

Sat 18 Jun 2016
St Pancras Room, 11am

Study Day

1816 – The Year Without a Summer

Two hundred years ago, the world's biggest volcanic eruption caused severe climate change: it was a time of extraordinary creativity alongside famine, poverty, disease and migration. Four leading experts, from the various fields of science, medicine, neurology, culture and history, explore the complete context of this extraordinary year in their individual talks and interactive panel discussions.

Schedule

11am Coffee

11.30-12.30 Talk 1: *Atmospheric Effects of the Tambora Eruption*
Professor Giles Harrison

12.30-1.30 Talk 2: *Frankenstein's Weather!*
Professor Gillen D'Arcy Wood

Break for lunch

2.30-3.30 Talk 3: *'Not yet saved': Europe after the fall of Napoleon*
Professor Robert Tombs

3.30-4.30 Talk 4: *Lightness, Darkness and the Creative Brain*
Professor Michael Trimble

Break for tea/coffee

4.45-5.30 Panel discussion
Speakers from the morning lectures, with **Judith Bingham** (composer), chaired by **Ian Ritchie**



Giles Harrison



Gillen D'Arcy Wood



Robert Tombs



Michael Trimble



Judith Bingham



Ian Ritchie

Speakers' abstracts

Giles Harrison

Atmospheric effects of the Tambora eruption

The eruption of Tambora in April 1815 led to immediate local destruction and loss of life from pyroclastic flows, tsunamis and whirlwinds, but its influence on the atmosphere became much more widespread because of the volcanic material, particularly sulphur dioxide, which was injected high into the atmosphere. The stratospheric winds caused the fine particles formed to be distributed globally, which acted as a veil to reduce the amount of sunlight entering the atmosphere. Such stratospheric particles typically persist for one to two years, and can act to modify the usual weather patterns. Through using modern computer models of the atmospheric circulation, which are configured to simulate the effect of Tambora, insights into the likely effects of the eruption can be generated. Although some summers of the early 1800s were cold, the measurements of the time indicate that, in some regions at least, the weather systems during 1816 were highly unusual.

Gillen D'Arcy Wood

Frankenstein's Weather!

What happens when the world's climate reaches a sudden tipping point?

This year marks the 200th anniversary of the so-called 'Year Without a Summer,' spawned by fallout from the massive eruption of Mount Tambora in Indonesia. During that global climate emergency, volcanic conditions disrupted monsoons in India that contributed to a devastating new strain of cholera, while crop failure and famine crippled nations from China to Western Europe to New England, precipitating food riots and the mass emigration of refugees. The extreme weather crisis also made waves in the world of art and literature, with Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* the most notable work of imagination to emerge.

This lecture, based on Wood's award-winning *Tambora: The Eruption that Changed the World* – the first book to present a comprehensive investigation of the environmental calamity of 1816 – provides a gripping disaster narrative, with important lessons not only for historians and students, but also local communities and governments tasked with responding to today's climate crisis.

Robert Tombs

'Not yet saved': Europe after the fall of Napoleon

After the drama of Napoleon's 100 days and his hasty dispatch to St Helena, Europe had to face the formidable task of putting itself back together again after nearly a quarter of a century of upheaval. This period is often called 'Restoration Europe', but there was little desire or possibility of putting the clock back to the 18th century. Huge geopolitical changes had been made, and millions of Europeans were once again facing rule by new masters. The maps of Germany, the Low Countries, and Italy had been redrawn. France was under military occupation. Thousands of Napoleon's former soldiers and officials were footloose, and many of them were bitterly resentful. Even in victorious Britain, euphoria soon gave way to the difficulties of readjustment. Soldiers and sailors were suddenly returned to civilian life. Wartime demand for goods and food tailed off. To its alarm, the British government found that a parliament bent on tax reductions had slashed its budget. Across Europe, while most people were relieved at the return of peace and order, angry minorities plotted new revolutions. This was the Europe now hit by the climatic turbulence and harvest failures caused by Mount Tambora. That it came through these challenges was perhaps testimony both to the resilience of its peoples and governments, and to their exhaustion.

Michael Trimble

Lightness, Darkness and the Creative Brain

There has been an association between weather and mood since the beginnings of written texts of Western civilisation. The early theories of Plato, later adopted in one form or another for the next 2,000 years, relied on the idea of the four humours. Earth, air, fire and water embody all existence, balanced in proportion in the healthy body and mind, with corresponding ailments linked to imbalance, and associated to the seasons.

This presentation will move forwards in time to look at the development of some medical ideas in the late 18th and early 19th century, especially of the romantic poet/physicians who embraced ideas of unity rather than division, and forces linking energy and vital spirits to the way the body and brain function. Within this story is the discovery of electricity, and the arguments as to whether or not it was involved in nervous activity. Alongside these somatic speculations that may underpin mental illness, epidemiological investigations studied external factors such as the weather. The speculations related to monthly temperatures, seasons and latitude, and some of the findings will be discussed including admission to mental hospitals and suicide rates at those times. Possible relationships of such mood changes to creativity especially among poets and composers will be suggested.

The presentation will conclude with a consideration of Seasonal Affective Disorder, its validity and the personalities that may be prone to affective disorders linked to gloomy weather.

Biographies

Giles Harrison is Professor of Atmospheric Physics in the Department of Meteorology at the University of Reading. His research work has included making some of the first airborne measurements in UK airspace of the Icelandic volcanic ash from Eyjafjallajökull, during the April 2010 flight ban. He is a member of the Academia Europea, and in 2014 was awarded the degree of Doctor of Science by the University of Cambridge for distinction in original contributions to the advancement of science.

Gillen D'Arcy Wood was born in Australia and is currently Professor of English at the University of Illinois. His research focuses on the British Romantic Age, climate and environmental history, and sustainability. His recent book, *Tambora: The Eruption that Changed the World* (Princeton University Press), reconstructing on a global scale the destructive climatic consequences of this massive event, has been recognised internationally and in Book of the Year awards by *The Guardian* and *The Times* Higher Education Supplement in 2014.

Robert Tombs is a Fellow of St John's College and Professor of French History at the University of Cambridge, where he teaches modern European history. Much of his work has been on France in the 19th century, but recently he has moved beyond the borders of the Hexagon (French Metropolitan mainland), most recently with *The English and Their History* (2014).

Michael Trimble is Emeritus Professor of Behavioural Neurology at the Institute of Neurology, Queen Square. His clinical practice and research involved people with problems particularly related to movement disorders and epilepsy. He has been especially interested in our emotional responses to artistic experiences: his book *The Soul in the Brain* explores the cerebral basis of art and belief and his more recently published volume, *Why Humans Like to Cry*, discusses emotional responses to tragedy and the arts from an evolutionary and neurobiological perspective.

Judith Bingham was born in Nottingham, began composing as a small child and then studied composition and singing at the Royal Academy of Music in London. She was a member of the BBC Singers for many years and, between 2004 and 2009, was their Composer in Association. A recording of Bingham's choral works by Wells Cathedral Choir and Matthew Owens was a *Gramophone* Editor's Choice in the 2013 *Gramophone* Awards issue. She recently wrote an anthem for the re-interment of Richard III.

Ian Ritchie studied singing at the Royal College of Music, Trinity College, Cambridge, and the Guildhall School of Music & Drama. He has directed several prominent arts organisations, including City of London Sinfonia, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Opera North, St Magnus Festival and City of London Festival. He is currently Artistic Director of the Setúbal Music Festival and The Musical Brain. In addition to interdisciplinary curating, he is in demand as a speaker, narrator and is occasionally heard as a singer.

Saturday 18 June

Byron in Switzerland

Hall One, 7.30pm

Louis Schwizgebel piano

Di Sherlock narrator

Ian Ritchie narrator

Alberto Venzago photography

Lord Byron's grand tour epitomises European Romanticism: retreating with Percy and Mary Shelley from the cold, rain and darkness on the banks of Lake Geneva, and playing with Promethean fire, Frankenstein's Monster was born that 'summer'. Byron then moved on to the Jungfrau mountain and there created *Manfred*. This concert of romantic words, music, melodrama and visual images reflects the spirit and climate of the age.

Foyer Exhibition

Saturday 18 June, 10am – 10pm

Die Jungfrau: She Walks in Beauty – An exhibition of projected photography by Alberto Venzago, capturing the awesome beauty of one of Switzerland's most iconic mountains.



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Hall One 8 pm



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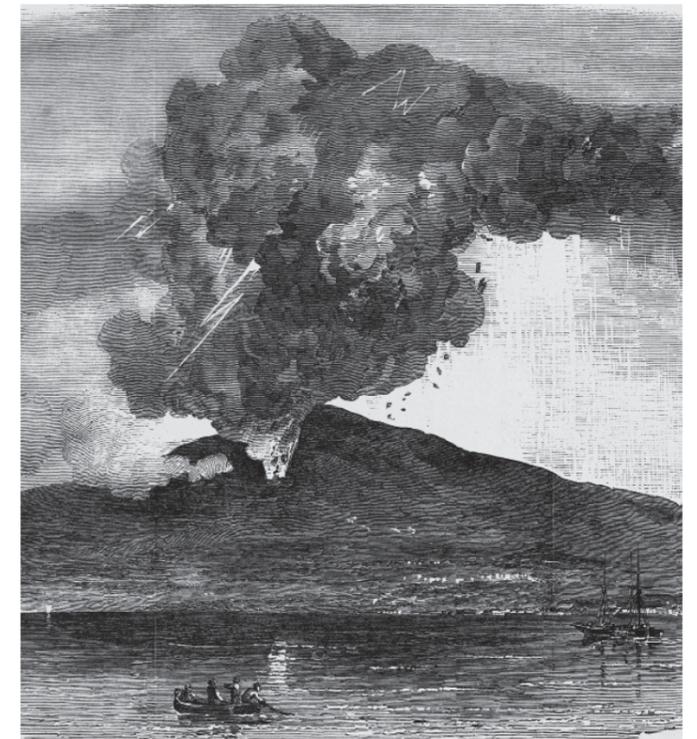
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