell us much about popular engagement with history and the commercialisation of the past.