



The INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR Victorian Women Writers Newsletter



~ September 2017 ~ Autumn Edition ~ Issue No. 3 ~

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Welcome ... to the third issue of *The ICVWW Newsletter*!

This summer ICVWW took one deep breath of Victorian women writers at the CUNY symposium. Then we officially joined the 20th century (we're catching up).

Read on for an account of our conference on Reassessing Women Writers of the 1900s and 1910s and some suggestions for how to engage new audiences with the period, courtesy of our bursary competition winners Naomi Walker and Emily Turner.

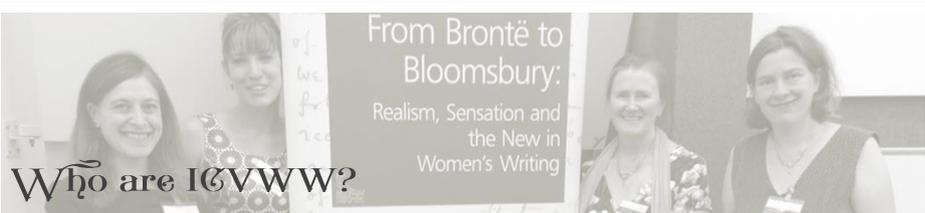


Carolyn Oulton (Director of ICVWW)

This issue's interview is with keynote speaker Professor Ruth Robbins – you'll find yourself wishing Oscar Wilde had made it on to just one episode of *Come Dine With Me*.

If you're more comfortable with the Brontë than the Bloomsbury end of our project, you'll enjoy this recent interview on podcast "Bonnetts at Dawn" <https://soundcloud.com/bonnettsatdawn>. ICVWW was invited in for Episode 16, and chose *which* Brontë novel as a favourite? Let's keep having this argument.

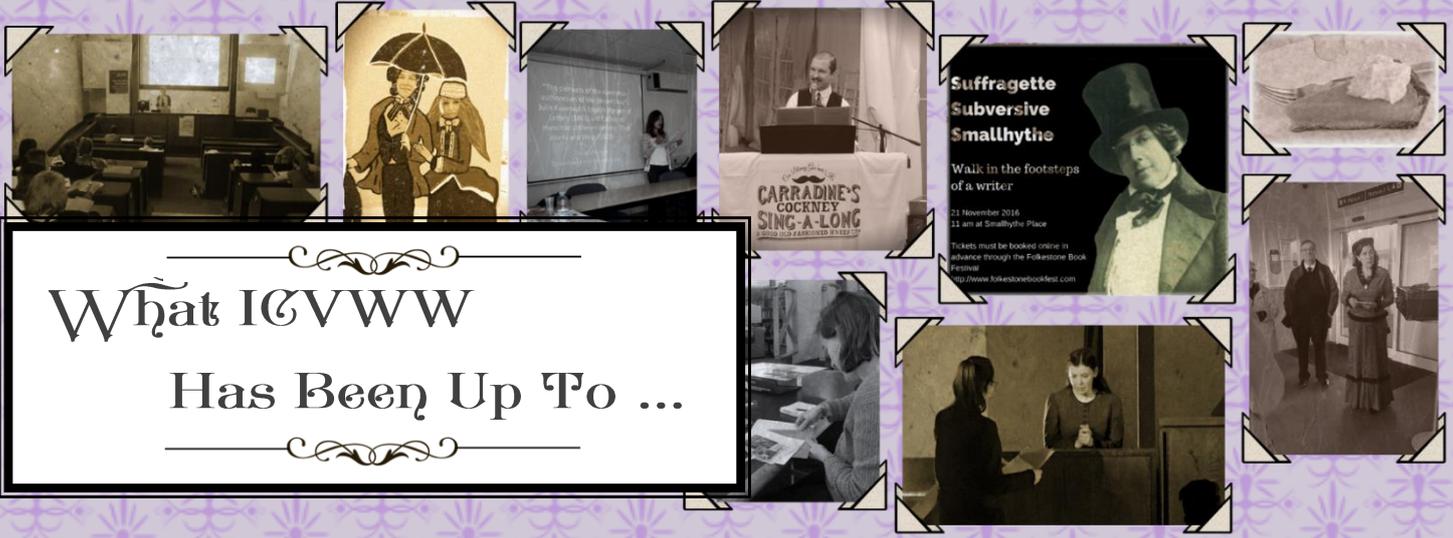
Or you could just read this issue's top picks, chosen by CCCU PG student Amy Trott. So what *did* the *fin de siècle's* most famous male humourist have to say about the New Woman? You may be surprised.



Co-founded by Profs Carolyn Oulton and Adrienne Gavin, The International Centre for Victorian Women Writers aims to spearhead new and innovative research in the area of Victorian women's writing, providing an international focus for scholars. We are involved in research projects, and regularly organise conferences, exhibitions, and public lectures in conjunction with our research.



Bike ready? Pedal on to discover more!



What ICVWW Has Been Up To ...

ICVWW Fourth International Conference

From Brontë to Bloomsbury: Reassessing Women's Writing of the 1900s and 1910s
10-11 July 2017, Canterbury Christ Church University

Naomi Walker of the University of Chester reports on her experience ...



The ICVWW's Fourth International Conference got off to a sunny start on the morning of Monday 10th July. We were welcomed with a goody bag on arrival and gathered in the foyer of Old Sessions House, and we were filled with anticipation for an interesting two days of varied and stimulating papers.

The keynote address by Professor Ruth Robbins of Leeds Beckett University did not disappoint. She explained how a culture could forget about women's literary history, and discussed how certain books and authors get forgotten or overlooked if they are not championed by people in power.



A choice of panels was then on offer. I opted for the "Early Modernism" one, and enjoyed papers on Virginia Woolf, May Sinclair, and Katherine Mansfield. Then, after a delicious lunch, it was time to present my own paper on Mary Webb. This was part of the "Revival and Rediscovery" panel, and included papers on female British Dantismo and Pearl Craigie. I enjoyed giving my paper, and received some valuable feedback. It was not as daunting an experience as I had feared! Following refreshments, there were papers on "Crime and Deviance." Carolyn Oulton gave a fascinating paper on Mary Cholmondeley's short story, "The Lowest Rung," and Alyson Hunt introduced me to Emma Orczy's crime stories (I will now hunt these out!).

The day ended spectacularly with a walk round to St Martin's Priory, where we all gathered with drinks on the lawn and enjoyed a surprise performance of a short play about suffragettes by the fabulous Time Will Tell theatre company. There were only three actors, but they all played many parts and everyone thoroughly enjoyed it. Luckily the rain held off so that we could enjoy the entertainment in such a beautiful setting. The day then ended with dinner and stimulating conversation about the talks we had all heard throughout the day.



The second day started well with a keynote address by Dr Sarah Edwards of the University of Strathclyde. She discussed Neo-Edwardian texts, providing much food for thought in this growing area. This was another action-packed day, with papers ranging from Mary Ward and Edith Nesbit to Rhoda Broughton and Sheila Kaye-Smith. I thoroughly enjoyed the two days I spent at Canterbury, and loved learning about new authors. I only hope now that I can find time to read them all as the reading pile by my desk has certainly gotten bigger because of this conference!

CUNY Annual Victorian Conference: "The Woman Card"

5 May 2017, Graduate Center, City University of New York, New York

Prof. Carolyn Oulton (CCCU) reports ...

That morning on 5th Avenue it was raining. This was clear to an English visitor from the number of large umbrellas going up like mushrooms, although in all honesty there wasn't quite enough water to go around. For the credit of ICVWW we will gloss over the moment when Elaine Showalter, one of the first critics to write on Mary Cholmondeley, was hailed with an enthusiastic, "Hello, I sat next to you at a conference once in 1996!" After all she's probably heard that one before.

Humorous moments aside, the 2017 CUNY symposium was stimulating, inspiring, and charged with the shock of recent events—news of a threat to Obamacare had broken literally hours before, and one of the more memorable responses came from the PG committee, who invited us to put donations in a box marked up with a range of health conditions.

Running through all this were some fundamental questions, of the kind that become fully apparent only later, after the plane has landed and the notes are typed up. Nancy Armstrong pointing out that Jane Eyre's authority increases as she alters the standard by which we measure her; Martha Vicinus asking us to look again at the moments of disruption in George Eliot and Charlotte Brontë; Maia McAleavey on the "mechanism of replacement" but also the resistance of competition in the family chronicle, where no one character emerges as the hero.

It was wonderful to be approached by a prospective PhD student on the day, saying, "Thank you for your paper. I now feel it's ok to write on non-canonical authors." Yes—we have officially moved on from what Elaine Showalter remembers as the 1970s norm, where "first class scholars worked on first class writers." But line of the day goes to Talia Schaffer, visionary organiser and tour guide extraordinaire, for her dryly delivered, "Don't bother asking her if it's cold, she's British."



[CUNY Graduate Center](#)

North West Long Nineteenth Century Seminar

5 July 2017, Manchester Metropolitan University

Dr Susan Civale (CCCU) reports ...

The North West Long Nineteenth Century Seminar featured an interdisciplinary and cross-period mixture of papers on the periodical press and women's writing from scholars at various stages of career.

Craig Horner, a historian at MMU, kicked off the day with a foray into *Punch* cartoons and other contemporary illustrations, which he used to challenge the idea that the motor car replaced the bicycle at the *fin de siècle*, and owed nothing to its predecessor. Discussions of periodicals continued with a panel on women editors, in which Beth Rodgers (Aberystwyth) explored Alice Corkran's work at the *Girl's Realm*, and Jayne Shacklady focused on Flora Klickmann's editorship of the *Girl's Own Annual*. The afternoon sessions then took us back in time to the Romantic period, starting with a panel on women's life writing. In her paper on the journal of Mary Berry (1763-1832), posthumously published in 1865, Amy Culley (Lincoln) offered new perspectives on age, memory, and gender (building on Devoney Looser's 2008 study, *Women Writers and Old Age in Great Britain, 1750-1850*). My own paper also delved into issues of memory and commemoration in its focus on Mary Hays's innovative use of form in *Female Biography* (1803), the first comprehensive English-language encyclopaedia dedicated solely to women. Two further papers on women's writing rounded off the day. Lucy Thompson (Aberystwyth) considered surveillance and the policing of identity, reading Charlotte Smith's *The Emigrants* in the context of the Alien Act of 1793. Finally, Holly Hirst (MMU) highlighted Ann Radcliffe's use of actual—not explained—supernatural in *Gaston de Blondville* (1826) in order to interrogate the neat dichotomy of female and male gothic that sees Radcliffe as distinct from contemporaries like Matthew Lewis. Organisers Emma Liggins (MMU) and Sonja Lawrenson (MMU) fostered a friendly and collaborative atmosphere on the day, which concluded with a convivial tapas dinner in the evening.

For details of the Autumn North West Long Nineteenth Century Seminar, contact organisers Emma Liggins and Sonja Lawrenson at: e.liggins@mmu.ac.uk and s.lawrenson@mmu.ac.uk.



Research and Researchers



Bursary Competition Winner

This summer ICVWW hosted a competition for the prize of a bursary for our Fourth International Conference. Applicants were invited to enter with suggestions for ways in which new audiences can be encouraged to engage with texts from the long nineteenth century. Congratulations to our winner, Emily Turner, who presents her ideas ...



PhD Student Emily Turner

With social media, community-orientated heritage industries, and a cultural fascination for the nineteenth century, there are a variety of exciting and dynamic ways in which new audiences can be encouraged to engage with texts from this era.

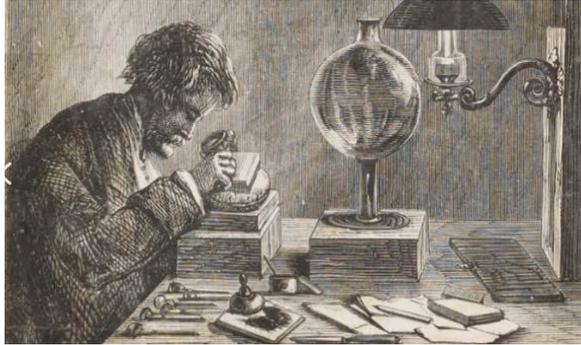
In addition to the online presence of groups such as ICVWW, BAVS, and VPFA enabling communities to grow, individuals can use social media to discuss texts by utilising hashtags, moments, and online book clubs. I use my website (emilyjessicaturner.com) to discuss and showcase Victorian literature, art, and ideas. Additionally, Twitter and Facebook are excellent platforms for helping new audiences experience literature and themes from the nineteenth century.

While talks and events held at higher education institutions promote the study of nineteenth-century fiction, public talks outside of University spaces—such as at museums, galleries, and even pubs—encourage a varied demographic to learn more about new topics. Such events bring Victorian texts to a wider public, beyond academia, connecting with those who might not have previous knowledge or experience. Interdisciplinary groups and talks also enable those from other disciplines to gain knowledge of nineteenth-century literature.

Encouraging people to take part in community projects, producing creative work, or volunteering as researchers also enables those who have not been trained to connect with texts from the long nineteenth century. Community events such as the Dalziel project, which promotes the work of nineteenth-century illustrators known as “woodpeckers” to schools and other public groups, bring the Victorian literary world to young people through workshops. Similarly, the Graylingwell Heritage Project, on which I worked to encourage local people to engage with the art and literature produced at a nineteenth-century Sussex asylum, enabled those who came along to explore equipment and techniques.

New audiences can also become engaged through a variety of other modern media. Film or television adaptations enable fans to communicate their thoughts about nineteenth century texts and their modern retellings, and bring stories to viewers anew. Modern authors are also creating new adaptations of classic books, enabling new readers to reconnect or experience for the first time works from the (perhaps intimidating) canon of classics. Lynn Shepherd’s novel *Tom-All-Along’s* (2012), for example, reworks Dickens’ *Bleak House*, and John Harding’s *Florence and Giles* (2010) retells *The Turn of the Screw* by Henry James. Retellings or reimaginings of classic texts are rife in postmodern culture, many of which introduce modern narrative elements to nineteenth century texts. *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, *Anno Dracula*, and *Penny Dreadful* are all examples of postmodern “texts” which bring contemporary themes to classic works. Some of these examples, such as the *Carmilla* webseries or the recent film *Lady Macbeth*, encompass the experiences of LGBTQ+ people and people of colour, and enable traditionally marginalised people to experience these texts.

All of these, are, and continue to be, examples of innovative ways in which audiences of all levels of experience can be encouraged to engage with texts from the long nineteenth century.



From “[Woodpeckings](http://Woodpeckings.com)” site © Sylph Editions 2016

Interview with a Guest

Name: Professor Ruth Robbins

Title: Director of Research for Cultural Studies, Leeds Beckett University

What is your current research project?

In common with most colleagues, I'm doing too many things! I'm working on a book on the figure of the dancer in prose, poetry, pictures, and real life at the end of the nineteenth century. I'm editing a book on the history of Leeds Library for its 250th anniversary celebration, plus I'm working on a grant application with the library about its Forgotten Fictions of the Victorian age. I'm also writing the odd article or two on gender and genre in short fiction, on suffrage fiction, and on Arnold's Bennet's *Riceyman Steps*.

What would be your dream research project?

I'm currently following my dreams, even if they are a bit scattered. I think the real dream is probably about just doing one thing at a time. But then, dreamscapes aren't like that, are they?

Critical sources you can't live without?

It does depend on what I'm doing, of course, but I return over and over again to Raymond Williams' *Keywords*, despite its lacunae in the matters of gender, sexuality, race, and ethnicity. Those missing entries, after all, are part of the historical record of how literary criticism and theory have moved on in the intervening years, and he left some spaces for others to fill in. In period terms, John Stokes' *In the Nineties* is kind of hard to beat: a model of what cultural history can be when you take on the idea that culture is not to be understood as "the best that has been thought and said," (Arnold) but is actually the study and experience of "a whole way of life" (Williams again). Like a lot of women of my generation, the golden oldies—Gilbert and Gubar's *Madwoman in the Attic*, Showalter's *A Literature of their Own*, and Joanna Russ' *How to Suppress Women's Writing*—still have things to

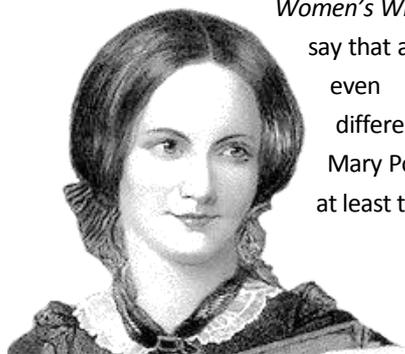
say that are urgent and important, even if the focus is now different. And everything by Mary Poovey has made me think at least twice.

What is your favourite work by a Victorian female writer?

Without a doubt *Villette*, though I did discover in quite a public way that this is not a popular choice. I was invited to be on a panel for the bicentenary of Charlotte Bronte's birth at the West Yorkshire Playhouse called "Jane Eyre v. Villette," which ended in a public vote. It was a bit like Brexit: we won the argument, but lost the vote. The reasons I still think I'm right, despite the democratic will of the people of Leeds, is that *Villette* is such a rich book. By turns it is funny, angry, distressed, resigned, triumphant, hallucinatory, gothic, realistic, fairy-tale and ghost story, all rolled into 500 pages. It plays with genre; thwarts readers' expectations; contains the best description of the experience of depression outside a medical textbook; its heroine is sneaky and unreliable, but also brave and more or less self-reliant—I think it's brilliant for all of those reasons and more.

If you could have three Victorians round for dinner, who would you have, and why?

I know I'm not meant to pick a man in this context, but I'd like to see if Oscar Wilde lives up to his reputation as a conversationalist. I have to know whether the wit really could rise to any occasion. To his right I'd put Eliza Lynn Linton. They'd have so much to talk about between the *Girl of the Period* and the *Woman's World* which Wilde edited with a faint flavour of feminism in the editorial policy. I'd like to know if she really meant what she said, or was just selling a good story; she and Wilde would have some stories to tell each other about the vagaries of magazine journalism. On his left, as a test of his mettle and manners, Marie Corelli. How would she respond to a man who seemed to stand for all of which she disapproved? It could be quite an explosive mix. If she can't come, then from a totally different part of the spectrum, I'd like Eleanor Marx-Aveling. She probably wouldn't get on with Wilde, having described him as "that very limp and very nasty young man ... who has been making such a d---d ass of himself in America." I wonder what he would have made of her. And if I got a chance, I'd try to have a little chat with her about the damage done by unsuitable boyfriends. It probably wouldn't go well, but you have to try, don't you?

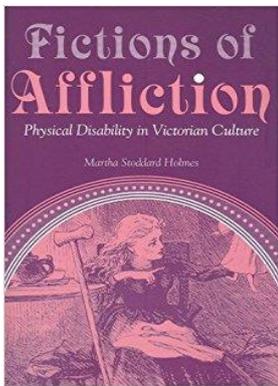


Books We Come Back To ...



Book Recommendations

Amy Trott, postgraduate at CCCU, gives her recommendations for fictional and critical sources ...



Fictions of Affliction: Physical Disability in Victorian Culture (2009)

Martha Stoddard Holmes

Stoddard Holmes provides a wealth of information about the depictions of physical disability in Victorian literature. She discusses aesthetics, the metaphorical connotations associated with disabled literary characters, and how disability was

used as a literary tool to discuss notions of morality and sexuality. She also investigates to what extent these characters influenced and shaped narratives, and contrasts the actions of these characters with contemporary sources to understand whether the portrayal of the disabled in literature reinforces or refutes contemporary Victorian stereotypes of impairment. This critical examination of disability transects gender studies, providing a contextual insight into how gender shaped the Victorian construct of disability.

Weeds: A Story in Seven Chapters (1892)

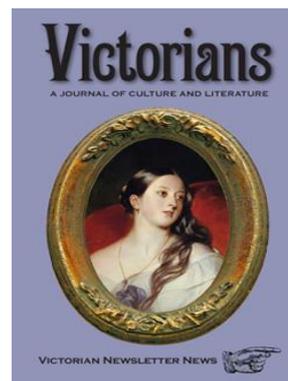
Jerome K. Jerome

Weeds includes a wealth of information about how aspects such as sexuality, marriage expectations, responsibility, gender politics, and stereotypes were viewed at the end of the nineteenth century. Using the image of a weed-filled, neglected garden as a metaphor for physical, mental, and sexual corruption, Jerome documents the infidelity of Dick Selwyn's affair with his wife's cousin, Jessie. Through Dick's actions, Jerome discusses accountability, and engages with concepts of good and evil, the deception of appearances, and fault. Through the somewhat radical reaction of Dick's wife, Daisy, to his affair, Jerome touches on contemporary debate surrounding "The New Woman," questioning the roles of both men and women in marriage, and what was deemed acceptable behaviour between spouses, with *Weeds* making a conscious shift away from patriarchal, authoritative male figures, and women as figures of weakness and dependence.



New & Upcoming Publications

Upcoming Special Edition!



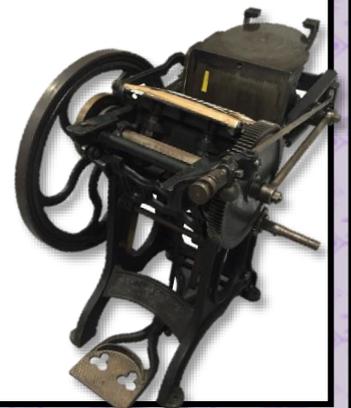
Alyson Hunt, ICVWW Research Associate, is editing a special edition of the *Victorians: A Journal of Culture and Literature*, called "Women of the Press in the 1890s"

The themes of the journal will be in conjunction with the third ICVWW International *Brontë to Bloomsbury* conference. Due out December 2017!

Upcoming New Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Entry!

Be sure to keep an eye out for a new entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* online.

Dr Susan Civale, Events Manager of ICVWW, has done a new biography entry on Victorian writer Catherine Jane Hamilton, which will soon be released this year!



Upcoming Events Calendar

September 2017

Fri 22 Sept 2017	London & Southeast Romanticism Reading 1817 Series: Ann Hatton, Gonzalo de Baldivia	University of Greenwich Campus, London, UK (6pm)
Thurs 28 Sept 2017	Jane Austen: The Banker's Sister	Chawton House Library, Alton, Hampshire, UK (6:30pm drinks, 7pm start)

October 2017

Sat 14 Oct 2017	Dickens Day 2017: Dickens and Fantasy	Senate House, University of London, London, UK
Tues 17 Oct 2017	Women's Writing in the Nineteenth Century Research Seminar – Panel on "Victorian Humour"	Canterbury Christ Church University, Room Nf01 (5:15pm)

November 2017

Fri 17 Nov 2017	London & Southeast Romanticism Reading 1817 Series: Sir Walter Scott, Rob Roy	University of Greenwich Campus, London, UK (6pm)
Sat 25 Nov 2017	Writing Romantic Lives: A One Day Postgraduate Symposium	Edge Hill University, Ormskirk, UK

Call for Papers

Publication/Conference	Theme	Deadline	Information/Contact
BARS/ Université Clermont-Auvergne International Conference	"Dream and Literary Creation in Women's Writings in the 18 th and 19 th Centuries"	30/09/2017 (Conference: April 2018)	Proposals to: dreamconference2018@gmail.com (more info)
Women's Negotiations of Space, 1500-1900 Conference	"Women's Negotiations of Space, 1500-1900"	30/09/2017 (Conference 18 Jan 2018)	350 word abstract and short bio to: womensspace18@outlook.com (more info)
INCS US Conference	"Serials, Cycles, Suspensions"	15/10/2017 (Conference 1-4 March 2018)	San Francisco, CA conference Proposals to: shackenb@sfsu.edu (more info)
Brill/Rodopi <i>Neo-Victorian Series</i>	Particularly welcome: Neo-Victorian Ecologies & Environmental Ethics; Cosmopolitanism; Postcolonialities; Journeys and Travels; Geographies	15/10/2017	Proposals for future edited collections in the series invited (more info)
Special issue of <i>Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies</i>	"Making Masculinity: Craft, Gender, and Material Production in the Long Nineteenth Century"	30/10/2017	Submissions of 5000-8000 words All queries/abstracts/manuscripts to: makingmasculinity@gmail.com (more info)
INCS Supernumerary Conference	"Measure and Excess"	30/10/2017 (Conference 13-15 Jun 2018)	Rome, Italy Conference Proposals to: incsroma@gmail.com (more info)
Special issue of <i>Victorians Journal</i>	Emily Brontë bicentenary, in particular poetry and artwork	01/01/2018 (Publication: Fall 2018)	Essay submissions of 7500 words Questions to: deborah.logan@wku.edu

The ICVWW Newsletter Team

<u>Director</u>	<u>Honorary Director</u>	<u>Events Manager</u>	<u>Contributing Editors</u>	<u>Format and Design</u>
Prof Carolyn Oulton	Prof Adrienne Gavin	Dr Susan Civale	Alyson Hunt Ann Loveridge Ian Higgins	Lizzie Sheppard



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Email: icvww@canterbury.ac.uk

Facebook: @ICVWW

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Don't Miss the Next Issue of *The ICVWW Newsletter* – Out January 2018!