

CFP: 'The Godwin Diary: Reconstructing London's Culture 1788-1836'

On 23-24 July 2010 the Leverhulme sponsored research project responsible for editing the diary of William Godwin will hold a two-day conference to introduce scholars to the new resource and to explore how that resource provides a distinctive light on our understanding of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century social and political culture. The Godwin Diary conference will mark the culmination of three years' effort to edit the diary and publish a digital and fully searchable edition. Accompanying the searchable text will be a complete scan of the original diary.

The conference organizers have invited a number of speakers but would also welcome proposals for paper from those interested in exploring the light that the resource can shed on their own research interests. Those speaking include: John Barrell, Luisa Calé, Julie Carlson, Greg Claeys, Pamela Clemit, Beth Lau, Jon Mee, Jane Moody, and Philip Schofield.

We should state at the outset that the conference format, and the nature of the papers presented, is a little unusual. The objective of the conference is to launch the diary website and to illustrate its potential as a research tool for the study of the period 1788-1836. It is not, therefore, a 'Godwin conference' but is concerned with how the diary illuminates various aspects of London's cultural and material worlds with particular emphasis on the manifold networks of relationships that Godwin mapped in his diary. Accordingly, papers should focus on the contribution Godwin's Diary might make to some of their own research interests. To enable people to do this the Godwin team will provide speakers with access to the Diary in advance of the conference. Moreover, rather than expecting people to write extensive papers on their research areas we are asking for short contributions of just 10 minutes. Our belief is that this will prove an attractive format that will allow a very wide range of issues to be discussed during the two days and will give some indication of the immense richness of the resource as a research tool. Our hope is that scholars will find attractive the idea of brief papers about particular topics that link the Diary to their research interests and indicate its contribution. The Bodleian has agreed that a collection of the papers will be published in a special issue of the *Bodleian Library Record*.

We plan to have sessions on publishing culture, theatre, lives and deaths, sociability, visual culture, and radicalism. There will also be a panel on the practice of diary-keeping. We will offer a hands-on session navigating the diary and exploiting its search mechanisms. The conference will also, in conjunction with the Bodleian Library, host an exhibition of the diary and other key manuscripts from the Godwin-Shelley archive (Abinger Collection). It is also planned to stage the world premiere of Godwin's MS tragedy, *St Dunstan* (1790)!

Those attending the conference will get access to the diary before its full launch in Autumn 2010 as we hope to improve the resource after feedback from users.

An outline plan of the conference and its different sessions is appended below, along with suggested topics (other topics are welcome). Those interested in contributing are asked to indicate the panel which they believe is most appropriate and to provide a brief paragraph outlining their research interest and what they would hope to discuss in their paper (no more than 300 words). This should be sent to the project e-mail address (below) by 1 October 2009.

See <http://godwindiary.politics.ox.ac.uk>
e-mail: godwin.diary@politics.ox.ac.uk

The Godwin Diary Project is funded by the Leverhulme Trust and is based in the Department of Politics and International Relations at the University of Oxford. The members of the Project are Mark Philp, David O'Shaughnessy, Victoria Myers, Kate Barush, James Cummings, James Grande, Laura Kalinkewicz, and David Fallon.

SESSION DETAILS

PUBLISHING CIRCLES

Godwin's diary reveals an author at large within the bustling and sociable publishing world of late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century London, rubbing shoulders with booksellers, printers, newspaper publishers, and engravers, as well as attempting to run his own bookshop. This panel will explore the evidence the Diary offers of activity in the book trade and among its members during the period, patterns of sociability between writers and all those involved in the production and selling of books, and changes to the commercial relationships which comprised much of literary life in London

Topics: The Children's Bookshop; Joseph Johnson and his Circle; George Robinson and his Circle; James Perry and the Morning Chronicle; Mapping the Geography of Literary London

POLITICS

The aim of this session is to encourage participants to use the Diary as a source for thinking about radical and reforming circles across the entire period, from the 1790s through to the Reform Bill of 1832. Although the Diary has been used to chart aspects of intellectual radicalism associated with Godwin and Wollstonecraft there has been far less attention paid to its potential value as a source on other aspects of popular and elite political culture in the period.

Topics: Spying in the 1790s - James Powell and his contacts; Prisons and treasons - from Muir and Palmer to D'Espard; John King and his circles; Godwin, Parliamentarians and Burdett; Godwin, Francis Place and the philosophical radicalism of the early 19th Century; Robert Owen and Godwin

LIVING AND DYING

The aim of this session is to encourage participants to examine the Diary as a source on aspects of life and death in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century London. For example, the Diary records the deaths of about 300 people. Some are major public figures; some utterly obscure. Several are members of Godwin's family. The Diary also records Godwin's health and his consultation of various doctors. It also has about 9 years of recorded temperatures. By examining some of these less noted aspects of the Diary it is possible to get a set of insights into the quotidian round of life and death, health and illness, and comfort and discomfort.

Topics: Family deaths; Protégés and their passing; Public deaths and Suicides: recording and not recording; Death of Sheridan and Memorialising; Anatomising Godwin's conditions

SOCIABILITY

The Diary has long been recognized as discrediting popular conceptions of Godwin as an unfeeling philosopher, a man of cold reason who rejected domestic affections.. This panel will hope to range across the different forms and contexts recorded in the diary, paying attention to individual circles, practices and venues. Godwin records a highly diverse culture - from the salon, through the 'conversatione' at Thelwall's, and the dinner parties at Tooke's and Johnson's, to the more informal dinners and suppers with friends and relations. Beyond this metropolitan culture, we are interested in exploring Godwin's experiences of provincial sociability in his travels away from London, and in examining his experience of hospitality as conveyed in his correspondence.

Topic: Metropolitan sociability; Godwin in the provinces (Norwich, Bath, Scotland, Ireland...); Conversation in the diary; Sexual politics in the diary; The contexts of sociability: societies, lectures, prisons and salons

VISUAL CULTURE

Godwin's Diary reveals important links between visual artists and natural philosophers, politicians and radicals, and literary figures. His circle was inclusive of painters, printers, and architects including Fuseli, Opie, Northcote, Martin, and Mulready. The frequency of Godwin's visits to popular painting exhibitions and entertainments establishes that he was certainly aware of the notion of vision as 'paradigmatic for knowledge', and likewise employed entertainments such as fables and plays to convey philosophical truths. This panel will explore Godwin's central position within the artistic milieu of the period.

Topics: Painting and Politics; The rise of the public exhibition; Godwin's illustrated juvenile library; A Portrait of Friendship: Artists and Sitters; Godwin and his Royal Academy friends

THEATRE

This session will explore what the Diary tells us about the practice of theatre-going at Godwin's epoch. It will be concerned both with patent and non-patent theatres. It will also be interested in Godwin's theatrical acquaintance and map London theatrical circles as detailed in the Diary, including actors, managers, and playwrights. The mutable sociability of theatre-going will also be important - theatre could be family entertainment, a literary marketplace, or a political space. The material aspect of theatre will also be a factor with what the Diary reveals about production via the staging of two of Godwin's plays being of particular interest.

Topics: Patent and non-Patent theatres; Theatrical sociability; Theatrical production; Theatre as family entertainment; The Kemble/Siddons family