



**AHG22**

# MOVEMENT

**An Animal History Group Conference**

JULY 25 & 26 | 13:00 – 18:00 BST (UTC+1)

ONLINE





# WELCOME

Welcome to the sixth annual Animal History Group Conference! We are delighted to be sharing a programme of diverse papers on the theme of *Movement*.

The conference hashtag is #AHG22

## THE ANIMAL HISTORY GROUP

The Animal History Group was founded in 2016 to provide a network for students, academics, and professionals whose work engages with animals in history.

Found out more:

TWITTER

@AnimalHistories

WEBSITE

[animalhistorygroup.org](http://animalhistorygroup.org)



# PROGRAMME

## MONDAY 25 JULY

**12:45 - 13:00**

Welcome

**13:00 - 14:30**

Panel 1: Boundaries

**15:00 - 16:30**

Panel 2: Movement

**17:00 - 18:00**

Keynote Lecture

*Professor Sandra Swart*

## TUESDAY 26 JULY

**12:45 - 13:00**

Welcome

**13:00 - 14:30**

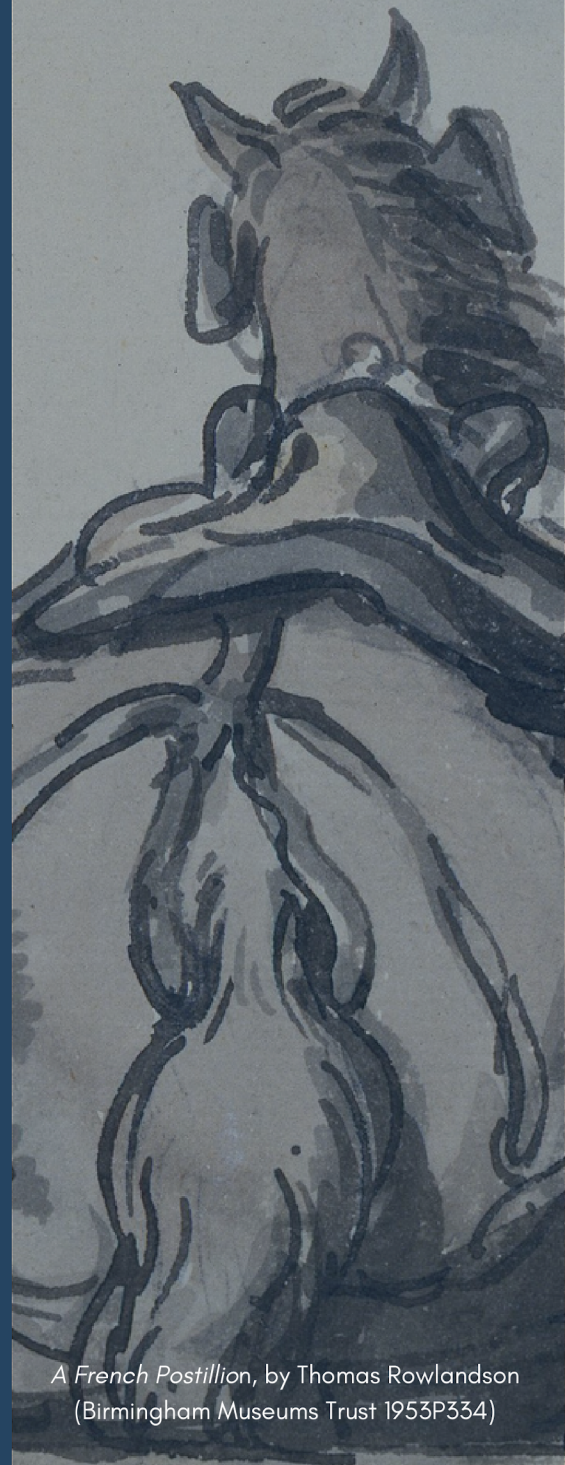
Panel 3: Disease

**15:00 - 16:30**

Panel 4: Conservation

**16:30 - 16:45**

Closing Remarks



*A French Postillion, by Thomas Rowlandson  
(Birmingham Museums Trust 1953P334)*



MONDAY 25 JULY

**PANEL 1: BOUNDARIES**

**13:00 – 14:30 BST (UTC+1)**

Moving Wild Animals for Profit. The Trading of Ethiopian Wildlife by the German Dealership Ruhe in the 1920ies

**Charlotte M. Hoes, University of Göttingen**

Moving Models and Mounting Ideas: A look at how the 1930 World Poultry Congress changed the position of chickens

**Natalie Lis, University of Queensland**

Diplomatic Platypuses: Moving an Australian icon

**Jack Ashby, University Museum of Zoology,  
Cambridge**



MONDAY 25 JULY

**PANEL 2: MOVEMENT**

**15:00 – 16:30 BST (UTC+1)**

Globetrotters: Alpacas on the Move

**Helen Cowie, University of York**

Moving Beavers, Sheep, and Whiteness into Tierra  
del Fuego

**Mara Dicenta, William & Mary**

Marvel and Menace: The Lapdog as a Commentary  
on Exotica in Tang-Song China

**Kelsey Granger, University of Cambridge**



MONDAY 25 JULY

**KEYNOTE LECTURE**

**17:00 - 18:00 BST (UTC+1)**

Rewilding Animal History: feral thinking in  
strange times

**Sandra Swart, Stellenbosch University**



TUESDAY 26 JULY

**PANEL 3: DISEASE**

**13:00 - 14:30 BST (UTC+1)**

Communicating BSE: The Pathways of Knowledge  
of a Novel Animal Disease, 1984-1988

**Isobel Newby, University of Leeds**

Migrant Gerbils and Colonial Borders: Veld Plague  
in Ovamboland, 1932-41

**Jules Skotnes-Brown, University of St Andrews**

Sheep in Motion in Nineteenth-Century Britain

**Nicole Gosling, University of Lincoln**

TUESDAY 26 JULY

**PANEL 4: CONSERVATION**

**15:00 – 16:30 BST (UTC+1)**

Beelines and Bordered Lands: Conserving An  
Aboriginal Honeybee Breed in Ukraine's  
Transcarpathian Region

**Tanya Richardson, Wilfrid Laurier University**

Thinking with the wild ass: teaching the  
Przewalski's horse to move in the Gobi desert, a  
contemporary history of conservation science

**Monica Vasile, Maastricht University**

"A Westerner Can't Come East and Contract  
Himself and Live With Any Comfort": Range  
Expansion and Coyote Mythologies in New England  
Print Media 1850-1910

**Caroline Abbott, NiCHE**

# FULL ABSTRACTS

Moving Wild Animals for Profit. The Trading of Ethiopian Wildlife by the German Dealership Ruhe in the 1920ies

**Charlotte M. Hoes, University of Göttingen**

In the first half of the 20th century, the German animal trading company L. Ruhe KG was one of the largest animal dealers in the world. Every year, the company transported thousands of mostly undomesticated animals to different regions across the globe, selling them mainly to Zoological Gardens or circuses. One of their main regions of extraction in the 1920ies was in Ethiopia, where the company's employees had to obey (or circumvent) governmental restrictions, in order to hunt and export wildlife. They established their network by connecting with other German tradesmen and by employing regional workers, who not only helped to capture the animals, but also accompanied them via train and steamship to their designated destinations. Moving these animals from one region of the world to another was by no means a swift endeavour, not least because the animals themselves frequently challenged it. By zooming in on the Ruhe company in Ethiopia in the late 1920ies, I will examine different forms of movement by humans as well as non-human animals, thereby also scrutinising which narratives accompanied these practices.



## Moving Models and Mounting Ideas: A look at how the 1930 World Poultry Congress changed the position of chickens

**Natalie Lis, University of Queensland**

This paper examines how the World's Poultry Congress, starting in the early 20th century, shaped current industrialised poultry husbandry and enclosures. In 1921 the World's Poultry Science Association (WPSA) held its first World's Poultry Congress, bringing together three hundred eighty-four representatives from twenty-three countries in order to improve poultry science and industry. WPSA's congresses rapidly gained interest, and by the fourth World's Poultry Congress of 1930 two thousand four hundred poultry delegates from sixty-one countries assembled in London. Large-scale commercial poultry had early beginnings in the United States in the late 19th century which expanded following the advent of refrigerator train cars. The 1930 congress was of interest to the US Government, who funded displays and literature that would travel with the US delegates to England. At the fourth World's Poultry Congress the US shared their advancements in commercial poultry. Many ideas for large poultry sheds were presented, some of which share strong resemblances to current commercial sheds, despite being a fraction of the size. One of the more curious inclusions was a large-scale chicken model that was prepared by the United States Department of Agriculture which was used to illustrate how chickens manufacture eggs, reducing them to no more than machines. Food scarcity during World War I stimulated innovations concerned with larger and more effective food supplies. The ideas presented by the US were rapidly adopted, specifically in Australia and the UK, marking the start of international battery and broiler sheds which radically changed the chicken's place in human society.

Diplomatic Platypuses: Moving an Australian icon

**Jack Ashby, University Museum of Zoology, Cambridge**

For centuries, animals have been used as political gifts from one country to another, to build relationships and strengthen international ties. Perhaps 'panda diplomacy' is the best known of such endeavours – the gift or loan of pandas by the Chinese government to countries with which it wanted to reinforce closer relations. This paper will discuss a similar endeavour, but with a far more challenging zoo animal – the platypus.

Australia sent – or attempted to send – one of its most celebrated animals to the UK and America in the early- to mid-twentieth century – with explicit political motives; an act that has been described as 'platypus diplomacy'.

The platypus, however, was so imbued with the iconic distinction of being uniquely Australian, was the subject of so much scientific interest, was rare in captivity and hard to keep alive that its gifting carried sufficient cachet to represent a political statement. The acceptance of such a gift had meaning, too, as it was a significant commitment to keep them fed.

To date, partly thanks to the fact that a platypus became the unlikely victim of German U-boat torpedoes during WW2, the USA is the only country outside of Australia that has successfully welcomed these duck-billed ambassadors, but the tales of how they crossed the Pacific are fraught with intrigue.

## Globetrotters: Alpacas on the Move

**Helen Cowie, University of York**

In 1861, 200 members of the New South Wales elite gathered at a ranch on the outskirts of Sydney to celebrate the arrival of 276 living alpacas in Australia. Congregating at the Sophienburg estate of Mr J.H. Atkinson, where four of the animals were being held, the party first met with the alpacas' keeper, Charles Ledger, who had smuggled the animals out of Peru and shipped them to New South Wales. The visitors then conducted 'a careful inspection' of the newly-arrived camelids, which 'patiently submitted to the examination of their fleeces', before heading to a 'spacious tent' next to Atkinson's house to consume 'several joints of alpaca meat'. Toasting the prosperity of Ledger and his alpacas, one attendee, R. Jones, prophesied that alpaca wool would one day become 'one of the staple exports of the colony'.

This paper examines attempts to naturalise the alpaca in the British Empire and situates these within the wider contexts of natural history, animal acclimatisation, commercial exchange and national/regional identity. In the nineteenth century Britain made concerted efforts to appropriate useful plants and animals and acclimatise them within its own colonies. Focusing on the case of the alpaca, I study the networks of knowledge that facilitated the transfer of alpacas from one continent to another and consider how British subjects in places as diverse as Bradford, Liverpool, Sydney and Arequipa promoted and benefited from the naturalisation scheme. I position alpaca appropriation within a wider discourse of animal 'improvement', bio-piracy and imperial adventure.



Moving Beavers, Sheep, and Whiteness into Tierra del Fuego

**Mara Dicenta, William & Mary**

In the summer of 1946, a landowning bourgeoisie organized the II Livestock Exhibition of Tierra del Fuego, and the Argentinian Navy filmed the introduction of twenty Canadian beavers in the region. Both events echoed power disputes between a military government seeking to nationalize lands and capitals and the European landowners whose privileges were threatened. The events show that landowners and state officers negotiated their interests by articulating Argentina's white exceptionalism with animals and against racialized others. Interrogating the interspecies articulation of whiteness in Tierra del Fuego during the 1940s, I examine how sheep and beavers helped secure white privilege through land concentration, breeding, racial purification, nature modernization, and eugenic moralities. To answer these questions, I analyze documents and films from local and national archives. My analysis shows the entangled racialization of humans and animals and its effects, including the appropriation of the Fuegian and native identification categories by settlers and the state. This article demonstrates that 'White Argentina' is a project desiring to live not only among white citizens but also among white animals. More broadly, I argue that including animals in race and ethnicity studies can better explain the intersectional production of race inequalities.

## Marvel and Menace: The Lapdog as a Commentary on Exotica in Tang-Song China

**Kelsey Granger, University of Cambridge**

This talk aims to uncover the unique placement of the lapdog as a luxury commodity in medieval China. As a prestige-conferring living treasure and a superfluous frivolity, writers and image-makers used the lapdog to comment on the influx and espousing of foreign fashions.

A sudden but sustained trend for lapdog-keeping emerged during the Tang dynasty and is evident in textual, material, and excavated sources from the seventh century onwards. Described as being from Fulin, Turfan, and Samarkand in turn, textual references place these animals firmly in the context of Silk Road trade and transmission. The abruptness of their appearance in Chinese sources, the direct references to their foreign origins, and their association with other exotica all intimately connect these animals with Silk Road trade.

This period saw products as varied as glassware, precious stones, incense, and hunting cheetahs reach the markets of the capital Chang'an from trade routes stretching across Eurasia. Many of these products irrevocably altered the lifestyle of the Chinese elite, but the arrival of the lapdog, and with it pet-keeping practices, brought an entirely new entity into the home. As a piece of living exotica, the lapdog could be traded, collected, treasured, pampered, and derided by writers and image-makers across the Tang-Song period. Situating the lapdog in contemporary discussions on wealth, luxury, exotica, and religion, this paper thus explores the value and vanity of foreign animals in medieval China.

Rewilding Animal History: feral thinking in strange times

**Sandra Swart, Stellenbosch University**

In our strange new world: baboons and humans have swapped places. It is like a twenty-first century remake of *Macbeth*, with the earth feverous, the humans feverish and the natural world out of kilter. In the Cape in South Africa, under lockdown, on some streets the only pedestrians are baboons. Suddenly, in a reversal of fortune, the humans are forbidden to roam as they choose, and pursued by law enforcement if they venture across boundaries. This is because we exist in unprecedented times: we are all watching the victorious progression of a rogue microbe – COVID, perhaps triggered by the trade in wildlife – so humans are compelled to think afresh about zoonoses. We reconsider our relationships with the animals close to us physically (like pets, many of whom have been abandoned or killed by their owners as panic rises, and livestock, whose mass production in industrial agriculture poses huge socio-environmental risks) and close to us physiologically (especially our closest cousins, the primates). This latter concern – the ‘primate as proxy’ or the ‘baboon as almost-human’ – has a complicated history, as I will show. Primates catch the virus as we do: under the global pandemic, chimpanzees and gorillas are being protected by being under lockdown – just like us.



In stark contrast, baboons are being pressed into service on the frontlines of fighting the virus. They are dragooned into drug testing because they offer researchers an ideal subject for complex human diseases due to their genetic and physiologic similarities to us. The mid-twentieth century saw the rise of this brand new way of thinking about baboons as 'proxy' - with the invention of the 'medical primate', as monkeys, macaques and baboons were circulated in the human body and the body politic. Scientists embraced using baboons experimentally - after all they were cheap, in large supply, and were in the main regarded as vermin. Baboon colonies started popping up in unexpected places in far-flung parts of the globe. Baboons were not only colonised by humans in this new way but also compelled to colonise in their own right, spreading across the world in medical networks. I show how baboons were circulated between laboratories, universities, countries, and continents; how baboon organs were circulated in the human body, and how ethical notions shifted. So I tell the story of a brand new way of thinking about baboons: as living factories of organs to rebuild the human body. (Of course, baboons were not always compliant bodies - they sometimes refused to conform to the role of model laboratory specimen.)

We already know that the world after the pandemic will be a different place. Now is a good time for historians to help revisit the past in order to rethink the future. In order to mitigate future pandemics, we will need to rethink our relationships with animals on a global and on a local level. In this time of global crisis, what can historians do in and about the Anthropocene? What kind of history do we write for the Apocalypse? I embrace “disciplinary rewilding” as key to creating a useable past for unusual times. Movement is key. So I suggest a new kind of freedom of movement, embracing radical disciplinary ferality moving between History and the other disciplines (especially ecology and ethology), and beyond the once ostensibly ‘natural’ boundary between the ‘human’ and the ‘animal’. The limits and challenges of this kind of history are exposed in the process, but equally its possibilities. I suggest how we can rewild animal history through a creature equally poised between wild and tame – the baboon.

## Communicating BSE: The Pathways of Knowledge of a Novel Animal Disease, 1984-1988

**Isobel Newby, University of Leeds**

Today, awareness of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) is entrenched in the consciousness of British society as one of the most significant animal and public health disasters of the twentieth century. Farmers are mindful of possible signs of the disease in their herd. But in 1984, the novel disease process was hidden within the individual animal. Though BSE has been transmitted to humans – manifesting as variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (vCJD) – the experience of BSE remains the preserve of the dairy cow. The first to suffer BSE, known as Cow 133, expressed the disease through an array of physical and emotional symptoms, observed and interpreted by her keeper as unusual behaviours. Like other diseases of animals, knowledge of BSE's existence was communicated between the animal and human worlds through non-verbal movement. As the very nature of the disease was being uncovered, knowledge of it was elevated through the ranks of the state veterinary realm. This paper will uncover the path that awareness of this novel animal disease travelled, traversing complex institutional relationships before filtering back through the British government's communications systems to the public domain, when it became a notifiable disease in 1988. Using correspondence gathered by the Phillips Inquiry into the government's handling of BSE, it will highlight the central roles of the farmer and veterinarian in the identification of BSE as a novel disease in 1980s Britain. It will also draw on ideas from histories of human-animal relationships to reflect on the experience of cattle in manifestations of disease.



## Migrant Gerbils and Colonial Borders: Veld Plague in Ovamboland, 1932-41

**Jules Skotnes-Brown, University of St Andrews**

This paper analyses the diplomatic, medical, and scientific consequences of an outbreak of 'veld plague' in Ovamboland – a populous region on the border of Namibia and Angola – from a multispecies perspective. In 1932, for the first time, *Yersinia pestis* moved across African land borders not in the bodies of rats, but of highveld gerbils, sparking a diplomatic incident and international scientific investigation between Ovambo people, South African, South-West African, and Angolan authorities. I argue that the discovery of *Yersinia pestis* in Ovamboland transformed highveld gerbils from endemic rodents into invasive, migratory species who needed to be subjected to surveillance and border control. As gerbils were reconceptualised as invasive, so too were the movements of Ovambo people pathologized and subjected to strict biopolitical controls. Not only were their "Kraals" declared infected and placed under quarantine, so too were they suspected of facilitating the transnational movement of *Y. pestis*. Angolan authorities stationed troops on their southern border to prevent the Ovambo crossings into Angolan territory, sparking confusion and violent clashes. Ultimately, this case shows how settler colonial authorities in invader societies reframed both indigenous animals and humans as invasive migrants, justifying the extension of settler biopower and the enforcement of a hard border between nations.

## Sheep in Motion in Nineteenth-Century Britain

**Nicole Gosling, University of Lincoln**

In the early nineteenth century, sheep began to enter and move across the UK more than they ever had before. This was largely a result of what has controversially been labelled the 'agricultural revolution', which saw the adoption of scientifically-based methods of agricultural production. Part of this so called 'revolution' in agriculture arrived in the form of improved breeding techniques to allow for the promotion of specific and economically valuable characteristics within sheep and other livestock animals. Sheep breeders across the UK began cross-breeding sheep to enhance particular characteristics, which involved the movement of new breeds into the country, as well as the sale and loan of sheep within the country. Although these breeding techniques were first developed in the late eighteenth century (largely by agriculturalist Robert Bakewell), it was in the early nineteenth century that they really took off. As a result of this movement, new contagious diseases, such as footrot in sheep, became prevalent problems. In this presentation I will explore how the movement of sheep for breeding practices led to the increased awareness and prevalence of certain contagious diseases, using footrot as an example. I argue that, rather ironically, while sheep were moving more than ever before, this also had a negative impact on the motility of individual sheep because of the increased risk of lameness-inducing conditions like footrot.

## Beelines and Bordered Lands: Conserving An Aboriginal Honeybee Breed in Ukraine's Transcarpathian Region

**Tanya Richardson, Wilfrid Laurier University**

This paper is about researchers from Ukraine's Prokopovych Beekeeping Institute based in Transcarpathia Region, whose task is to conserve Carpathian honeybees as a distinct and commercially viable breed. It draws on publications about Carpathian bees since the 1970s and ethnographic fieldwork with Ukrainian researchers during their field trip to Moldova and Romania in November 2019 and with a Ukrainian Canadian beekeeper who has imported these bees to the province of Quebec. Carpathian honeybees became the focus of Soviet scientific research and breeding in the 1960s because of concerns that a productive, aboriginal honeybee population was disappearing due to the influx of other kinds of bees. Russian and Ukrainian researchers from Moscow's Timiriazev Agricultural Institute collaborated with Transcarpathian animal technicians and beekeepers to establish a breeding program and state queen breeding farm from which queens were sent to other regions of Ukraine and various Soviet republics. Since Ukraine's independence, researchers have continued to operate a research and breeding program by funding it from their private apiaries. The conservation of this particular locally adapted bee remains dependent on markets for these bees in Ukraine, in Moldova, Kazakhstan, Canada, and until the invasion – Russia.

By describing cross-border relations among bees, beekeepers, and breeders I aim show some ways in which Ukrainian researchers navigate the territorializing logics of conservation, honeybees' aerial mobilities, competition among breeders, geopolitics, and disparities in resources available to maintain epistemic authority about how to breed Carpathian bees. I end by reflecting on how the Russian invasion has disrupted these relations.

Thinking with the wild ass: teaching the Przewalski's horse to move in the Gobi desert, a contemporary history of conservation science

**Monica Vasile, Maastricht University**

The Przewalski's horses – believed to be last wild horses on earth – were taught by humans how to move and explore territory ('again') in the wild, after living in zoos for generations and losing their spatial imagination. I explore in this presentation how humans have understood and managed the movement of the Przewalski's horses (and its absence) in the Gobi desert. In the 1960s, the horses became extinct in the wild, exterminated by border wars, hunting, competition with livestock, unforgiving winters. The species survived only because of captive-breeding in zoos. Yet captivity posed challenges. Humans thought that a life back in the wild is possible for these skittish tawny animals. In the 1990s, reintroductions to Mongolia began, and transport after transport brought dozens of horses 'back home' to the Gobi desert. For the scientists involved, it was worrisome though that, once released, the horses did not move enough, and this could prove fatal when winter struck. Were the horses able to use the scarce resources of the Gobi, to move, and find shelter, forage and waterholes? Or did they lose an essential sense of territory during their captive lives? And how could humans teach horses to recover these movement patterns? No baseline information existed to enable human comprehension of how such a movement could look like. Scientists turned to wild asses (also called khulans), who had a movement range ten times larger than the horses, and fared well in difficult winter conditions. They fitted satellite transmitters around the asses' necks and studied their movements to borrow knowledge for teaching the horses. Based on research of documents, scientific publications and interviews, I trace the entangled journeys of the horses, asses and scientists as they produced a more-than-human history of the wild horse learning to move across their new but old 'home' range.



## "A Westerner Can't Come East and Contract Himself and Live With Any Comfort": Range Expansion and Coyote Mythologies in New England Print Media 1850-1910

**Caroline Abbott, NiCHE**

Settler colonial mythologies of the Eastern coyote (*C. latrans*) have evolved at rates which reflect the species' significant range expansion, but scholarly examinations of the transnational history of these mythologies have not kept pace. Interdisciplinary studies which account for the often-harmful mythologies of the "Coywolf" (a contentious sobriquet for hybridized populations in the Northeastern United States and Canada) are vital to countering this deficit. Though existing scholarship provides critical basis by which to frame the mythologies of wolf-hatred in New England and Canada, explorations which address the impact of wolf-hate on coyotes are limited. Although nineteenth and early twentieth century print media are rife with harmful representations, these portrayals of coyotes are neglected from environmental histories and ecocriticism. This study builds on previous work which analysed the rhetoric of wolf hatred in late nineteenth century American print media alongside comparative rhetoric concerning the transnational nature of New England's "Coywolf" mythologies. Building on the findings of this study and building on established critical frameworks, this study will analyze coyote appearances in New England print media. It sets its sights on a period of key range expansion for the coyote following wolf extirpation in New England (1850) to the turn of the century (1910). Its conclusions aim to improve critical and social comprehension of one of the Northeast's most vilified apex predators, benefit scholarly understanding of transnational animal folklore, and open intersectional pathways which can benefit the field and non-human animal communities in "backyard environments"



# THANK YOU

Your participation and support for the AHG is greatly appreciated – the funds generated by the annual conference allow us to run our free programme for the upcoming year.

## HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

The current conveners are UK-based but we hope the AHG continues to grow as an international organisation.

Our main programme will remain online but we hope to add more in-person events such as exhibition visits.

We'd love to hear from anyone who would be interested in devising, supporting or running AHG events in their timezone, whether online or in-person.

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