

Writing History: Battles and the Shaping of the North Atlantic World

A series of conferences of commemoration,
Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic, University of Cambridge

Conference 1: 1014, Ireland and the Wider World (5-6 December 2014)

G-R06/07, Faculty of English, 9 West Road, University of Cambridge

Programme

Friday 5 December

9.30: Registration

10-11: Professor Matthew Strickland, School of History and the Scottish Centre for War Studies, University of Glasgow
'The Historiography of Conflict'

11-11.30: Tea/Coffee

11.30-1: *Clontarf in Context*

Professor Simon Keynes, Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic, University of Cambridge

'England, Ireland and Scandinavia in 1014: the historical context'

Dr Judy Quinn, Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic, University of Cambridge
'*Darraðarljóð* and Old Norse poetic traditions commemorating kings chosen to die'

1-2: Lunch (Social Space, Faculty of English, 9 West Road)

2-3.30: *Writing History around and beyond Clontarf*

Dr Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir, University of Reykjavík, Iceland

'Clontarf and the shaping of Njáls saga'

Dr Meidhbhín Ní Úrdail, School of Irish, University College Dublin

'The Battle of Clontarf in later Irish tradition'

3.30-4: Tea/Coffee

4-5: Dr Stephen Harrison, Department of Archaeology, University of Glasgow

'Time, Tide and Text: An Interdisciplinary Approach to the Battle of Clontarf'

5: Reception (Social Space, Faculty of English, 9 West Road)

Saturday 6 December:

9.30-11: *Communication and Cultural Contacts in the North Atlantic World*

Dr Colmán Etchingham, Department of History, National University of Ireland,
Maynooth

Dr Máire Ní Mhaonaigh, Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic, University of
Cambridge

Dr Alex Woolf, Department of Medieval History, University of St Andrew's

Professor Jón Víðar Sigurdsson, School of History and Archaeology, University of Oslo

Dr Elizabeth Ashman Rowe, Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic, University of
Cambridge

11-11.30: Tea/Coffee

11.30-12.30: *1014-1914*

Professor Keith Jeffery, School of History and Anthropology, Queen's University Belfast
'Writing History, a Modern Perspective: Ireland and the First World War'

Writing History: Battles and the Shaping of the North Atlantic World

5-6 December 2014: Ireland and the Wider World

18-19 September 2015: Scandinavia and the Wider World

15-16 April 2016: England and the Wider World

This series of three interrelated conferences has, as its main theme, the nature of battle in historical memory and how the writing and rewriting of battles frames and shapes subsequent cultural and political developments. In the context of the commemoration of the centenary of the First World War and consideration of the impact of conflict upon society more widely, the focus will be on a group of significant military encounters and their protagonists, from a millennium ago (1014–1016), which took place in the broad sphere of the North Atlantic World (Britain, Ireland and Scandinavia). In our elucidation of the historiography of conflict of a particular time and region, the universal features of writing war will also be highlighted. To this end, we range chronologically and generically beyond our early medieval core and have invited speakers at each of the three events to address the theme analogically from their own modern perspective.

The spirit of commemoration, reaching across a thousand years, will begin in 2014 with the battle of Clontarf, in Dublin (1014), and the death of Brian Boru, with Professor Keith Jeffery reflecting on the participation of Ireland in the First World War. In 2015 the focus will shift to Scandinavia, marking the millennium of the accession of St Olaf, king of Norway, and of Cnut's invasion of England in the late summer of 1015. Professor Brendan Simms will offer a paper on the theme of writing history in connection with the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. In 2016 the centres of attention will be King Æthelred the Unready, and his son Edmund Ironside, both of whom died in 1016; an invited speaker will reflect on the magnitude of the loss of life in war, with reference to the Battle of the Somme. Within this overarching framework, the happenings of a thousand years ago will be the subject of our primary investigation. In exploring the deeds, as well as the literary representations and appropriations, of such leaders as Brian Boru, Edmund Ironside, and St Olaf, we will adopt a comparative perspective, drawing links across the Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic worlds, as well as with continental Europe and with modern times.