

## THE EMILE ZOLA SOCIETY

### WHO WE ARE

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Early in 1990, Chantal Morel, librarian at the Institut Français in South Kensington, London, who was researching English translations of Zola's works, contacted Graham King, author of *The Garden of Zola: Emile Zola and his novels for English readers*, and they agreed to form a society to encourage interest in the work of the French writer. With the patronage of the then French Ambassador, the French cultural Counsellor, and the Director of the French Institute, the Society was launched with an inaugural meeting at the French Institute on 31 May 1990.

The new Society attracted people from all walks of life, academics, bibliophiles and general readers. It was agreed that its proceedings should be accessible to a wide audience, preserving a balance between academic interest and a more general appeal, and keeping mainly, though not exclusively, to English in its programmes.

The meetings of the new Society were soon considering all aspects of Zola, including his novels, journalism, plays and theatrical collaborations, his defence of the Impressionists, his photography, and his intervention in the Dreyfus case.

To mark the centenary of Zola's first visit to London in 1893, and the completion of Zola's *Rougon-Macquart* novels, the Society organised an International Colloquium in September 1993. A week-long series of events, including lectures from leading academics, round-table discussions, and performances of music and films, culminated in a well-attended celebratory dinner at the Savoy Hotel, London. In 1998, the society celebrated the centenary of the publication of *J'accuse*, Zola's famous open letter to the President of France.

The Society's journal, *Bulletin of the Emile Zola Society*, was launched in October 1993, initially with two issues a year, and more recently, as a double volume each October. The *Bulletin* provides a vital link between UK members of the Society and those overseas. It is a forum for articles, from both members and external contributors, on all aspects of Zola's life and work, and the work of some of his contemporaries. The *Bulletin* was edited until 2014 by David Baguley, then until 2023, by Valerie Minogue and Patrick Pollard; it is currently edited by William Greenslade.

Recent articles have included: Zola's works for the musical stage by Jean-Sébastien Macke (ITEM/CNRS); Zola's circle of friends at Médan by Martine le Blond-Zola (the author's great-granddaughter, who has also addressed one of the Society's meetings); French caricature in Zola's time; the serialisation of *Travail* in the American magazine, *Harper's Weekly*; Zola as depicted in the *Savoy* magazine; American editions of Zola's works; the stage version of *Nana*; and many other diverse aspects of Zola's life and work.

The Society first ventured into publishing — apart from the *Bulletin* — in 1995, with the publication of papers from the 1993 Colloquium, *Emile Zola, Centenary Colloquium*, edited by Patrick Pollard. This was followed in 2000 by the publication of various essays by the late Henri Mitterand, the distinguished Zola scholar, who had participated in some of the Society's events. The essays were translated and edited by Monica Lebron and David Baguley, and published under the title, *Emile Zola: Fiction and Modernity*.

2002 was the centenary of Zola's death in Paris, and in 2003 the Society published selected papers from a Cambridge Centenary Colloquium, under the title *New Approaches to Zola*, edited by Hannah Thompson.

In 2007 the Society held a very successful International Colloquium in Aix-en-Provence: selected papers from this were published as *Visages de la Provence*, edited by Valerie Minogue and Patrick Pollard in 2008.

In 2011, the Society set up its web-site. The Émile Zola Society continues to have regular meetings, outings and talks, and holds a very popular, informal dinner every year, in the spring.

In 2013 The Society held another successful International Colloquium in London, Papers from this were published as *Rethinking the Real*, edited by Valerie Minogue and Patrick Pollard, in 2014.

In recent years, the Society has organised annual half-day Saturday Seminars, which have proved popular with both members and the general public, who are able to hear talks from experts in their fields, and take part in the subsequent open discussions. Most of the Papers given at the seminars have been printed in the *Bulletin*. A list of all the contributions is available on the website [www.emilezolasocietylondon.org.uk](http://www.emilezolasocietylondon.org.uk) and back copies are still available from the secretary [zolasociety@gmail.com](mailto:zolasociety@gmail.com)