

Conference report: ICHG 2015

The International Commission for the History of Meteorology and the Climate History Network helped organize a number of panels for this year's International Conference of Historical Geographers, held at the Royal Geographical Society in London. Nearly every session contained at least one group of papers related to weather and climate in history. I would like to personally thank the conference organizers for a very well-planned conference and a perfect venue for the meeting. I apologize for any papers or presenters I have left out or that I was unable to attend.

The morning of Monday July 6 began with a two-part session on "Cultural Histories and Memories of Extreme Weather Events," including papers by Alex Berland, Stefan Grab, Daniel Grant, Toby Pillatt, Cary Mock, Hywell Griffiths, and Alex Hall, concluding with a discussion by Georgina Endfield. The presentations ranged from England and Wales to North America and the Caribbean, to Patagonia and Namibia. While drawing on different types of evidence from oral histories to diaries to newspapers and documentary records, the papers all dealt with the common theme of why and how certain extreme weather events were remembered and sometimes forgotten. That afternoon five panelists presented on the theme of "Imagining the Climate: Representations of Climatic Relationships and Adaptation" (Daniel Barber, Jason Hauser, Marcos Luna, Alexis Metzger, and Tori Jennings). While again diverse in their areas and sources, these papers all dealt with the ways that regional climates have been represented (or misrepresented) in various media, from architectural plans to almanacs, paintings, and tourism promotion.

Tuesday July 7 included three panels all dedicated to regional climate reconstruction and impacts. The first, organized by Rudolf Brázdil, Petr Dubrovolny, and their students, presented both new studies and new syntheses of documentary-based reconstructions of temperature, precipitation, hail, floods, and famines in Czech lands during periods of the Little Ice Age. In the second panel, on climate and history in Anatolia, Adam Izdebski presented the findings of a forthcoming multidisciplinary study about periods of climate amelioration AD 300-1300 and their socio-economic consequences for the Byzantine Empire, Andrea Williams discussed the impact of 19th-century Mediterranean droughts against the background of new forestry and land use policies in Ottoman lands, and Neil Roberts offered a helpful discussion contextualizing these events within the latest high-resolution regional climate reconstructions. The afternoon panel included several papers on the climate history of Japan from documentary and early instrumental evidence, presented by Takehiko Mikami and colleagues, as well as a historical wind climatology for the Cape of Good Hope, presented by Alexa Brown.

On the morning of Thursday the 9th, there was a two-part panel on "Weather and the Geographical Imagination." The first part included papers by James Kneale and Sam Randalls, Simon Naylor, Katharine Anderson, and Ruth Morgan, which examined the history of meteorology in the English-speaking world from a number of angles, including insurance company policies, the influence of ship-board instruments and

records, and the concerns of Australian fisheries. The second half of the panel (which I was unable to attend) continued this theme with papers on the history of meteorology and climatology in Britain, America, and the Soviet Union. That afternoon, Brad Skopyk, Sam White, and Tom Wickman presented on “Climate, Vulnerability, and Indigenous Adaptation in the Colonial Americas,” with papers about Nahua, Pueblo, and Wabanaki nations respectively during the 16th through 18th centuries.

Friday morning included two simultaneous panels on climate history. “Documenting Climate Histories” (which I was unable to attend) brought together papers on documentary-based climate reconstruction from diverse regions and sources, including Kieran Hickey on the climate of Ireland, 1650-1750. At the same time, the panel “Exploring Human Vulnerability to Climate Variability in the Little Ice Age” included presentations by Heli Huhtamaa on climate vulnerabilities in 14th-18th-century Finland; Chantal Camenisch on famines in Burgundy during the 15th century; Matthew Hannaford on social vulnerabilities to climate revealed in Portuguese records of pre-colonial Zimbabwe; and Andrea Janku on the possible role of climatic disasters in the rise of benevolent societies in late Ming China. The conference finished with another two-part panel, “Towards Policy-Driven Research in Historical Climatology,” organized by George Adamson. The presenters—Conor Kostick, José Luis Martínez-González, Sarah Davies, George Adamson, James Jeffers, Jonathan O’Bergin, and Sandip Hazareesingh—covered a wide range of areas and topics, but with the common theme of identifying the relevance of history for climate change research or policy.