

"The Face of Crime: Explaining and Visualising Criminality in Nineteenth-Century Britain"

Conference by **Neil Davie**, Professor of British History at Université Lumière Lyon 2.

Monday, October 14th 2019, 10-11am

Université Savoie Mont Blanc, site Jacob-Bellecombette, Amphi 23000



Neil Davie is Professor of British History at Université Lumière Lyon 2, France. He has published widely on the history of penal policy, crime and criminology in Britain, and has also written on the history of science and women's history. He is the author of *Tracing the Criminal: The Rise of Scientific Criminology in Britain, 1860-1918* (Bardwell Press, 2005) and *L'Évolution de la condition féminine en Grande-Bretagne à travers les textes juridiques fondamentaux de 1830 à 1975* (ENS Editions, 2011). His most recent book, *The Penitentiary Ten: The Transformation of the English Prison, 1770-1850* (Bardwell, 2017), was joint runner-up for the 2018 AFEA/SAES research prize. He is currently working on a study of the origins of Dartmoor Prison during the Napoleonic Wars, due to be published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2020.

SYNOPSIS

During the nineteenth century, the British were preoccupied, one might almost say obsessed, with both describing criminals and seeking explanations for crime. Indeed, many specialists hoped that by describing criminals in greater detail, they would be able to explain their actions, and possibly reduce crime. And the clock was ticking, many argued, because crime appeared to be rising inexorably! And to make matters worse, there were fears that in Britain's new industrialising, urbanising society, criminals were able to commit their crimes with little chance of being caught. But what if there was a reliable way of identifying criminals, and - possibly - *future* criminals by means of studying their faces? This talk examines the different techniques developed in Britain in the nineteenth century, aimed at the visual identification of criminals and explaining crime.



Benjamin Parker, aged 30, convicted for housebreaking in 1890, and sent to Dartmoor Prison for 5 years.