

# Merde Alors! Conference



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**Venue: The Lucas Lecture Theatre (also known as DLT),  
SOAS Main Building, Thornhaugh Street, London WC1H 0XG  
Nearest tube: Russell Square**

**ZOOM SESSIONS** [Requires you to subscribe to Zoom]

**SATURDAY:** Meeting ID: 990 8956 1430 :: Passcode: 7ge0vHc0Kj

**SUNDAY:** Meeting ID: 946 8010 2063 :: Passcode: biE52SxBg1

**In case of difficulties with online conference access, contact**  
[ed.emery@soas.ac.uk](mailto:ed.emery@soas.ac.uk)

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## CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

**SATURDAY 21 OCTOBER 2023**

**Morning – 10.00 am to 1.30 pm**

**10.15 – INTRODUCTION:**

Ed Emery [SOAS], and Lizzie Hull for the SOAS Food Studies Centre

**FIRST SESSION: 10.30 to 11.30**

**1. Cess pits and society**

John Collis [University of Sheffield] [[Abstract](#)]

**2. Making soil healthy and people unhealthy with shit: what we can learn from Chinese farmers**

Nicole Elizabeth Barnes [Duke University] [[Abstract](#)]

**COFFEE BREAK**

**SECOND SESSION: 12.00 to 1.30**

**3. “Boys will be boys”: the *putto pissatore* in European Renaissance art**

Charles Avery [[Abstract](#)]

**4. There is something *fenny* (糞) about Warfare in the Song (960-1279) and Ming (1368-1644):  
Bio-Chemical Weapons of Imperial China**

Benjamin Avichai Katz Sinvany [Columbia University] [[Abstract](#)]

**5. Excrement in the city: Tokyo, 1867–1933**

David L. Howell [Harvard University] [[Abstract](#)]

**SATURDAY 21 OCTOBER 2023**

**Afternoon – 2.30pm to 6.00pm**

**THIRD SESSION: 2.30 to 3.30**

**6. Shit and civilisation – Western reports on nightsoil in 18th and 19th century China**

Jörg H. Hüseemann [Leipzig University] [Distance presentation] [[Abstract](#)]

**7. *Merda Pompeiana***

Laura Nissin [Aarhus Institute of Advanced Studies] [[Abstract](#)]

## TEA BREAK

### FOURTH SESSION: 4.00 to 6.00

**8. “Shit business is serious business”: Isaac Durojaiye Agbetusin (“Otunba Gaddafi”) and the business of mobile toilets in Lagos (Nigeria) since the 1990s**

Ayodeji Olukoju [University of Lagos] [Distance presentation] [[Abstract](#)]

**9. From the privy to the paper: Excrement, public health, and discourses of race in the Progressive Era US South (Working Title)**

Jared Kazik Asser [University of Georgia] [[Abstract](#)]

**10. From gunpowder to fertilizer: How Confederates used human waste during the American Civil War and Reconstruction (Working Title)**

Andrew Loyd Craig [University of Georgia] [[Abstract](#)]

**11. How latrines lost the war: race, waste, disease, and demoralisation in the Confederate Army**

Benjamin Roy [University of Georgia] [[Abstract](#)]

**SUNDAY 22 OCTOBER 2023**

**Morning – 10.30 am to 1.00 pm**

### FIFTH SESSION: 10.30 to 11.30

**12. The remarkable preservation of excrement in the archaeological record and what can be done with it**

Eleanor Green [University of York and Natural History Museum, London] [[Abstract](#)]

**13. ADCO and the case of a patented artificial manure**

Tad Brown [University of Cambridge] [[Abstract](#)]

## COFFEE BREAK

### SIXTH SESSION: 12.00 to 1.30

#### **14. The “Dirty Strike” of Irish Republican prisoners in British jails, 1976-81**

Ed Emery [SOAS, University of London] [[Abstract](#)]

#### **15. The case against Anglia Water**

Al Dixon [Little Blue Dot] [[Abstract](#)]

#### **16. Breaking the silence on gendered sanitation taboos across urban Africa**

Adriana Allen [University College London] [[Abstract](#)]

**SUNDAY 22 OCTOBER 2023**

**Afternoon – 2.30pm to 4.30pm**

### SEVENTH SESSION: 2.30 to 4.00

#### **17. Brown Gold? Reconciling existing practices and new innovations for shit re-use**

Lyla Mehta (Institute of Development Studies) and Tanvi Bhatkal (Institute of Development Studies), et al. [[Abstract](#)]

#### **18. Dump and pump: The impact of COVID-19 and income on septic system pumping patterns in Athens-Clarke County, Georgia**

Julia Sharapi [University of Georgia] [[Abstract](#)]

#### **19. Building protection: Public bathrooms and boundary making in United States history**

Bryant Simon [Temple University, Department of History] [[Abstract](#)]

#### **20. Concluding discussion, and planning for 2025**

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**Conference kindly hosted by the SOAS Food Studies Centre**

**Papers from the conference and also invited contributions  
will be published on this web page and also as a printed volume**

**We are now planning for a second conference, to be held in  
October 2025.**

**Expressions of interest are invited.**

**Ends**