

Poles in Britain: History, Culture and Literature

This symposium entitled 'Poles in Britain: History, Culture and Literature' will take place on 12 July 2019 at the University of Portsmouth, UK. The symposium is concerned with Britain's Polish population from the eighteenth century to the present and aims to bring together scholars from a variety of fields (history, literature, music, film etc.). The plenary presentation at the event will be delivered by Adam Zamoyski.

We are looking for papers of around 20 minutes on any topic related to the symposium's theme. The deadline for abstracts (150-200 words) is 12 April.

The organisers are Dr Ben Dew (Benjamin.dew@port.ac.uk) and Dr Maggie Bowers.

This one-day, interdisciplinary conference is designed to bring together scholars whose work is concerned with aspects of the Polish presence in Britain from c. 1750 to the present. Britain has long been a place of residence – sometimes permanent, sometimes temporary – for Poles. The eighteenth century saw a series of significant visits to Britain from Poland's major political leaders – among them the future King, Stanisław August Poniatowski in 1754, and the statesman and military leader Tadeusz Kościuszko in 1797 – and the emergence of a Protestant Polish community in London. Larger groups of Poles, meanwhile, settled in Britain after the expulsions and large-scale emigration from Polish territories sparked by the failed uprisings of 1830-1 and 1863-4. Various waves of migration to Britain were to follow, perhaps most notably those in the wake the Second World War, the Solidarity protests of the early 1980s, and the entry of Poland into the European Union in 2004. As a consequence, the history of Polish Britain is a story both of continuity and change. There has been a continuous Polish presence in the country for many years. However, the social, political and cultural character of that presence has been a constantly evolving one, with new migrants arriving, other individuals returning to Poland or travelling on elsewhere, and existing communities responding to changing local, national and international circumstances.

Our aim in this conference is to explore the various historical, cultural and literary legacies of Polish Britain, and their significance for both the British and Polish nations.

The conference will take place in the city of Portsmouth, the home of one of Britain's oldest Polish communities.

Conference themes include, but are not limited to, the following topics:

The history of Britain's Polish communities

- The literature and culture produced by expat Poles resident in Britain
- Ideas of British and Polish identity in the work of expat Polish writers and artists
- Representations of Poles (particularly those resident in Britain) in literature, media and the arts
- Accounts of visits to Britain by Polish travellers – this might include the trips of more celebrated individuals (Kościuszko, Chopin, Sienkiewicz etc.) as well as regular travellers
- The presentation and marketing of Poland and its political and cultural heritage to a British audience
- Responses to Brexit from Poles resident in Britain