

Introduction

The University of Adelaide hosted the fifteenth George Rudé Seminar in French History and Civilisation between 12 and 15 July 2006. We felt it especially fitting that the fifteenth George Rudé Seminar should take place at the University that offered George Rudé his first academic post in Australia. The conference attracted participants from Australia, France, New Caledonia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States. Sixty-two presenters gave papers on diverse topics including the theme of the conference, “French Identities.” Our keynote speakers were Robert Gildea, John Horne, Peter McPhee and Nicolas Offenstadt.

The Australian Association of French Studies held its conference at the University of Adelaide in the same week. On 12 July we took advantage of this happy convergence by organising sessions that brought together participants from both conferences. A plenary panel that included Charles Sowerwine, Nicholas Hewitt, and Anne Kean paid tribute to Colin Nettelbeck and his generous contribution to the promotion of the study of French culture and history in Australia over many years. Other plenary sessions and a range of panels addressed the notion of modern French identities from a range of different perspectives: social, cultural, military and political. As a number of the papers in this volume demonstrate, French colonial identities emerged as a key theme. Readers may notice strong elements of continuity between this volume and the first, indicating a discernible pattern of scholarship across many areas of specialisation.

If the conference and the papers published in this volume reflect the continuing vitality of French history as an academic field, public lectures associated with fifteenth George Rudé Seminar demonstrate its enduring interest to the broader public. A lecture by John Horne at the State Library of South Australia on 13 July and a Bastille Day lecture by Peter McPhee at the Art Gallery drew enthusiastic audiences. (Both papers are reproduced in this volume.)

We thank everyone who participated in the conference, especially those who travelled far to do so, and all of our contributors. We also gratefully acknowledge the ongoing support of H-France and David Kammerling Smith’s guidance. We appreciated his advice, his attention to detail and his patience during the unforeseen delays in bringing this project to a close. The George Rudé Society is grateful to H-France for providing the opportunity to present to the wider community of scholars a sampling of the array of excellent papers offered at a stimulating and well-attended

conference. We believe the papers in this volume provide further justification for the high regard in which the Rudé Seminar is held locally and internationally.

The Editors

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