

From the President's Desk

Dear Colleagues,

ESEH entered its sixth year with a successful conference in Florence in February. With an attendance of 260 people the conference showed that environmental historians are not only a large crowd but a very resourceful one as well. Attendants were treated to insights gained from many disciplines, presentations as diverse as humankind, and topics as diverse as the breadth of human experience.

An exciting new initiative was taken by the General Assembly to establish a Committee for Education, which will be charged to promote the further institutional development of environmental history within undergraduate and postgraduate university programmes. The first steps will be to undertake a mapping of the state of environmental history.

Action was also called for to strengthen the crucial link between environmental history and policy-making. Clearly, environmental history is of relevance not only to academics but must reach out and engage in a dialogue with managers, politicians and the general public. I look forward to report on steps taken in later issues of Notepad.

With the election of a new Executive, ESEH had to accept the stepping down of two pioneers of European environmental history, Verena Winiwarter and Christian Pfister. Thanks to their formidable efforts, ESEH survived the critical first years of existence and is now a thriving organisation ready to promote the research and use of environmental history.

Poul Holm

ESEH President

Results of Executive Board Election

ESEH Board elections were held during the Ordinary General Meeting in Florence on 18 February. The quorum of 20 per cent was met with 66 members on the attendance list out of 142 members who were not in arrears.

53 out of 66 members who were present voted with raised arms for the entire board. All nominees were supported and voted to the Board. The result was as follows: in favour: 46; against: 2; abstained: 5

The composition of the new board is as follows:

PRESIDENT: Prof. Dr. Poul Holm, University of Southern Denmark, Esbjerg

VICE-PRESIDENT: Prof. Dr. Mauro Agnoletti, DISTAF, University of Florence

VICE-PRESIDENT: Dr. Jan Oosthoek, University of Newcastle upon Tyne

SECRETARY: Lenka Uhlířová, Charles University in Prague

TREASURER: Ulrich Koppitz, University of Düsseldorf

During the nomination process, several potential candidates were approached but decided that, due to other commitments, they were not ready to stand. A call for nominations attracted no further nominees. The low interest or awareness of the administration of the society among its members was a cause for concern to the Nomination Committee. When the lists were made public there was a further concern that the gender balance of the Board was not appropriate. We certainly hope a balance returns at the next election from a larger slate of candidates.

The OGM also elected Professor Timo Myllyntaus as the new Regional Representative for the Nordic Countries.

Comings and Goings

The new board wishes to thank outgoing President Verena Winiwarter and outgoing Vice-President Christian Pfister for all their hard work for the Society. Both have been founding members of ESEH and without their efforts ESEH would never have been the flourishing organisation it is at present. The board also thanks Eva Jakobsson for all the work she has done for ESEH in her capacity as Regional Representative for the Nordic countries. Finally a warm welcome to the new executive board members, Mauro Agnoletti and Lenka Uhlířová, as well as to Timo Myllyntaus as new Regional Representative.

New Contact Address for ESEH

The ESEH elections held in February also bring a shift of the ESEH Secretariat to Prague, from which the Society's activities will now be coordinated. Please send all correspondence for ESEH to the following address:

ESEH Secretariat
c/o Lenka Uhlířová
Charles University in Prague
Faculty of Science
Albertov 6
128 43 Praha 2
Czechia
Email: uhlirov5@natur.cuni.cz

Third International ESEH Conference, Florence 16–19 February 2005

The third international meeting of ESEH in Florence, Italy, was hosted by the University of Florence and organised by the regional Tuscan government at the Palaffari conference centre in central Florence. Approximately two hundred and sixty delegates, from thirty countries, attended the conference. There was a strong representation from northern Europe, with Germany and the UK having the largest contingent, although there were also delegates from Eastern Europe, the Americas, Australia and Africa. A truly international event! The format of the conference was structured so that each day there was four 'parallel' sessions of five different themed lectures, discussions or poster plenary sessions. The theme of the conference was 'history and sustainability' and speakers interpreted this premise very broadly, covering broad time eras and with an extensive geographical coverage.

The most difficult decision facing many delegates was which session to attend, given that many lectures promised intriguing papers, followed by lively discussion. From my own perspective, I settled upon a tactic of choosing sessions that would have a direct relationship to my own current research field, a tactic I suspect followed by many other attendees. Therefore I tended to seek out sessions that would cover nineteenth and early twentieth century attitudes towards natural history, conservation and wildlife in Europe. These included an account of municipal waste incineration in nineteenth century Torquay, Devon, by John Clark, who drew some of his evidence from the provincial press and showed how a middle-class oppositional movement to the scheme slowly developed. Nicholas Goddard's paper on the use of Victorian sewage farm waste for agricultural use also had many parallel themes to Clark's interpretation. Charles Mathais illustrated that the developing Victorian conservationist movement was endeavouring to present an idealistic picture of 'Merry England' based upon countryside landscape, but was hindered by the growing industrial landscape on the 1800s. Food for thought was provided by Bernd Herrmann's report from the ESEH research group into historical species abundance. A lively group discussion followed on the intricacies of using evidence to substantiate historical species population levels and whether anecdotal accounts of species previously thought of as 'super-abundant' should be accepted.

The subject of hunting, particularly gamekeeping and African big game hunts is a recurring historical theme. Three papers covered these themes from a German and Swedish perspective, giving fresh analysis to a subject that has been largely viewed from a British perspective. In particular, Bernhard Gissibl's lecture on the development of wildlife conservation under German colonial Africa illustrated a completely opposite attitude to wildlife taken by the Germans to that projected by British Edwardians. Those sessions that had a common linking theme probably were the most successful. In particular, the German research papers from an academic group investigating Kulturlandschaft that focused

upon the development of the German tourist trade in the 1800s, the growth of natural history as a middle class 'recreation' and an amateur Berlin historical society, had an almost seamless quality.

The poster plenary session of twenty-one displays provided a good method of presenting research projects that were 'ongoing' and a tool to stimulate constructive debate. It is my opinion that this method of presenting research results, notably by postgraduates, gave researchers an excellent chance to informally discuss their results with interested delegates. In particular the poster by Nina Kruglikova, that examined historical environmental posters, which promoted sustainability messages in the form of recycling and energy saving programmes, was particularly appropriate, given the theme of the conference. The overall strength of the conference was its informality, which led to stimulating discussion with delegates. These discussions were held over the superb lunches provided by the Regional Agency for the Development and Innovation in Agriculture and Forestry, and allowing delegates to generously sample the superb wines of the region, which probably stimulated further rich discussions! The venue for the conference dinner on the Thursday night was the sumptuously decorated Villa Montalto, where in this grandiose setting we enjoyed another fantastic culinary experience and more superb wines, whilst being entertained by local Tuscan traditional dancing.

The field trips to various historical sites around Florence also gave delegates the chance to mingle and explore sites in and around the city. The guided tour of the Museum of the History of Science was particularly enjoyable. In particular the display of maps and medical equipment, along with several of Galileo's instruments and a glass case containing the remains of his index finger was particularly intriguing. The ESEH award dinner on the Saturday evening was a fitting climax to the conference, with several ESEH members being recognised for their unstinting work, and the proprietors of White Horse Press were also honoured for their superb efforts in producing the journal *Environment and History*.

I believe the Florence conference to have been a great success, and it gave me the opportunity to broaden and deepen my understanding of environmental history and to discover how the discipline readily encompasses diverse academic fields, from science to the humanities. As a student who was acquainted with only one of the delegates before I arrived, I was naturally very apprehensive about the event, but the informality of the conference was such that these fears were quickly allayed. Therefore I would very much encourage other researchers and students to attend the Amsterdam conference in 2007. Mauro Agnoletti, chair of the Florence conference committee and his colleagues are to be congratulated for arranging and hosting this first-class event.

See you in Amsterdam in 2007!

Fred Milton, Post-graduate research student, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, UK. Email: F.S.Milton@ncl.ac.uk

'Sustaining and Supporting Environmental History Research: The Role of Libraries'

A Summary of a Panel of the IC ESEH, Florence 2005 (19 February)

This well-attended panel highlighted the most pressing issues confronted by those who are in charge of libraries dedicated to the subjects of environmental history. The goal of presenters was to encourage greater dialogue between historians and librarians about ways to resolve the legal, political, organisational, and financial challenges of amassing and divulging information about former environments.

Cheryl Oakes of the Forest History Society stressed, among other subjects, the many types of environmental history archives, the significant costs of maintaining them, and the potential threats of litigation for both users and depositors. She posed the question of whether it would be possible or desirable in the current political and economic milieu to establish one central European archives devoted strictly to environmental history in the way that the Forest History Society has done for North America since 1946. Roger Mills of the Oxford Forestry Information Service noted that environmental subjects are often long-term issues, and so require long-term financial commitments. He spoke of the challenges of standard article abstracting (e.g., Forestry Abstracts, 1939–, which focuses on *who*, *what*, *when*, and *how* as keywords), the vital importance of free depositing, and some of his institute's ongoing digitising and cataloguing projects. The University of Newcastle's Jan Oosthoek, who has been deeply involved in expanding the Forest History Society's environmental history bibliographic database [see <http://www.lib.duke.edu/forest/Research/biblio.html> and <http://www.eseh.org/bibliography.html>], outlined recent developments for searching relevant documents on the web, noting that almost all documents will someday be available online if you can just locate them. This will be done through standardised thesauri of key terms that will be used for the creation of a knowledge system, technically called an ontology. Ontologies will provide meaning to the web and create expert search engines that understand what users are looking for; however, developing such systems will require much input from librarians, archivists and historians.

Take-home messages from these presentations and audience commentary were that environmental historians need to consider their projects from the viewpoint of librarians and archivists, that historians need to be more conversant with the world of information technology, that 'environmental history' is still not a unit of analysis in most repositories, and that more staunch supporters of environmental history need to be found and cultivated.

Marcus Hall, University of Zurich and Swiss Federal Research Institute WSL, Switzerland

ESEH conference 2007

The fourth ESEH conference will take place in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, in mid-June 2007. The theme of the conference is under consideration, and a call for papers will be issued in the autumn of 2005.

European Society for Environmental History

Executive Board:

President: Poul Holm, *University of Southern Denmark, Esbjerg*
 Vice-President: Mauro Agnoletti, *University of Florence*
 Vice-President: Jan Oosthoek, *University of Newcastle upon Tyne*
 Secretary: Lenka Uhlířová, *Charles University in Prague*
 Treasurer: Ulrich Koppitz, *University of Düsseldorf*

Ex officio:

Petra van Dam, *Free University Amsterdam*

Regional Representatives:

Benelux, **Petra van Dam**, The Netherlands
 British Isles, **Fiona Watson**, Scotland, UK
 Czechia & Slovakia, **Leoš Jeleček**, Czechia
 Francophone Countries, **Geneviève Massard-Guilbaud**, France
 Germanophone Countries, **Andreas Dix**, Germany
 Hungary, **Lajos Racz**, Hungary
 Iberian Peninsula, **Muanuel Gonzáles de Molina**, Spain
 Italy, **Marco Armiero**, Italy
 Nordic Countries, **Timo Myllyntaus**, Finland
 Russia and additional Eastern European Countries, **Daniel Alexandrov**,
 Russia

ESEH aims to promote environmental history in Europe, by encouraging and supporting research, teaching and publications in the field. The ESEH maintains its web site at <<http://www.eseh.org>>.

Notepad Editor: Lenka Uhlířová

Items for the next Notepad should be sent by 1 July, 2004 to the address shown below.

All correspondence should be directed to the secretariat:

c/o Lenka Uhlířová
 Charles University in Prague, Faculty of Science
 Albertov 6, 128 43 Praha 2
 Czechia
 Email: uhlrov5@natur.cuni.cz