

## Sarah Dorr



As a current Master's student, I was privileged to attend the CREES 50th Anniversary Conference, held from the 7th through the 9th of June, at Cumberland Lodge, Windsor Great Park.

I had the opportunity not only to listen to numerous great scholars, whose work I have become acquainted with throughout this past year, but to converse with them in an informal and historical setting that can best be described as quintessentially English. The presenters included many of the University of Birmingham's doctoral students, lecturers and alumni, who as Dr. Arfon Rees, Reader in Soviet and Russian History, so accurately stated, "have gone on to colonize the field".

This conference brought together the founder of CREES, Dr. Bob Davies, as well as generations of former and current CREES scholars, who have pursued further research in a variety of fields. In doing so, it broke down both intergenerational and interdisciplinary boundaries. Having been afforded the opportunity to participate in a conference which was both a celebration of Area Studies and of CREES itself, I came to the realization that CREES is not just a Centre, a course, or a department, but that it is a community that I will continue to form a part of long after I have handed in my dissertation.

Though the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the USSR inadvertently called the continuing existence, purpose and focus of Russian and East European Area Studies into question, the CREES 50th Anniversary Conference assured me that this field is not only alive, but is also thriving and needless to say, brimming with new scholarship and talent. Moreover, from this conference I gained insight into the fact that the specialist knowledge acquired through Russian and East European Area Studies is particularly valuable in our contemporary era, as it encourages a comprehensive understanding of the multiple processes of internationalization, which originate on a local level. Therefore, Russian and East European Area Studies is applicable to a much larger region than its name suggests, and judging from the groundbreaking research presented at this conference, it is well placed to continue doing so. In addition, as a guest of Cumberland Lodge I was encouraged to visit the Royal Chapel, where I caught a rare glimpse of the Queen herself.

All in all, the CREES 50th Anniversary Conference was an intellectual, social, and cultural experience. It is an event that I recommend all future "Creesniks" take advantage of, and one that I hope to partake of again, in upcoming years.