

PREMIS, Wednesday 27 November,
16-18 in Aud. Helikon (A202), Arken

To be followed by a book launch for *The Materiality of
Literary Narratives in Urban History*, 18-19, Aud. Donner

Richard Dennis, University College London

No Home-Like Place: Delusions of Home in Some Victorian and Edwardian Novels

An important strand in both George Gissing's *Born in Exile* (1892) and H.G. Wells's *Ann Veronica* (1909) concerns their protagonists' escape from 'homes' in which they do not feel 'at home' and their search for somewhere more 'homely'. Both Godwin Peak (in *Born in Exile*) and Ann Veronica Stanley are labelled by their friends as 'exiles'. Gissing and Wells became friends in the late 1890s, partly as a consequence of the brief proximity of their own suburban homes. Gissing was never 'at home' anywhere, in any kind of dwelling, and Wells was also geographically and socially mobile at this stage in his career. In this talk I will explore different conceptions of home and community, setting *Born in Exile* and *Ann Veronica* alongside other Gissing novels that are sensitive to questions of home and place. A wider context is provided by processes of urban change that underlay writing by Dickens, on whom Gissing wrote a critical biography, and Forster, whose *Howards End* was published only a year after *Ann Veronica*.

Richard Dennis is Emeritus Professor of Geography at University College London. He is the author of numerous book chapters and journal articles on the built environment and social conditions in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century London and Toronto, including several essays on literary representations of the social geography of both cities. Among his publications are *Cities in Modernity* (Cambridge University Press, 2008) and, as co-editor, *The Materiality of Literary Narratives in Urban History* (Routledge, 2020).

