



Graduate Women Scotland East



Dundee
Women's
Festival

12 March 2022, 2pm to 4pm.

Location: Zoom

Tickets available through Eventbrite

***'Plagues, Climate Change and Vaccines:
A look through history to understand our future'***

This is a rare opportunity to hear from women currently studying in Scotland and whose research aims to help shape tomorrow's world.

Three Doctoral candidates investigating how pandemics and climate change impacted our ancestral world will explore how these points in history can help us manage our future. There will be opportunities for questions and discussion.

- Rebecca Main - University of Stirling – Historicising Plague: A Contextualisation of the Early Rise and Spread of Plague Pandemics in Prehistoric Eurasia
- Irmine Roshem - University of Aberdeen – Climate change in the medieval northern world and its impact on respiratory health
- Sylvia Valentine – University of Dundee – Vaccine hesitancy: not a twenty first century phenomenon

The event will be chaired by Dr Susie Schofield, Associate Dean at the University of Dundee and President of Graduate Women Scotland East.

(Full Bios and Abstracts below)

Rebecca Main

Historicising Plague: A Contextualisation of the Early Rise and Spread of Plague Pandemics in Prehistoric Eurasia

Historically, plague is the single deadliest disease ever encountered by humans. We now know that plague is a much older disease, emerging some 6,000 years ago and killing people for at least the last 5,000 years.

How can we learn from historic pandemics to mitigate future threats of emerging/re-emerging infectious diseases? The emergence and early spread of plague is an excellent case study that can provide insight into how epidemic diseases emerge and persevere for centuries or millennia and help develop a framework to understand the link between climate change and the emergence of infectious diseases today.

Bio: Rebecca Main is a History PhD student at the University of Stirling, where she also completed both her BA (Hons) and MRes degrees in History. Rebecca's interest in plague history began during her Undergraduate, exploring it further in her MRes where she researched the phenomenon of prehistoric plague pandemics. Rebecca's PhD is a continuation of the MRes project.

Irmine Roshem

Climate change in the medieval northern world and its impact on respiratory health

Northern Europe experienced two major climate periods during medieval times: the Medieval Warm Period and the Little Ice Age. During the former, the warmer temperatures allowed the expansion of agricultural land and a consequent increase in production. The transition to the Little Ice Age saw a significant cooling of temperatures and significantly impacted people's lives. Despite past climate reconstructions often being used in current climate studies, they often neglect how they affected human health at a local scale. To better understand the relationship between climate and health, and to provide insight into current climate challenges, this research aims to determine the effects of past climate changes on respiratory health.

Bio: Irmine Roshem graduated from the University of York where she obtained a BSc in Archaeology in 2019 and an MSc in Bioarchaeology the following year. Her Master's dissertation focused on the impact of modern climate change on the preservation of human remains. In November 2020, she began a PhD at the University of Aberdeen aiming to determine the effects of the medieval climate transition on respiratory health in Scotland and Ireland.

Sylvia Valentine

Vaccine hesitancy: not a twenty first century phenomenon

In the early nineteenth century the British government sought to control the spread of smallpox by introducing compulsory vaccination in England and Wales in 1840 and Scotland from 1 January 1864.

Their efforts were undermined by the activities of anti-vaccination campaigners. Today Covid 19 anti-vax campaigns use social media to spread disinformation. This is nothing new. By the 1850s an anti-compulsory vaccination movement had taken root in England. They used meetings, and the written word to spread their propaganda. Joined in the late 1880s by Scottish anti-vaxxers they campaigned together for total abolition of the Vaccination Acts.

The presentation will discuss the growth of opposition to compulsory vaccination in Scotland and consider the role of men and women in Scotland and England lobbying for the right to conscientiously object to the compulsory vaccination of their children.

Bio: Sylvia Valentine is a PhD candidate with the University of Dundee. Graduating M. Litt in Family and Local History in 2016. Her Masters dissertation *The Guardian's Revolt* considered the events in a Yorkshire town which lead to members of the Board of Guardians of the Poor being jailed for failing to enforce the compulsory smallpox vaccination in the 1870s. Her curiosity about the lack of any evidence of similar events in Scotland led her to return to study and she is now researching Opposition to Compulsory Smallpox Vaccination in Scotland 1864 – 1918. Several articles on her research have been published and she has spoken at both the British and Australia and New Zealand Society of the History of Medicine and the Scottish Studies Foundation.