

The SHP Conference 2011

Whose idea was it to run a workshop at the Schools History Project Conference in July this year?

I blame Helen Snelson, Head of History at The Mount School in York, whose infectious enthusiasm has embroiled me in some heart-stopping situations over the years.

It was her fault I marched alongside the main road into Ypres with a bus-load of Year 9 students (one in a wheelchair) after the coach broke down during our First World War Battlefield Tour. She's responsible for flying me to Auschwitz in the company of Anthony Sher and Ian McKellen, a visit that reduced me to impotent tears and a lingering depression. Yes, we have a history, Helen and I.

So when Ian Dawson, founder member of the SHP, author of the textbooks I've relied on throughout my career and the man behind the Thinking History website appeared in our workshop and said he'd like to join in, there was only one woman to blame.

Our S.H.P. workshop was called '**Beyond Role Play, Turning Your Classroom into the TARDIS**' and used an Act the Facts' GCSE script :**The Origins of the First World War** to show how scripted drama can teach exam skills and revise course content.

Helen, her colleague Ruth Linguard, Head of History at Millthorpe Secondary School and I had pooled our dressing up boxes, designed a stick-on moustache for Alfred von Schlieffen, rolled up the Entente Cordiale and Triple Alliances to form rudimentary light sabres and waited for our first group of delegates to arrive. Seeing Ian Dawson amongst them was another heart stopping moment for me.

True to form, Ian took on the character of '**Germany**' and prepared to wrest a Dreadnought from the grip of a feisty '**Great Britain**'. Thanks entirely to the exceptional talents of a dramatic group of delegates, our workshop went swimmingly and Ian himself was generous and positive about the potential of scripted drama to tackle problems of exam technique, source analysis skills, chronology and course content in GCSE and A Level History. Perhaps I'd better retract my complaints about Helen; my career would have been much less fun without her!

Ian Dawson's inspirational website can be found at www.thinkinghistory.co.uk