

SHP26: Simply the Best

I decided to wait awhile before posting my reflections on SHP26 because I wanted to let it soak into my bones, to lodge it safely in my memory bank, to store it away so it will always be available to me. It was, without doubt, one of the highlights of my professional career. It is such a huge privilege to curate a conference that brings together so many people, uniting for the weekend as the SHP family. To be part of such a joyous, inspiring and meaningful event was truly uplifting, despite the exhaustion most of us feel at this time of the academic year.



One aim for this year was to shift our workshops away from didacticism back towards constructivism and active learning and it worked like a dream. Workshop leaders embraced the opportunity and the wealth of their rigour and creativity was on full display. As I floated between rooms, stepping inside felt like I'd been transported into a series of magical classrooms: the 'students' forming a living graph exploring Tudor England and weighing the impact of Thomas Wolsey's reforms on the folk of East Anglia; a game of Jenga revealing, with a crash, the impact of the supply chains on the experiences of Indian lascars; change and continuity over 10,000 years explored through a series of historical reproductions of a single farm.

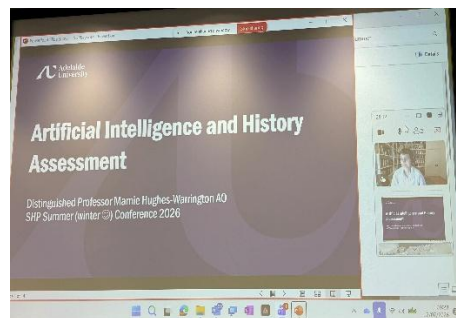


Another ambition for SHP26 was to find ways to strengthen the conference community over the weekend. With this in mind and inspired by SHP Fellow Alex Ford's visit to a conference in Sweden earlier in the year, we launched our Bildung sessions. These were an opportunity, outside of the formally curated programme, for everyone to be in a space that lent itself to building their connections: a gentle walk through the local countryside taking in the historic sites of Horsforth; a free writing workshop, structured with a few thought provoking questions; or time to create a historical embroidery, working with an artist to inspire and support the process. The Bildung sessions were, without doubt, the glue that held the conference together, and certainly received some of the warmest anecdotal feedback. Similarly, the return of Leeds poet, Natalie Davies, was very well received. She

possesses a beautiful ability to connect, in her words and performance, the past, present and future, drawing on themes about the environment, migration and family.



A common theme of interdisciplinarity weaved through the keynote sessions for the conference, highlighted the vital role that history plays across the school curriculum. Our roundtable discussion expertly explored the question of how history should approach interdisciplinarity; the first keynote lecture was from Professor Dan Hicks, who drew on his expertise as an archaeologist, anthropologist, author and museum curator to share insights from his latest book *Every Monument Will Fall*; and our final keynote lecture was from Distinguished Professor Marnie Hughes Warrington, a philosopher, historian and primary teacher with a specialism in Artificial Intelligence.



Finally, I'd like to share a few words from the SHP family who contributed to such a wonderful weekend in Leeds:

"From the poetry to the bildung there was such an effort to ensure that the conference was meaningful and attended to us as teachers from a whole person perspective, recognising that who we are in the classroom is built on a lifeworld of experiences. Just fantastic, I don't know how you managed to make it even better this year but you did!"

"perfectly pitched, intelligent, thought-provoking with practical application but deeper engagement as well (not just tips and tricks)"

"It was fantastic to see more primary delegates there this year, especially students with whom there were lots of excellent conversations."

"It's hard to pin it down to one thing so perhaps the overall experience. It feels like a community, one that cares and wants to support and champion. The workshops were varied and the keynote lecturers were fantastic - top class."

Thank you so much to everyone who joined us in Leeds to make it such a memorable conference, and I hope to see many more of you next year for SHP27.