Rethinking Modern British Studies, 1-3 July 2015

Programme

WEDNESDAY 1st JULY

9:30 – 12:30 pm – Postgraduate Workshop – Arts, Lecture Room 3

1 – 2 pm – Plenary 1 – Vaughn Jeffries Lecture Theatre, Education Building
James Vernon, “What, where and when is the history of modern Britain?”

2 – 3:30 pm – Panel session 1

Interrogating British Boundaries – Arts, Lecture Room 1
Speakers: Chloe Ward, Liam Byrne, Lauren Piko

Chair: Chris Hill

These three papers span the twentieth century and political, cultural and academic contexts. They are united by their aspiration to ‘treat [Britain] as a nodal point in a broader global history’ [MBS Working Paper No. 1]. They seek to challenge longstanding perspectives on the origins and effects of political, economic and cultural transformations in Britain in the 20th century.

The three papers are transnational in methodology and scope. They conceive of the transnational as ‘a space’ for exchanges that can elide, override, and undermine national boundaries. This helps identifying the ways in which ‘the nation’ is in fact produced by transnational forces (c.f. ‘AHR Conversation on Transnational History’, 2006). In so doing, each paper frames an aspect of 20th century British politics, culture, and thought as relative and comparative, challenging the insularity of existing literature in each field.

Liam Byrne examines the connections between labour movements and parties in Britain and Australia and their adoption of policies of socialisation in the years immediately following the First World War. Chloe Ward’s paper focuses on the left in culture, discussing the little-explored
international connections of the interwar Left Book Club. Lauren Piko uses the frame of Empire to interrogate the ethical and political implications of the study of declinism.

**Paper 1 Abstract:** ‘A comparative reading of British and Australian political labour 1918 and 1921: points of connection and difference.’
Liam Byrne, University of Melbourne

2015 has been marked by the political ascent of radical ‘alternatives’ to the status-quo, such as SYRZIA and Podemos, seemingly challenging the traditional parties of progress. British Labour noticeably lags behind such radicalism in response to this crisis, its own viability as a party of radical reform has been questioned. The party’s political culture has become hollow, and Labour seems the victim of its own history, the consequences of ‘ruling the void,’ as Peter Mair would have it.

In this paper, I analyse a period of transformation to consider the construction of the political culture of British Labour, and explore its possibilities for change. But, following the work of Neville Kirk, I argue that an under-appreciated but vital lens through which to view such bodies is the comparative one, and that through such a means both the particular factors that shaped Labour’s experience, and transnational influences, can be appreciated. It will offer a comparative reading of British Labour’s 1918 constitution and the adoption of Clause Four and Australian Labor’s socialisation objective of 1921. Tracing the common legacies of these moments of transformation and the interconnections between the radical wings of both parties – ideological, and personal with figures such as Tom Mann embodying the networks of exchange – my intention is to demonstrate the processes common to these organisations as they operated as a particular form of counterpublic. I will propose the utility of works of analysis such as that of Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge and their concept of the proletarian public sphere. This important understanding will be joined with the concept of the subaltern counterpublic developed by Nancy Fraser in a unique interpretation to chart the impact of division and contest between moderates and radicals in these organisations.

Providing such a reading seeks to use this transformative period to appreciate the underlying dynamics of these organisations and how they function within established polities as counter spheres, but also to demonstrate that this in itself is an ambiguous and contradictory function.

**Paper 2 Abstract:** ‘Towards ‘real world-citizens’? The transnational reading community of the Left Book Club.’
Chloe Ward, University of Melbourne
The Left Book Club, founded by the radical publisher Victor Gollancz in 1936, has been cited as a key agent of transformations in British political culture and Labour’s election victory in 1945. Works about the Club have, however, struggled to explicate the relationship between the Club’s principal activity – buying, reading and discussing books – and changes in the political order. The international aspects of the Club have also gone largely unexamined. This paper addresses these neglected vectors for assessing the Club. It examines the transnational reading community the Club established across Britain, Europe, Asia, the Americas, Africa and Australia. It builds on several recent advances in the history of the book. Historians of reading have examined the significance of class, gender, consumer practice and local and national cultures in structuring Britons’ reading practice. This paper further positions reading in the context of recent examinations of the imperial book trade and anti-fascist politics. The Club’s organisers regularly and publicly appraised the international development of the Club. In 1938 they described it as ‘a world-wide movement’. Such blandishments obfuscated the distinction between Gollancz’s progressive cosmopolitanism and the class-based internationalism of the Club’s professional staff. Further to this, British readers’ responses demonstrate the tension between these two ideals of an international readership and a practice that was highly localised and inflected by considerations of nation and Empire. This paper uses newspapers, correspondence and readers’ accounts to explore how they imagined and pursued relationships with the international readership of the Club. These exchanges contributed to local readers’ apprehension of the post-war world and British responsibility to it. Their reading affirmed a view of Britain’s leading role in global democracy and their own potential contributions to this through local activism and electoral politics.

**Paper 3 Abstract:** ‘Relative, absolute, or both? Towards locating empire in postwar declinism.’ Lauren Piko, University of Melbourne

The last twenty years have seen a substantial and welcome increase in the study of British declinism after 1945. The conceptualisation of a belief in decline, especially relative economic decline, as a pervasive ideology with its own history, has been especially productive in creating challenging narratives of Britain’s political and media cultures. Nonetheless, I argue that the study of declinism has rarely been accompanied by examination of its broader implications, particularly how declinism might function in excluding, as well as privileging, particular aspects of postwar British history. I suggest that existing studies of declinism, by seeking to narrate and to explain cultural fixations on relative economic decline, have replicated some of the limitations of declinism itself, by treating absolute imperial decline as a given which does not require substantial engagement. While postwar declinist cultures did not frequently explicitly engage with absolute imperial decline, I suggest that this in itself is indicative of an ongoing cultural practice of avoiding explicit and direct engagement with the legacy of empire. It is possible to read
postwar relative economic declinism as a form of post-imperial silence, a way of sublimating discussion of the absolute unravelling of imperial economic models while obsessively reframing the diagnosis of decline within a strictly domestic framework. In this way declinism can be seen to work alongside the ongoing debates around European integration and of immigration which facilitate oblique reference to post-imperial status and identity without fully addressing the moral, emotional, and ongoing political implications of having exerted imperial power. This therefore precludes engagement with the criteria by which Britain's pre-decline history of 'greatness' is defined. While the analysis offered here is partial, it represents a potential model for further historical engagement with the functions of declinism as an ideology.

After Modernism: The Politics of Urban Renewal Since the 1970s – Arts, Main Lecture Room
Speakers: Otto Saumarez Smith, Adam Page, Simon Gunn

Chair: Erika Hanna

The transformation of Britain’s cities after 1945 was one of the key sites where the majority of the population came into contact with the social visions for the future promulgated by political elites. The collapse of this project from the late 1960s is essential to understanding ‘cultures of democracy’ not least because it was linked with an active rejection of a model in which the ‘expert’ planner interpreted the needs of society and especially those of the urban working class. The buildings of the 1960s came to serve as a proxy for the whole gamut of post-war meliorist, state-led, top-down progressivism. Especially crucial was the fact that by the 1970s modernist solutions no longer seemed adequate in responding to two issues that were increasingly urgent: how to give cities a new role in the face of deindustrialization, and how to help those in inner city areas left behind in the general trend towards greater affluence, especially in new immigrant communities. Whether this rejection led to a culture more responsive to democratic participation, or whether it left a vacuum that was filled by market-led approaches, is one of the questions the panel seeks to address.

Through this discussion we wish to assert the importance of a focus on the urban and the built environment to any project of ‘rethinking’ modern British history and the forms which democracy may have taken. The transformation of the built environment is a focus missing from the working paper, but is one which is indispensable to comprehending the profound material and political changes that overtook much of British society in the twentieth century.

Paper 1 Abstract: ‘Unequal City: The Emergence of the ‘Inner City’ in British Politics’
Otto Saumarez Smith, Lincoln College, Oxford
In the 1970s the concept of the ‘inner city’ became a spatially materialised locus for all that was perceived to have gone wrong with Britain’s state and society in the post-war period; it was the physical location where many emerging anxieties that seemed so intractable in the period – about physical, social and economic decline, as well as issues ranging from race, to the persistence of poverty, to deindustrialisation – appeared most manifest.

This paper focuses on one aspect of central government’s approach to the problem, the Department of the Environment’s commissioning of the three Inner Area Studies for Birmingham, Lambeth and Liverpool – which paved the way for Peter Shore’s 1977 White Paper on the Inner Cities.

The studies were commissioned from three architect-planner consultancies, each of which had been central proponents of the Modernist approaches to redevelopment in the 1960s: Llewellyn-Davies, Weeks, Forestier-Walker and Bor; Wilson and Womersley; and Shankland Cox. If this continuity in personnel suggests a continuity in approach with an earlier period, this is belied by the contents of the reports, which foreground the failures of the post-war period and disavow Modernist approaches – as the Lambeth study argued, ‘the traditional remedies were no longer adequate.’ The reports attempt to reappraise the relationship between planners and planned, between state and society. They focus on those who had not just been left behind by the meliorist project of social democratic Britain, but whose position was understood to have been exacerbated by the physical aspect of this project. Though much of their rhetoric is underlined by a deep pessimism, in retrospect they also represent a brief moment of possibility; where the failures of the post-war period could be appraised and perhaps tackled, but before new neo-liberal approaches gained ascendancy.

Paper 2 Abstract: ‘Rejecting the Future: the Campaign to Demolish Divis Flats, Belfast’
Adam Page, Sheffield

Between 1966 and 1972 a landmark housing scheme, the Divis Flats complex, was built in Belfast’s Lower Falls, near the intersection with the loyalist Shankill. The Le Corbusier-inspired design was imagined as a modern technological solution to the area’s slum housing. While still under construction in 1969, however, it became a flashpoint and symbol of the developing Troubles, and ten years after it was completed, it was named the worst estate of its kind in Europe. The architectural image of high-rise living and cities in the sky came into conflict with the everyday lives of residents. Design features implemented to facilitate a sense of community actually contributed to alienation, illness, depression and danger as the complex was transformed into ‘Fort Divis’. In response, residents formed the Divis Demolition Committee and protested against their living conditions, attacking the architecture itself by destroying vacant flats from the
inside-out. By 1994 embattled officials had relented and all the blocks had been demolished with the 20-storey tower the only element that remains.

This paper begins to ask to what extent failing built environments contributed to a broader loss of faith in the future in postwar Britain, but also provoked new forms of opposition and protest in urban contexts. The campaign to demolish Divis was a rejection of the official techno-rational vision of the future and the political and planning processes which mirrored the architect’s top-down approach. It was a version of democratic participation born in desperate conditions and a society steeped in violence, which provocatively exposed the gulf between residents and officials and the limitations of more orthodox politics. The Divis example indicates the importance of contestations over urban futures in postwar politics and suggests that Northern Ireland should not be entirely separate from postwar British histories.

Simon Gunn, Centre for Urban History, Leicester

On 8 April 1971 the Queen opened Birmingham’s Inner Ring Road by driving its full three and three-quarter miles length around the city’s gleaming new centre. Over fifty years in the making, the Inner Ring was celebrated as one of Britain’s great civil engineering achievements. It made Birmingham the emblem of an almost ‘transatlantic modernity’ in the words of the city’s official historians and Britain’s premier motor city, home to British Leyland and a city recreated to meet the needs of the new ‘car-owning democracy’. In a matter of years, though, the motor city ideal was dead. In 1972 the recently opened Gravelly Hill interchange – the notorious Spaghetti Junction – became the focus of a national debate about motor pollution caused by noise and car emissions, including, most dangerously, lead pollution. And in May 1977 the Sunday Times ran an extensive article on an engineer’s report that the Inner Ring Road was crumbling due to faulty construction, which allowed rainwater to penetrate surfaces, concrete to crack and supporting beams to rust. Without expensive repairs its flyovers and underpasses were in danger of collapse.

This paper explores the politics of automobility in 1970s Birmingham and the disillusion with modernist planning that it embodied. Pollution, corruption and the disintegration of urban motorways were the most highly publicised aspects, but the political reaction was also marked by widescale protests against new suburban roads and dangerous road lay-outs by residents’ associations and women’s groups. Birmingham’s status as a motor city was undermined, I shall argue, by a micro-politics of local democracy which increasingly dovetailed after the oil crisis of 1973 with an international politics which brought mass automobility and the whole project of Britain’s urban modernism into question.
Co-operation and Economic Democracy – Arts, Lecture Room 6
Speakers: Donna Loftus, Nicole Robertson, Peter Gurney

Chair: Matthew Francis

The Co-operative movement was a cornerstone of working-class life between the late nineteenth and mid-twentieth century. However, historians have often been unsure about how to fit it into wider narratives of economic and political modernisation. This session reconsiders the place of the Co-operative movement in the history of modern Britain and aims to shed light on a number of key questions.

For example, did the movement represent the democratization of the economy or the displacement of politics? In what ways did it reconfigure the relationship between the enfranchisement of men and women and the power of capital? Between them the three papers consider co-operative business and culture and seek to address broader questions about class formation and the politics of production and consumption. The session will consider whether co-operation provided a viable alternative to capitalism and whether it empowered people as producers and consumers in the marketplace. Considering the often contentious contemporary debates that surrounded co-operative ventures, the session asks what the movement can tell us about the history of capitalism.

Paper 1 Abstract: ‘Capitalism for all: co-operative production in mid-nineteenth century Britain’
Donna Loftus, Open University

In the 1850s co-operative production became a popular panacea for social and economic problems. As the Chartist Land Plan and the Rochdale Pioneers demonstrated the potential of working-class capital to transform communities, radicals and liberals placed the co-partnership of capital and labour at the centre of a vision of the future social economy built on negotiation, consensus and mobility. Believing that a more equitable capitalism would promote social peace and economic prosperity, campaigns focussed on the reform of industrial organisation to make profit-sharing businesses and worker co-operatives easier to establish. The reform of company law in 1856 was presented as the unfettering of capitalism, allowing all men of talent regardless of class the opportunity to combine and prosper. In the years after reform a number of co-operative businesses were established with some like the Sun Mill cotton spinning factory becoming models of industrial democracy, attracting visitors from all over Britain and overseas. The turbulent history of these ventures and the persistence of industrial unrest strengthened the voices of critics who dismissed such concerns as utopian distractions. The paper will examine the rise and fall of co-operative production to examine what it tells us about the history of capitalism. It demonstrates how languages of economic democracy were accompanied by
concepts of capital’s innate qualities which were used to build hierarchies around ideas of expertise. It also examines how contemporary questions about the difference between co-operative production and a regular joint stock company exposed both the myth of the free market and of equitable capitalism itself.

**Paper 2 Abstract:** ‘Defending and educating the consumer: the Co-operative movement and ‘food for all”
Nicole Robertson, Northumbria University

In the nineteenth century, the Co-operative movement was founded to provide wholesome, unadulterated food for its customer-members. The co-operative retail system was organised and controlled by the consumer according to the Rochdale Pioneers’ concept of economic democracy. Protecting the consumer remained of central importance in the twentieth century and it can be argued that the movement was a substantial force in the defence of consumer interests. The business ethos and structure of the co-operative movement, designed as it was to empower the consumer, was conveyed to members in a number of ways. The principles of co-operation and ownership were often structured around the principles of ‘food for all’. This paper will explore these themes by discussing the work of the Co-operative movement and its engagement with the consumer during the period of the First World War and the interwar years.

**Paper 3 Abstract:** “The Curse of the Co-ops’: co-operation, the mass press and the market in interwar Britain’
Peter Gurney, University of Essex

The British Co-operative movement was a central institution of working-class life between the wars, with 6.5 million members in the early 1930s. The movement’s phenomenal success inevitably brought it into conflict with private capitalists and government that sought to contain co-operators’ ambition. The movement’s ideologues proclaimed that the great lesson of the depression was that markets ought to be regulated by the democratic will of the people and that continued co-operative growth proved that this was entirely practicable. This paper assesses the threat co-operation posed to economic and business elites in this period, highlighting particularly co-operators’ critique of the myth of the free market and the advantages of free enterprise in the context of the rapid growth of combines and syndicates during the interwar years. It explores co-operators’ thwarted attempt to regulate markets in the interest of working-class shoppers by means of the Consumers’ Council Bill after 1929, then goes on to discuss the ‘penal’ taxation imposed on the Co-operative movement as a kind of disciplinary measure by the National Government in 1933. The role of the mass press provides a vital thread in the story throughout, for the anti-co-operative ‘crusade’ was fervently taken up by the press barons, Lord Beaverbrook
and Lord Rothermere, who used their considerable power to try to extinguish the largest
democratic movement of consumers in modern British history.

**Making Democratic People: Psychology, Politics, and Private Life after 1945 – Arts,**
Lecture Room 3
Speakers: Teri Chettiar, Rhodri Hayward, Michal Shapira

Chair: Mathew Thomson

During the decades immediately following the Second World War, Britain emerged as a post-imperial, post-industrial, democratic society; during that same period, a new generation of psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers successfully made the case that emotional health was forged in the monogamous nuclear family, and was the basis for social mobility, self-governance, and responsible citizenship. This panel brings together historians of Modern British political culture, gender, and psychology to explore the role of “psy” experts and expert-driven health and social service initiatives in forging transformative new links between state politics and citizens’ private sexual and emotional lives in Britain between the end of WWII and the retrenchment of the welfare state under the Thatcher government. The three papers address the multiple ways in which citizens’ emotional health and wellbeing became a central political concern in Britain after 1945, forcing revisions in the meaning of democracy, introducing new expectations of psychological freedom, and providing the basis for cultivating new liberal political subjectivities. The panel interrogates the post-war recasting of relationships between public and private, science and everyday life, and the distribution of responsibility between families and the welfare state in the provision of social protection. It asks what role psychological knowledge and practices played in making citizens’ private lives not only widely intelligible, but also capable of being acted upon. Moreover, it considers what new strategies for governance (including self-governance) the post-war popularization of “psy” knowledge made possible.

The panel will also attend to the unintended consequences of the introduction of a wide range of psychological and psychiatric services in post-WWII Britain, including the creation of new scientific frameworks for making demands for social and sexual reform in the 1960s and 70s. Activists championing a range of causes—including the liberalization of the divorce law, the decriminalization of private homosexual acts, and the abolition of the age of consent—were deeply concerned with securing emotional fulfilment as a crucial prerequisite for health and wellbeing in the decades after the war. Together, the three papers are broadly concerned with examining how the widespread valuation of citizens’ mental and emotional lives gave rise to a range of new readings and expectations of democratic culture between 1945 and 1979, the era of Britain’s “classic” welfare state.
**Paper 1 Abstract:** ‘More than a Contract: The Emergence of a State-Supported Marriage Welfare Service and the Politics of Intimacy in Post-1945 Britain’

Teri Chettiar, Postdoctoral Fellow, Humboldt University

This paper examines the political implications and impact of the development of state-supported marriage counseling and therapy services in Britain in the decades following the Second World War. It explores how citizens’ emotions emerged as a central object of political concern in Britain after 1945, and how intimate emotional relationships, in turn, became the subject of intense legal reform and new public expectations in the decades that followed. To this end, it presents two argumentative threads. First, it argues that British state support for a nationwide network of marriage welfare services was integral to the wider welfare-state project of eliminating class divisions by appealing to British citizens as individuals fundamentally defined through their emotions. Britain’s new postwar marriage welfare service affirmed the importance of emotional factors in making citizens’ lives complete at a moment when the government claimed to have solved the acute interwar problem of socio-economic inequality. Second, this paper argues that the psychological reading of marriage that was expounded by marriage therapists underwrote an epochal shift in popular attitudes toward marriage. The second half focuses on the widespread appropriation of psychological language and concepts in the movement to liberalize the divorce law in the 1960s. The psychological “discovery” of the wide-ranging importance of emotional relationships for healthy human development provided the basis for a new emotionally oriented egalitarian political landscape. In tracking the development of Britain’s marriage welfare service, this paper is concerned with how monogamous heterosexuality became inextricably connected to the broader goals of psychological maturity and responsible citizenship. While only a few hundred thousand men and women ever came into direct contact with marriage therapists and counselors in the decades following the war, their work was nonetheless profoundly important in providing a compelling language and set of concepts that elevated the stable marriage to a position of social and emotional cure-all in the public imagination.

**Paper 2 Abstract:** ‘Living and Partly Living’: Psychological Cripples and Social Planning in Post-war Britain

Rhodri Hayward, Senior Lecturer in the History of Medicine, Queen Mary University of London

Over recent years a number of historians, including James Vernon and Michael Saler, have claimed that twentieth-century Britain underwent a process of re-enchantment. Reversing the
familiar Weberian formulation with its insistence that modern cultures of speed necessarily erode shared values and institutions, these authors maintain that modernity imbues the world with new values, unleashes alternative temporalities and creates new spaces for the imagination. This paper extends their claim but argues for a more prosaic basis for this process. It shows how the combination of new physiological theories, such as the stress concept, with new systems of welfare administration after the Second World War disrupted conventional ideas of temporality while at the same time creating and sustaining a new set of social values in postwar Britain.

This paper examines the work of a number of prominent post war politicians, psychiatrists and industrialists – including Lord Taylor of Harlow, Sir Geoffrey Vickers and the Reith Lecturer, G. M. Carstairs – who looked to psychiatry to provide a new basis for state planning and social values. These commentators firmly believed that post-war Britons were equipped with a growing sense of psychological and emotional sophistication that far outstripped the sensibilities of earlier generations. The rapid personal evolution of the new Elizabethans destabilised conventional morality and complicated potential programmes of political intervention. Focussing on experiments in town planning and industrial organisation this talk will consider how psychiatric planners turned to new models of temporality in order to balance the twin goals of social stability and personal growth.

**Paper 3 Abstract:** ‘Responsible Citizenship, Emotional Health and Crime in Postwar Britain’
Michal Shapira, Senior Lecturer of History and Gender Studies, Tel Aviv University

Recovering the work of forgotten psychoanalysts, this paper locates forensic psychoanalysis within the context of wide debates about the meaning of democracy and the ability to tame individual and collective violence after 1945. Via psychoanalytic logic and terminology, mental predicaments were taken as serious threats to the political stability of democracy and responsible citizenship was seen as dependent on emotional health. From the 1930s to the 1960s British psychoanalysts were setting the tone in discussions of juvenile delinquency and the rise in crime (thought to be caused by the upheaval of war). Psychoanalytic accounts of criminality and the work of the Institute for the Scientific Treatment of Delinquency (ISTD) became vital to much of the public and official thinking on the subject. In the postwar era, the ISTD was also frequently called upon by state committees to provide expert testimony on topics ranging from corporal punishment to homosexuality and prostitution. The Institute was willing to develop Sigmund Freud’s original view of crime in inventive and far-reaching ways that had effects on
the lives of different law-breakers, the legal and probation systems, the police, and governmental offices. This paper will follow the work of the institution in the mid-decades of the twentieth century and will explore its ideas about childhood, violence, aggression, and cooperation in a democratic context in the age of mass violence.

3:30 – 4 pm – Break – Arts, Mason Lounge

4 – 5:30 pm – Panel Session 2

**Imperial Trajectories: Britain’s Entanglement with the World – Arts, Lecture Room 1**

**Speaker:** Tehila Sasson, Aimee M. Genell, Radhika Natarajan

**Chair:** Kevin O’Sullivan

Central to Modern British Studies at Birmingham’s call for proposals is a desire to understand the importance of British Studies today. One panel proposes to consider the continuing legacy of the British Empire in shaping local, national, and global governance. Each of our papers reflects on an imperial ending to examine the relationship between contemporary institutions and Britain’s imperial past. Aimee Genell’s paper explores why British administrators favored limited “self-government” in Egypt at the outset of occupation. By focusing on Lord Dufferin and connecting his Irish, Egyptian and Indian careers, she argues that Dufferin’s plan for administrative reform in Egypt drew upon his earlier understandings of autonomy within the Ottoman and British Empires. In each case, Dufferin’s administrative solutions to political crises were in line with a particular theory of international relations, which viewed the world as safe for empire. Radhika Natarajan’s paper examines the negotiation of migrants’ social rights and political belonging in post-war Britain. Through stories of Commonwealth Citizens’ attempts to access welfare, she connects the ‘domestic’ history of social democracy to forms of ‘imperial’ community management. Tehila Sasson’s paper examines the relationship between military and non-governmental aid in natural disasters after decolonization. As the British military found a new role as an agent of aid, it participated in the creation of new conceptions of global humanitarian community in the 1970s. Through these papers we explore how Britain’s imperial trajectories have shaped the contemporary world.

**Paper 1 Abstract:** ‘The Reorganization of Egypt: Lord Dufferin’s Tanzimat?’

Aimee M. Genell, Yale University

On February 6, 1883, nearly five months into the British occupation of Ottoman-Egypt, Lord Dufferin authored a report outlining British policy and a plan for the “reorganization” of the
province. Dufferin’s “Reorganization of Egypt” proposed far-reaching institutional changes that radically limited Ottoman and European rights and privileges in the province. Dufferin projected the reorganization of the army and police, the native courts, distribution of water, and new forms of taxation and land use. To placate the constitutionalists in Egypt, the report also called for the creation of representative assemblies, whose role in governance would be confined to consultation. The report was widely considered by contemporaries and later historians to be the blueprint for the occupation. Yet, the scheme itself appears only briefly in historical accounts and without much concern for the ideas animating the report. By the time Dufferin arrived in Cairo, he had extensive experience with Eastern Question diplomacy and had worked on various other “reorganization” schemes for other parts of the Ottoman and British Empires.

This paper traces Dufferin’s schemes for administrative reform in diverse contexts – from Ireland, Mount Lebanon, Canada, Eastern Anatolia and Egypt. Dufferin’s reorganization schemes presented a particular theory of international relations that sought to strengthen imperial architecture through administrative decentralization, but cut across distinct imperial and international spaces. This paper argues that Dufferin’s plan for administrative reform in Egypt drew upon his earlier understandings of autonomy within the Ottoman and British Empires. Dufferin was a key figure in a long-standing debate between the British and Ottoman governments on the meaning of self-government and autonomy within empire. The British Foreign Office viewed provincial autonomy in the Ottoman Empire as an instrument to limit the influence of other European powers, and also as a device to curtail Ottoman involvement in governing particular provinces. In contrast, the Ottoman Foreign Ministry viewed autonomy as a derogation of sovereignty and worked against British efforts to create autonomous provinces.

**Paper 2 Abstract: ‘Conversations in a Nottingham Welfare Office’**

Radhika Natarajan, Reed College

In 1959, Edmund N. Burke, a welfare officer from Jamaica, instituted a course to cultivate the leadership skills and civic capabilities of West Indians living in Nottingham. Instituted in the wake of the ‘riots’ that shook the city in 1958, the program’s organizers believed that the leaders cultivated in the course would go on to work as leaven, lifting up the community by instilling cohesion and cooperation. In partnership with West Indians resident in Nottingham and social workers employed by the Nottingham Council of Social Service, Burke brought community development principles honed in the villages of Jamaica to urban Britain.

This leadership program represents a strange return, that of the cooperative principles that went out into the empire and came back as community development. In my paper, I will situate the ‘Nottingham Experiment’ (as it became know in newspapers hungry for examples of ‘good’ race relations) in the context of the imperial circuits of cooperation and community development.
The “Rochdale Principles” of cooperation, first proposed in Lancashire in 1844, traveled to Jamaica in the early twentieth century via the Antigonish Movement of Nova Scotia. From the 1930s, Jamaica Welfare promoted adult education and village improvement programs throughout the island to demonstrate the fitness of Jamaicans for self-government. That West Indian social workers had something to teach their British peers was itself a symbol both of West Indian capacity for independence and also the internationalization of community development at mid-century. In Britain, the idea that a West Indian community could be mobilized by leaders found favor in local councils throughout the country as a way of managing the ‘immigrant problem.’ The turn to community development, however, also represented the end of a commitment to a social democratic vision of community that could include migrants from the decolonizing empire in its expansive reach.

The conversations at the Nottingham Council of Social Service—amongst social workers from the West Indies and the Midlands, West Indian settlers, and civic leaders—created an avenue of participation for migrants in Britain, not as universal citizens, but as members of discrete communities.

**Paper 3 Abstract:** ‘Modern Britain and the Rise of Disaster Militarism’
Tehila Sasson, University of California, Berkeley

The notion that natural disasters require military response has become so familiar to us in the past decades that it almost seems inevitable. And there is some sense to it: as its proponents would argue, the military is well-equipped to transport food and supplies in difficult conditions. Its efficiency in sustaining itself in difficult and extreme conditions makes the armed forces an effective body for disaster relief. Yet paradoxes here are also clear when the armed forces of the state are deployed to humanitarian disaster-zones instead battlefields. “Disaster militarism,” as some call it, carries a political valence, making the military seem both benevolent and necessary. As this paper will argue, this is not a new phenomenon. Its origins lay in the 1970s, when states began responding to natural catastrophe by calling in the troops.

This paper examines the emergence of this phenomenon by focusing on the British military. Although the story is largely global, the British story is rather unique because of the country’s former imperial experience. In the 1970s, as the British military relinquished the majority of its operational and combat roles, it became one of the major international responders to large-scale catastrophes and providers of humanitarian aid. Its knowledge and availability, as well as its former bases in Asia and Africa, allowed it to become a major participant in disaster relief in these areas. Disaster militarism, I argue, emerged in the 1970s because of the shrinking of the military as a result of decolonization and détente. It was a way to repurpose the armed forces and re-appropriate their knowledge in the service of humanitarian aid. Through this repurpose, the
military became part of the larger project of humanitarian governance. By harnessing its skills to transport aid, the British military acquired a new justification and a new role as a humanitarian actor.

**Cultures of Worship: Democracy, Royalty and Celebrity in Inter-War Britain – Arts, Main Lecture Room**

Speakers: Ed Owens, Frank Mort, Max Jones

Chair: Christine Grandy

‘The ancient world knew… the public needed circuses instead of bread’, Keynes argued in 1936, but present day democracies believed that ‘shows and ceremonies’ were ‘fit only for… savages’. Writing in the shadow of modernist hero worship on parade at the Nuremberg rallies and Moscow’s Red Square, Keynes demanded a form of democratic spectacle that could match both Fascist and Soviet style authoritarian populism. He identified only George V’s Silver Jubilee as the one ‘extraordinary example’ of the type of celebration that fulfilled the British public’s craving to ‘collect in great numbers and feel together’ before a sovereign figurehead.

To what extent did mid-twentieth century British political democracy, both at home and in the white dominions, require validation from shows, ceremonies and authentic heroes, in the ways Keynes claimed? Or to put it more starkly: were royalty and movie stars now inter-changeable in the inter-war popular imagination? These questions inform our three papers which deliberately bridge the fields of elevated public culture and media generated consumption, with their focus on royal weddings and empire tours and the stars of radio and the silver screen. Our answers call for a more nuanced relationship between sovereignty, publicity and politics and a more complex understanding of the audiences for these cultures of worship – who were at once addressed as citizens, subjects and consumers.

**Paper 1 Abstract:** ‘Democratic Splendour: Monarchy, Imperial Politics and Publicity in the Prince of Wales’ Tours of Canada and Australasia 1919-1921.’

Frank Mort, University of Manchester

‘Kings and princes now live in the fierce glare of publicity’, argued Sir Wilfred Laurier, Prime Minister of Canada. The pre-eminent figure in this version of publicity conscious royalty after 1918 was Edward, Prince of Wales, who led an international field of princely contemporaries and newer celebrities with his distinctive brand of modernism and pseudo-democratic accessibility. Between 1919 and 1925 his public profile was transmitted across the empire via his extended world tours. My paper examines the Prince’s role in the dominions as the representative of a
distinctively British projection of democratic royalty by focusing on his first tours to Canada (1919) and New Zealand and Australia (1920). Faced with the collapse of the old European order of princes and the new revolutionary challenge of Bolshevism, it was in these settings that an embryonic version of royal, democratic spectacle became tied to the politics of empire, as advocated by leading imperial statesmen and courtiers.

My approach locates experiments in the democratic display of royalty in the white empire, rather than on the more familiar terrain of Britain’s streets. In Canada and Australia the Prince was drawn into competing forms of nationalist and imperialist politics. He was embraced not only as the personification of empire but also as representing domestic aspirations for increased self government and cultural recognition. These experiments fused the crown’s constitutional functions with its media heightened appeal. The Prince’s tours brought together an influential press pack who stayed physically and symbolically close to their royal visitor. Working with the active support of Buckingham Palace and dominion politicians, journalists began to reshape the public face of the British monarchy. I argue that royalty’s ability to address ‘the Anglophone citizen’, as Laura Nym Mayall has termed it, rested on their ability to speak to audiences who were understood to be not only subjects of the crown but now avid consumers of royalty.

**Paper 2 Abstract:** ‘Communicating Constitutional Democracy: Mass Media, Emotion and Social Cohesion at the 1934 Royal Wedding of George and Marina’
Ed Owens, University of Manchester

This paper shows how a relatively unknown interwar royal wedding witnessed significant innovations in the way both Buckingham Palace officials and the mass media sought to communicate to British subjects a vision of a democratic public sphere that had constitutional monarchy at its heart. Building on recent historical work which has examined the diffuse and unsettled nature of Britain’s democratic political culture between the wars, this paper demonstrates how royal love stories were jointly orchestrated by the media and Palace as national set-pieces to try and integrate a new mass public into the constitutional compact through identification with popular narratives of romantic intimacy. The 1934 marriage of Prince George, youngest surviving son of King George V, to Princess Marina of Greece, accelerated this shift towards a more informal, emotionally expressive royal populism. It was the first occasion on which members of the House of Windsor spoke directly to cinema audiences through the newsreels, while the bride-to-be popularized the royal wave as a gestural mode of
communication between royalty and British subjects. George and Marina were the first royals to be publicly photographed kissing and their marriage ceremony in Westminster Abbey now involved British listeners when it was broadcast live by the BBC. The wedding also witnessed a BBC interviewer ask working-class people for their views on a topic of public interest for the first time and officials consented to cameramen filming from the roof of Buckingham Palace. This created mass panoramas of a British people who appeared to gather around the national focal point of the monarchy. These innovative modes of media exposure facilitated new kinds of popular participation in the British public sphere and generated visions of a populace united in celebration of the love story. And, against the backdrop of authoritarianism on the continent, the 1934 royal wedding helped crystallize a British political identity that was closely aligned with images of home life and the sanctity of family.

**Paper 3 Abstract:** ‘Authority, Exemplarity and Celebrity Between the Wars’
Max Jones, University of Manchester

Worship: To honour or revere as a supernatural being or power, or as a holy thing; to regard or approach with veneration; to adore with appropriate acts, rites, or ceremonies. (OED)

The third paper in our panel will step back and situate the detailed case-studies of the transformation of the monarchy within the broader trajectory of changing cultures of worship in modern Britain.

Daniel Boorstin’s seminal distinction between authentic ‘heroes’ and fake ‘celebrities’ directed attention towards the new types of fame generated by what he described as ‘the graphic revolution’ of the nineteenth century. Boorstin’s erection of a simple opposition between heroes worthy of admiration for their achievements and celebrities known only for their ‘well-knownness’ remains influential, embedded in the continued use of ‘celebrity’ as a pejorative term. This paper will argue that historians should reject Boorstin’s distinction and instead follow Graeme Turner in understanding celebrity as ‘as a media process that is coordinated by an industry, and as a commodity or text which is productively consumed by audiences and fans’.

Modern practices of fandom flourished in the nineteenth century, but public moralists – teachers and clerics, philosophers and politicians – fought to retain control of the representation of popular heroes. In the first half of the twentieth century, the new media of radio, feature film
and newsreel combined with innovations in print to transform cultures of worship and loosen
the grip of the moralists: artists and writers producing stories about heroes for the market rather
than moral edification, began to drown out their voices. The front page, the cinema and the
wireless emerged as new sites of worship, with their own appropriate rites and ceremonies.
Recognizability alone became a vital source of cultural authority, as Stefan Collini and others
have noted.

Mort’s and Owens’ papers reveal how the royal family responded to these media innovations,
performing multiple roles, from moral exemplars to objects of sexual desire, on new stages,
domestic and imperial. These changes signalled decline and the erosion of moral standards for
some, but opportunity for others, especially the potential to reach and convert new followers.
Such divergent diagnoses continue to characterise British cultures of democracy.

**Expertise, bureaucracy and the body: dilemmas of empowerment in post-war British
governance – Arts, Lecture Room 6**
Speakes: Gayle Davis, Gareth Millward, Glen O’Hara
Chair: Tom Crook

This panel will explore the tensions that emerged in the second half of the twentieth century
between the empowerment of ‘the people’ (including increased democracy, democratization,
local government, and patients’ rights) and the empowerment of state officials and experts (e.g.
local government officers, hospital boards, civil servants, doctors and dentists). These tensions
were long-established and were a crucial feature of the ‘liberal’ governance of the Victorian
period, when Britons first started debating the relative merits of ‘central’ and ‘local government’
and railing against excessive ‘bureaucracy’. But they also flourished in what post-Second World
War Britons thought of as a ‘social democracy’, which was supposed to involve a deepened sense
of democratic participation (including mass parties, the full franchise for all adults, and more
inclusive decision-making processes). Now, all kinds of expertise for planning and administering
‘the social’ became controversial subjects of bitter public debate, both inside and outside the
traditional political parties, including the subject of this panel: the regulation of the very life and
health of the human body. Crudely, the question was: where should the ‘empowerment’ of the
individual end, and the enormous influence of what was good or better for those individuals – as
evidenced by science, expertise and evidence – begin? This panel will look at three instances of
the management of these difficult borderlines in post-war Britain: firstly, the difficult relations
between doctors, the state and individual morality in debates about contraception and abortion;
secondly, the anti-vaccination campaigns of the 1970s; and thirdly, the controversy over adding
fluoride to drinking water to help preserve children’s teeth in the 1950s and 1970s. By so doing, the panel participants will reflect on the varying powers, images and clashes of experts and citizens, and concepts of ‘the public’ in the making and remaking of British public life during the second half of the twentieth century.

**Paper 1 Abstract:** “Sex on the National Health’: the medicalisation of fertility control in ‘swinging’ Scotland’
Gayle Davis, Senior Lecturer in the History of Medicine, University of Edinburgh

The increasing availability of safe and effective means of fertility control – abortion and contraception – arguably constitutes one of the most significant social developments of the twentieth century. Many social historians have located this trend within the general programme of so-called ‘permissive’ measures introduced to Britain during the ‘Swinging Sixties’, measures that reconfigured the role of the state in issues relating to sexual morality and gave significant power to individuals over their own bodies. Despite the centrality of the medical profession to both the formation of reproductive health policy and the delivery of services, scholarship has therefore tended to neglect, caricature or denigrate their role. This paper stems from ongoing research into the interface between reproduction, sexuality, health and medicine in post-World War Two Scotland. It will explore the social, medical and political factors that influenced fertility control provision in Scotland, charting the complex relationship between state, church, medicine and the public. In particular, it will provide a more nuanced examination of the state’s devolution of responsibility to a reluctant medical profession, and the resulting impact on women’s bodies and patient rights.

**Paper 2 Abstract:** ‘Who decides how ‘safe’ is ‘safe’? The pertussis vaccine scare and the Vaccination Damage Payments Act 1979’
Gareth Millward, Research Fellow, Centre for History in Public Health, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

Weeks before the 1979 General Election was called, the Labour government passed an Act to provide payments to parents whose children had been damaged by vaccinations given under the state’s public health programmes. This followed the ‘pertussis vaccine scare’, in which the whooping cough vaccine had been linked to brain injuries in children. By the early 1980s, the medical community was again broadly united in declaring the vaccination ‘safe’ – but in the meantime, enough doubt had been sowed in the general public to cause vaccination rates to plummet. For historians, this poses interesting questions about public trust in the medical authorities and their understandings about how medical treatments ‘work’ or might ‘go wrong’. Following the high-profile thalidomide scandal, Parliament, the press and pressure groups were open to the idea that the medical community may have allowed a dangerous drug to be
administered to millions of British children. This paper addresses these conflicts between the public, the medical profession and the government over what constituted a ‘safe’ vaccine. What role did the state have for informing parents of the potential risks without causing undue panic? How was medical ‘truth’ contested both within Britain and in the international arena, as similar debates were being conducted in Japan and the US? And how did campaign groups such as the Association of Parents of Vaccine Damaged Children and their allies in parliament seek to secure compensation from the government for injuries they were convinced were caused by state-administered vaccinations? Through these questions, historians can show that ideas such as ‘risk’ and ‘expertise’ were not static, and the way these were debated in public gives us a vital insight into 1970s’ British approaches to both medicine and public policy.

**Paper 3 Abstract:** ‘Something in the water: the fluoridation debate in post-Second World War Britain’
Glen O’Hara, Professor of Modern and Contemporary History, Oxford Brookes University

Fluoride was supposed to provide a cheap, quick, clean, easy and ‘modern’ answer to tooth decay. As rationing came to an end in the 1950s, and tooth decay from sugary drinks and sweets became a topic of great concern for doctors and dentists who saw themselves as having ‘solved’ many other health crises, UK policymakers looked to US experiments with fluoridising the water supply for a glimpse of a scientific future that would help them escape from dilemmas of diet and lifestyle. But they came up against a well-organised, determined and ideologically-committed group of anti-fluoridisers, gathered under the banner of the National Pure Water Association, who perceived ‘compulsory medication’ to amount to tyranny, and enforced intervention in individual Britons’ bodies akin to Nazi medical experimentation. The anti-fluoridation campaign cut across political parties and traditional conceptions of ‘left’ and ‘right’, finding adherents across the UK, and all in all main ideological groupings. What such groups opposed was what they perceived to be the unacceptable risk with their children, imposed on them by the same ‘experts’ who caused the thalidomide tragedy in the late 1950s. Once the Conservatives had declined to legislate in the early 1960s, finding the whole issue too controversial for central direction, anti-fluoridation campaigners kept up the pressure in the courts, and on local authorities, until they managed to thwart the idea of near-universal fluoridation itself. Only about a fifth of the UK’s water was to be fluoridated by the end of the century – a controversy that continues in the early twenty-first century, at the borders of acceptable state intervention in the health choices of each individual.

**Religion and Subjectivity in Modern Britain – Arts, Lecture Room 3**
Speakers: Harry Cocks, Sam Brewitt-Taylor, Laura Ramsay

Chair: James Vernon
Twentieth century Britain used to be thought of as a mainly secular society in which religion was of very little importance. Religion, if it was considered at all, was usually seen as part of class – window dressing for essentially ideological or political positions. Since that time, we have had a generation of scholarship that has tried to restore the importance of religion in Britain not least to cultural and political debates, as well as to questions of morality, sexuality and family. Whereas an earlier generation of historians saw religious belief as incompatible with modernity, recent work has undermined this simple equation, and suggested that it was only in the 1960s that there was a decisive turn away from religious belief and observance. This panel examines some of these arguments and ideas about the place of religion in British culture and in its relationship to subjectivity and identity. The first paper (Sam Brewitt-Taylor, Plymouth) considers how the idea of the sacred survived the political changes of post-war Britain, and considers how certain ideas assumed the inviolable status of sacredness. The second paper (Laura Ramsay, Nottingham U) examines the way in which the Church of England – which is usually seen as an implacable opponent of modern morals – in fact tried to respond positively to changing notions of sexuality and identity in 20th-century Britain. In particular, Ramsay aims to show the ways in which voices within the Church aimed to assemble a Christian subject fit for participation in contemporary Britain. Finally, Harry Cocks (Nottingham U), examines the uncertain relationship between law and morality after Wolfenden, principally through the Hart-Devlin debates and how they played out in practical terms in arguments over the law of conspiracy to corrupt public morals, which many liberals viewed as a threat to the potential Wolfenden settlement.

**Paper 1 Abstract:** ‘The self and the sacred: reflections on modern British selfhood from a religious-history perspective.’

Sam Brewitt-Taylor, Plymouth University

Birmingham’s Working Paper calls for closer attention to historical constructions of the self and ‘hierarchies of value’. Taking a Durkheimian perspective, this paper argues that these concerns can greatly be furthered by histories of the sacred: histories which focus on the myths, rituals, and symbols which allow individuals to construct themselves as part of a cohesive community. ‘The sacred’ can be defined as anything which is socially constructed as non-negotiable: that which a community places at the very top of its ‘hierarchy of values’. ‘The sacred’ is thus wider than traditional religion. In the last fifteen years, for example, attention to ‘the sacralisation of politics’ has transformed interwar European historiography, allowing fascism and communism to be understood as ‘political religions’.

In particular, this paper argues that a focus on ‘the sacred’ as an organizing theme has three major implications for ‘modern British studies’.
First, recent work on the religious crisis of the 1960s suggests that ‘the Sixties’ marked a profound turning-point in constructions of the social self in Great Britain. Beforehand, hegemonic cultural forms derived from Christianity governed rites of passage, codes of respectability and civil discipline, sexual mores, gender relations, and both British and Irish national identities. After the 1960s, following the eclipse of these forms, all these areas of Great British (not Northern Irish) life were decisively problematized.

Second, a focus on the sacred might sharpen reflection on the shifting relations between society and the individual. In societies where social forms of the sacred are strong, communal obligations rule many parts of life. In societies which hold individual self-expression to be sacred, this will not be the case. Thus the shifting visions of the sacred might help us think about the rise of postmodern forms of individualism, especially since the 1980s.

Third, my own work on the imagined revolutions of the Sixties suggests that the idea of transformation has acquired sacred significance since the 1960s. New Social Movements wanted to transform modern society; Blair and Cameron face-lifted their parties; even Thatcher tried to use economics to ‘change the soul’. Social shifts are now routinely described as ‘transformations’. Personal transformation is an emerging theme in postmodern identity.

In all these cases, the self can be understood not simply in terms of what controls it, but also in terms of what it most earnestly desires.

**Paper 2 Abstract:** ‘Christianity and modern sexuality: assembling an Anglican view of autonomous sexual selfhood’
Laura Ramsay, Nottingham University

Until very recently, histories of sexuality and modern religion remained separate and discreet. Since then, historians have begun to trace the development of progressive Christian positions on issues of sexuality in the twentieth century, demonstrating the symbiotic rather than oppositional relationships between religion and sexual modernity. In this paper, I want to argue for a continuation, but also a broadening out, of that project. By opening up and extending this dialogue, historians of modern Britain can profitably explore shifts and continuities in the regulation of sexuality, the fluidity of models of understanding sex and desire, and the broader social, cultural and political change involved in that process. In particular, I want to focus on the extent to which Christian discourses engaged with, and contributed to, debates about new forms of autonomous sexual selfhood. I outline a long (and complicated) trend in Anglican moral welfare work, towards positive, constructive, and rationally-based statements about sex, and attempts to assemble a Christian view of responsible, self-regulating sexual citizenship, that became integral to the ways in which Anglican moral welfare organisations sought to promote
specifically Christian ways of thinking about sex, marriage and the family, through their
educational work and participation in public discussions, from the mid-1920s onwards.
Increasingly, Anglican moral welfare organisations began to shift away from older, prohibitive
moral frameworks, towards a Christian approach based on individual social adjustment and
responsibility. The moral welfare organisations not only became the official bodies of the Church
for thought and action in issues of sexual morality, thereby occupying a central position in
mainstream Church policy-making, but they also exercised a broader influence in British society
through their participation in major public debates, and their interactions with other social
agencies, public health and educational authorities, and government departments. We need to
recognise and further interrogate these religious contributions to wider contemporary
discussions on social policy and the needs and obligations of British sexual citizenship.

**Paper 3 Abstract:** ‘Law, Religion and Morality after Wolfenden: the Case of Conspiracies
Against Public Morals’
Harry Cocks, Nottingham University

In 1960 a laboratory assistant named Frederick Shaw was prosecuted for a conspiracy to corrupt
public morals. His crime was to have published the Ladies’ Directory, a short booklet giving a
list of prostitutes and their services. Although Shaw appealed, claiming that there was no such
offence, his conviction was upheld and thereafter became the basis of several more prosecutions
up to the early 1970s, the most famous being that of the underground paper International Times
(IT) in 1969. There is reason to think of Shaw’s case as more than a legal footnote. In
particular, it loomed large in debates over the question of whether morality derived from
Britain’s Christian heritage was central to the workings of the criminal law. In that sense, Shaw’s
case was central to the famous debate over permissiveness and the law between the legal
philosopher H. L. A. Hart and his judicial opponent Patrick Devlin. For critics of the decision
such as Hart, Shaw’s case seemed to threaten not only the liberties of low-rent types like Shaw,
but in a much broader sense to attack the principle behind the Wolfenden Report, namely that
there were areas of private life that were no longer the law’s business. Devlin’s response to Hart
was to base a large part of his argument on the Shaw decision. He argued that morality would
always be part of the criminal law, and that the best way of deciding what that morality should be
was through the views of the “reasonable man” represented by the English jury. This, he
suggested, was what had happened in the Ladies’ Directory case. Attacks on the decision in
Shaw suggested that privileging the jury in this way would give authority to any contemporary
prejudice, and that the offence of conspiracy to corrupt public morals was drawn far too widely.
These fears seemed to have been borne out with the use of conspiracy not only against blue
films and small-time gay brothels, but also in the attack on IT. In that case, the publication of
gay contact ads in the paper was taken to be a similar conspiracy against public morals, and again
seemed to threaten what was now, after the decriminalisation of homosexuality between men in
1967, the settled principle of Wolfenden. In short, the development of the law of conspiracy in the 1960s and early 70s appeared to be a definite counter-strike against the Wolfenden settlement.

5:30 – 6 pm – Break

6 pm – “What Produces Democracy? Revolutionary Crises, Popular Politics, and Democratic Gains in Twentieth Century Europe”

Vice Chancellor’s Lecture by the Institute of Advanced Studies Distinguished Visiting Fellow, Geoff Eley
Elgar Concert Hall, Ground Floor, Bramall Music Building

THURSDAY 2nd JULY

9 – 10 am – Plenary 2 – Vaughn Jeffries Lecture Theatre, Education Building
Seth Koven, “Economies of Conscience in Early 20th Century Britain”

10 – 11:30 am – Panel Session 3

Ties that Bind: Refashioning Community and Responsibility for a Changing World – Arts, Lecture Room 1
Speakers: Caroline Shaw, Christienna Fryar, Emily Baughan
Chair: Richard Huzzey

Britain features prominently in accounts of humanitarianism and human rights. British abolitionists fuelled global campaigns against the slave trade and metropolitan activists tried to mitigate the impact of settler colonialism on aboriginal populations. Though these accounts are important and compelling, they tend to rely on a “humanitarian narrative” that emanates from private philanthropists and voluntary groups in the imperial center and assumes a logic of expansion, even while acknowledging that relief could be slow and progress often checkered. Together, the papers on this panel ask what happens when we reexamine the moral bases of responsibility and philanthropic outreach. What would this story look like if it were told from the colonies? If we begin to question whether the individuation of rights brought of necessity an improvement in humanitarian activism? If we were to explore more fully government’s role in generating activism? Each paper tackles aspects of this challenge to historians’ discussions of fellow-feeling and responsibility in a changing British world. For Christienna Fryar, political crises and natural disasters—and the vulnerable subjects affected by these upheavals—
challenged and transformed the preferred imperial strategy of minimal intervention in postemancipation Caribbean colonies. Whereas Fryar explores the connections between colonial constitutional politics and imperial philanthropy, Emily Baughan interrogates the workings of internationalism in the making of British foreign aid policies in the postwar period. Geopolitics and rising interest in moral law encouraged the government to commit tax revenue to overseas aid, a decision that, while it sparked considerable debate at the time, continues to be a key feature of British humanitarianism. Shaw’s paper similarly brings questions of ethics to the international sphere in her work on British relief for foreign refugees. Shaw queries through British activism the tension between universal and particular claims for humanitarian outreach and the extension of international rights.

**Paper 1:** ‘A Fire, A Constitution, and the Political Calculus of Imperial Philanthropy in 1880s Jamaica’  
Christienna Fryar, SUNY Buffalo State

If nineteenth-century imperialism was often about holding territory as cheaply as possible with as little manpower as possible, then this was doubly true in the postemancipation Caribbean. As the former slave colonies slumped into varying degrees of economic ruin, many in Britain wanted to limit the money and resources devoted to these colonies. Yet not only did the Caribbean colonies continue to draw on imperial resources, but natural disasters and administrative crises often forced more aggressive imperial intervention on behalf of vulnerable or disgruntled subjects. This paper examines one such moment in the early 1880s, after a fire destroyed much of downtown Kingston, the new capital of Jamaica. With previous fires, the Colonial Office had refused to provide imperial rebuilding grants or loans, despite requests from Kingston residents or members of the West India Lobby. However, in the early 1880s, Jamaica was in the middle of a political crisis, as Jamaican elites demanded revisions to the unpopular 1865 constitution that the imperial government had imposed after the Morant Bay Rebellion. After a series of internal debates during which various administrators made clear that the fire would not ordinarily warrant financial assistance, the Colonial Office offered substantial rebuilding loans to Kingston residents in recognition of the delicate political situation. Thus, the paper argues, colonial constitutional politics dictated the degree of humanitarian intervention from the metropole. Furthermore, the paper highlights the ways that crisis could both fortify and weaken the political and affective links between metropole and colony.

**Paper 2:** ‘Refugees: Between the Universal and the Particular’  
Caroline Shaw, Bates College
According to standard accounts of refugee history, the refugee became a matter of political and philanthropic concern in the aftermath of WWI. The term then applied to a handful of groups only. In the mid-twentieth century, the category shifted, its application becoming potentially universal: any individual fleeing persecution could qualify as a refugee. This standard account parallels the rise of a human rights regime. The accruing of rights, whether one places it the late-eighteenth century or in the 1940s or in the 1970s, follows a standard telos from group to individual. The proposed paper challenges this account. It traces the emergence of a powerful British normative claim on refugees’ behalf to the long nineteenth century. First offering a brief look at this longer history, the paper then focuses on British arguments on behalf of foreign refugees between the 1870s and 1940s, be they refugee slaves in the Indian Ocean region or Jews from Central and Eastern Europe. As this paper highlights, British activists, officials, and public commentators alternately individuated or aggregated would-be refugees by group throughout this period. Group or individuated categorization was not necessarily better for the persecuted parties themselves, the paper finds. Yet, understanding this dynamic, the paper argues, can help us better understand the difficulty of elevating refuge to a human right.

**Paper 3:** ‘A Mrs Jellyby Nation: the British State and Overseas Aid, 1918-1925’
Emily Baughan, University of Bristol.

Each year, the British Government gives £11 billion in foreign aid. Yet, despite this cross-party commitment to foreign aid, at present little is known of the origins of this policy. This paper it will examine the political, economic and philosophical underpinnings of British overseas aid, tracing its emergence to the immediate aftermath of the First World War. It will argue that post-war foreign aid reflected both a commitment to international free trade, and a Kantian tradition that upheld a ‘moral law’ guiding international relations. Proponents of overseas aid ensured its success by tying it to two of the foremost concerns of British foreign policy in the early twentieth century: the perceived decline of Europe and American ascendance. Yet, overseas aid was far from universally popular. The Government took the unprecedented step of using British tax revenues to provide food and shelter for people overseas, of national hardship and prevalent poverty. Conservative critics of aid claimed that Britain was becoming a ‘Mrs. Jellyby Nation’ – saving distant others while blind to the suffering of its domestic poor. Drawing upon popular media sources, the article will examine these anti-aid voices, as well as the counter-arguments successful in circumventing them: those which connected national pride and foreign policy objectives directly to the granting of humanitarian aid.
Humour and Comedy in Modern British Studies- Arts, Main Lecture Room
Speakers: Gavin Schaffer, Peter Bailey, Lucy Delap

Chair: Julie-Marie Strange

This session will offer three perspectives on the ways in which historians approach comedy and humour as sources for the research of modern British history. Looking at case studies of suffrage and anti-suffrage movements of the early twentieth century, music hall, and 1980s alternative and mainstream comedy, it will question what historians can learn from cultures of humour and laughter and explore the role played by jokes in social, political and cultural life. The three case studies within the panel between them probe issues of class, race, sexuality and gender, exploring the function of comedy as an agent of challenge and change. They utilise different sources, including live comedy performance, print, and television, to tease out the role of comedy and its impacts. At the core of the session will be a discussion about why historians have hitherto underused comedy as a source and why cultures of humour have so often been dismissed as ephemeral or unimportant. All three papers in this session will argue that humour and laughter offers insight into past cultures, while focusing on the theoretical and practical parameters of the historical study of humour.

Paper 1 Abstract: ““Turned Out Nice Again”: Music Hall Humour As Social Text’
Peter Bailey, University of Manitoba/Indiana University

Music hall in Britain denotes both the prototype modern entertainment industry that did business from the mid-Victorian era to the 1950s and a persistent style of humour and comic performance now lodged in the national psyche as an agreeably vulgar and traditional working class mode. This paper surveys the shifting content and function of music hall stage humour in text, persona and performance, as a register of material and social values, an issue in the history of cultural politics, and an emergent second language for all.

Paper 2 Abstract: “A wave of angry laughter’: feminism, suffrage and laughter in modern British history’
Lucy Delap, St Catharine’s College, Cambridge

This paper examines the role that the study of humour, comedy and laughter can play in elucidating key themes in modern British history. It will discuss the ambiguities of traces of laughter in the historical archive, as well as the reluctance amongst modern historians to take laughter seriously as a revealing dimension of political, emotional and cultural life. Attention to who laughs, when, and at what is valuable for its capacity to show multiple facets of social and political change – laughter, for example, signals reception and incorporation of culture into
everyday life; its study elucidates the emotional content of political and social movements; laughter indicates the cues for social anxiety and the tools deployed to diminish it. Study of laughter must always be alert to failed jokes, the moments where laughter is sought but not forthcoming. Laughter can be manipulated, but remains an unpredictable emotional performance; the emotional states it signals are many, and cannot be assumed. This paper will offer a case study of humour and laughter within the women’s suffrage and anti-suffrage movements of the early twentieth century, to better understand the reception and ‘throw’ of suffrage arguments, the performances mandated, and the unpredictable meanings that suffrage or anti-suffrage interventions might take on. The paper will conclude with reflections on what the study of humour and laughter can offer to wider field of modern British studies, and to methodological debates concerning the study of emotions, and the incorporation of theory into historical practice.

**Paper 3 Abstract:** ‘The Alternative to the Alternative: Mainstream Comedy in 1980s Britain’
Gavin Schaffer, University of Birmingham

Comedy in the 1980s is mainly remembered in terms of the rise of a new brand of alternative humour, epitomised by The Young Ones, The Comic Strip Presents, and the success of comedy clubs such as The Comedy Store and The Comic Strip. This focus on iconic alternative output makes sense in terms of charting the development of British humour, but silences the broader reality that most Britons were uninspired by alternative comedy in the 1980s. While in popular memory the 1980s is remembered in terms of the decline of traditional comics such as Benny Hill, in reality this was an era where these kinds of acts prospered. Hill, for example, continued with his successful television show until 1989. The most popular sitcoms of the 1980s were ‘Allo ‘Allo and Only Fools and Horses, programmes which owed far more to the traditional structures and conventions of British comedy than they did to the alternative movement. This paper will offer analysis of the continuing success of mainstream comedy set against the background of the rise of the alternative. It will consider why mainstream comedy maintained its popularity in the 1980s and what this might tell historians about culture and society in Thatcher’s Britain, at the same time questioning why so many Britons continued to dismiss new wave humour as the alternative to comedy.

**Class and Gender in Post-war Social Science—Arts, Lecture Room 6**

Speakers: Helen McCarthy, Lise Butler

Chair: Deborah Cohen

An increasing number of historians have turned their attention to the role that the social sciences played in shaping social identities in post-war Britain. They have explored the ways in which the
expanding social-democratic state made use of professional ‘expertise’ to govern in an age of complexity, and how social-scientific knowledge helped British people to make sense of their changing relationships with family, community and the state, as well as their personal and social identities. Exemplifying this new direction in the historiography of the postwar, these papers explore different kinds of social-science ‘encounter’ and raise important interpretive and methodological questions: Jon Lawrence (now unable to attend) asks how historians can repurpose the rich social research of the period to shed new light on the ‘structures of feeling’ which governed the politics of everyday life. Helen McCarthy poses similar questions to feminist historians, revisiting through the lens of social science the ideologically fraught issue of how to access women’s ‘authentic’ desires. Lise Butler offers a fresh and arresting perspective on the intellectual history of the left by demonstrating the centrality, and ideological effects, of particular social-scientific formations of gender, family and community. These three papers will take new perspectives to post-war social science, asking how it shaped the culture and politics of post-war Britain, and how the historian can mediate social scientific accounts to access, examine and interpret experience.

Paper 1 Abstract: ‘Women’s work, social science and the politics of feminist history’
Helen McCarthy, QMUL

From its origins in the 1960s, the feminist historical project was committed to giving women in the past a ‘voice’ – allowing them to speak for themselves and to cut through the ideological undergrowth of what other, more powerful, historical actors have said through the ages about women’s thoughts, feelings or ‘true’ desires. But in methodological terms, this has not been easy. The most articulate testimonies preserved in the archives frequently illuminate the lives of only the privileged or elite, prompting many feminist historians to look to oral history as a means of reconstructing women’s ‘authentic’ experiences. Others, under the influence of the ‘cultural turn’ questioned the intellectual viability of this aspiration, focusing instead on representations, discourses and ‘performances’ of gender. Permeating the debate over women’s/gender history remains a basic ideological tension: what if the ‘structures of feeling’ uncovered by feminist historians in the past seem to point away from a viable feminist politics in the present? How do we explain an apparent accommodation to patriarchal structures and conservative gender ideologies in women’s testimonies? What do we do when women don’t say what we want or expect them to say?

This paper revisits the politics of doing women’s/gender history by considering the place of post-war social science in elucidating women’s needs, preferences and desires regarding paid
work. A period traditionally characterised for its conservative gender politics, the 1950s and 60s witnessed a dramatic growth in married women’s employment outside the home and generated a wealth of sociological studies focused on the emerging phenomenon of the ‘dual role’. The question of why married women did or did not work was central to this literature, but how useful is it for historians as evidence of women’s ‘authentic’ desires? Developing Jon Lawrence’s discussion of the power relations of the social-science encounter, the paper will argue that at work in these texts was a dynamic and mutually-constitutive process whereby women’s self-narrations and the interpretive devices of the social scientist together helped to shape women’s orientations to paid work in the post-war period.

**Paper 2 Abstract: ‘Family, gender and left-wing social science’**

Lise Butler, Oxford

In recent years historians have taken a more critical eye to the social research and social science of the 1950s, 60s and 70s. The methods of social scientists and social researchers professed to offer an objective, universal and comprehensive portrait of the social, but the ostensibly neutral approaches of the social sciences also promoted specific cultural and political values, and can be read as sites of rich intellectual, ideological and political debate.

Jon Lawrence and Helen McCarthy’s papers address how the ideas and methods of social researchers structured the ways in which individuals understood their identities and their social and professional possibilities. Drawing on my recently completed doctoral research, which examines the impact of social psychology, sociology, and anthropology on post-war left-wing political thought through a study of the ideas and networks of the policy-maker and sociologist Michael Young, this paper will assess the impact of family-centric social science in a variety of institutional contexts in post-war Britain, including the Institute of Community Studies, the London School of Economics Department of Social Policy, and the Consumers’ Association. It will show how the work of post-war social researchers was rooted in pre-war and wartime social policy debates about the economic dependence of women, anthropological notions of female centric-community, and an idealized conception of women as non-workers.

This paper calls for a contextualization of the history of social science within a broader intellectual history. It highlights the significance of organicist, family-centric and communitarian values to the intellectual foundations of post-war social research. And it gestures at the centrality
of gendered norms to left-leaning conceptions of community and class at a moment of increasing affluence, modernization and social and economic transformation.

**It's different up here: Region, locality, and place in 20th Century British History— Arts, Lecture Room 3**

 Speakers: Christine Grandy, Helen Smith, James Greenhalgh

 Chair: Laura King

 At the core of this panel is a historiographical and conceptual absence in the face of a fairly straightforward question: What place do region or the local have in historiography of the 20th century or indeed within historiography of modern Britain? These areas have, for the most part, been largely ignored by historians of modern Britain, even while the very different experiences of the North and the South, the metropolitan and local, are registered with relatively little comment within our works. Our panel asks whether a ‘rethinking’ of modern British studies should grapple with the overlooked role of region and locality in shaping conceptions of sexuality, the urban and municipal, and race? Does regional and local history need to be torn away from conceptions of small-scale analysis or uncomfortable associations with heritage?

 This panel considers the largely overlooked role of region and place within histories of 20th century Britain. Together, these three papers examine the usefulness of region and locality as an organising principal for understanding communities, space, and even time periods within the 20th century. Helen Smith’s paper rethinks long-standing assumptions around sexuality in the North in light of her work on relatively high levels of same-sex acceptance in Yorkshire while James Greenhalgh considers the overlooked role of local planning as an engine for change, rather than World War II, in fostering post-war British modernity. Christine Grandy examines the role of regional television news in both collapsing and invoking concepts of ‘strangerhood’ in post-war reporting on immigration in the Midlands. Together, our papers are concerned with interrogating both the benefits and drawbacks of using region and locality as primary categories of analysis within the complex terrain of 20th century Britain.

 **Paper 1 Abstract:** “It’s all incest and buggery up there”: Same-sex desire, northernness and a different way of living?

 Helen Smith, University Of Lincoln

 In her memoir, Evelyn Haythorne remembered how her family reacted to being relocated to South Yorkshire during the inter-war period. Her mother was mortified about the move north (from Hampshire) because she had always known that ‘it’s all incest and buggery up there’. Evelyn enjoyed life up north and was not worried by the evidence of same-sex desire that she
saw in cafes and on the streets of Sheffield, and neither in her experience, were the rest of the city’s inhabitants. Somehow, Yorkshire had acquired a reputation for sexual depravity and this does not fit with understood narratives within the history of sexuality.

This paper will explore region as a category of analysis for understanding sexual cultures and the expression of same-sex desire. For the most part, historians of sexuality have ignored non-Metropolitan men, assuming that such men did not have the same freedom of opportunity to be found in the capital and that they have left behind few traces of their experiences. The fact that, for the first half of the 20th century, most northern men did not have access to the types of commercial and cultural venues as their metropolitan counterparts has been seen as evidence of repression and of a certain kind of provincial ‘backwardness’. However, this kind of reading obscures the fact that, for many men in the north, same-sex desire was an acceptable way to find sexual and emotional release. And as shown by the attitudes of the residents of Evelyn Haythorne’s Sheffield, communities, albeit within a certain set of locally governed expectations, could feel the same way.

While well-documented lives were being led in London, thousands of working-class men were having sex with each other in the north without challenging their ideas of sexual ‘normality’. Laura Doan has written on how ideas of normality can be challenged and reconfigured and, in terms of sexual experience, a study of the north can add to this scholarship. By reworking an analysis of sexuality in the 20th century to include region specific research, the picture of how ordinary men fulfilled their desires becomes more both nuanced and more grounded in other forms of life experience such as work, class-culture and family life. This paper will examine these intersections between sexuality, region, class and masculinity to offer up the beginnings of a new normal and a new way to interpret 20th British history more broadly.

**Paper 2 Abstract:** “Do your neighbours talk to you?’ Region, ‘strangerhood,’ and immigration in Midlands news television.’
Christine Grandy, University Of Lincoln

In 1956, the relatively new ITV channel began broadcasting a regional news bulletin produced by a Birmingham based television company, ATV. This news bulletin, called Midlands News was a daily weekday broadcast until 1969, when it merged with another programme ATV today. From its inception, Midlands News focused on regional news, often racing from its headquarters to developing stories across the Midlands. This was modern media in the new age of two television channels, as the power of the screen within the home was just beginning to be realized.

This paper is concerned with exploring region, but within the peculiar confines of a two-channel television system that was tasked with documenting a variety of local concerns, including the
growth of immigrant communities in the Midlands. This paper firstly considers how regional television news sits within James Vernon’s recent argument that provincial newspapers in the 19th and early 20th centuries worked to ‘remake associational and political culture’ between increasingly dislocated and abstracted notions ‘distant strangers’ within Britain. My paper attempts to situate the work of a 20th century regional television network within Vernon’s concept of, for lack of a better word, regional ‘strangerhood,’ and alongside concerns that with another type of ‘distant strangers’ who, as Chris Waters has argued, powerfully shaped post-war notions of an encompassing Britishness. Where, or can, regional identities sit within this post-war reshaping of Britishness? How do regional affiliations work to both collapse notions of strangerhood within regions, but also conversely to invoke strangerhood in the powerful medium of screen culture as grounds for a defensive and persistent framework of identification? By examining ATV’s reporting on post-war immigration in the Midlands, this paper examines the intersections of post-war television and notions of racial and regional strangerhood in modern Britain.

**Paper 3 Abstract:** ‘Local modernities: Urban planning, war, and the citizen’

James Greenhalgh, University Of Lincoln

This paper examines the manner in which narratives of change have been influenced by historical periodization and too-heavy a focus on the national-level state as both an arena for and the driver of developments in policy designed to shape people’s lives through interventions in urban space. The paper argues that, despite caveats, scholarship on post-war Britain has been too ready to treat the war as a caesura or a driver of change, which has led to misunderstandings about the genesis of policy concerning the built environment and the importance of the local state being ignored or downplayed.

Examination of approaches to urban space in provincial cities — here focused upon attempts by the corporations of Manchester and Hull to produce functional, liveable cities through spatial policies — reveals local state actors in corporations and planning departments as one of, if not the, key driver of national policies emerging after the Second World War. By discarding assumptions about the salience of the war as a driver of change, the paper shows the importance of challenging understandings associated with common periodization of modern Britain and Europe and offers examination of the local state as a way of doing so. Following on from work done by historians of twentieth century Germany and France the paper thus suggests ways we might challenge conventional understandings of what constituted British modernity in in the middle of the twentieth century. Building on theses developed by historians of urban Britain like Simon Gunn, the paper reveals local corporations deploying their own vision of urban modernism, redefining the functional city and showing detailed models of how space functioned in shaping the behaviours of the consciously-free citizen subject. British modernity emerges not
as a singular, national process, but as a contested, fragmented set of processes, with different meanings at the personal, local and national levels of the state. Attention to how local corporations were interpreting and contesting the meanings of planning legislation; how they were regulating advertising, fairground noise, waste-ground hawkers or bystanders; and how they brought detailed understandings of the manner in which space shaped individual experience shows the importance of the local state and local state actors as drivers of change at a national level.

11:30 – 12 pm – Break – Arts, Mason Lounge

12 – 1 pm – Plenary 3 – Vaughn Jeffries Lecture Theatre, Education Building

1 – 2 pm – Lunch – Arts, Mason Lounge

2 – 3:30 pm – Panel Session 4

**Humanitarianism in Modern Britain: from Imperial Burdens to the Aid Industry** – Arts, Lecture Room 1
Speakers: Andrew Jones, Charlotte Lydia Riley, Anna Bocking-Welch

Chair: Matthew Hilton

There is a long history of British involvement in humanitarianism – the aid and campaigning to save lives, alleviate suffering, and protect human dignity around the world. From its origins in religious missions, anti-slavery campaigning and wartime relief, humanitarianism and international aid has been an important and enduring presence in the landscape of modern Britain. In recent decades this has matured into a highly professionalised sector, commanding substantial resources and global influence. However, despite growing interest from historians, there is still much we do not know about the historical dynamics, development, and political dimensions of modern British humanitarianism.

This panel investigates this history, featuring three papers from early career researchers working and publishing in this field. All three papers explore specific aspects of the history of British aid, and use these case studies to illuminate key issues in modern British studies highlighted in Birmingham’s collective Working Paper 1. Charlotte Riley discusses how the history of official aid and development policy in Britain (both pre-and post-colonial) can shed light on wider issues in British political and social history. Anna Bocking-Welch examines how popular engagement in
internationalism was reframed in Britain after the Second World War, focusing specifically on civic participation in transnational humanitarian campaigns in the 1960s. Finally, Andrew Jones analyses the rise of a professionalised and technocratic humanitarian infrastructure in post-war Britain, and the insights this history can provide into public engagement, the rise of NGOs, and the legacies of imperial discourses in modern Britain.

**Paper 1 Abstract:** “This country is full of warm-hearted people’: Identity, Humanitarianism, and British Political History’
Charlotte Lydia Riley, University of York

This paper will explore how the history of aid and development policy in Britain can be used to shed light on wider issues in British political and social history.

From the 1920s, British colonial policy became increasingly articulated through a language of ‘progress’ and ‘development’. This was enshrined in British law with the Colonial Development Act (1929) and the Colonial Development Acts (first passed in 1940). During and after decolonisation, this approach was continued in Britain’s relationships with the newly independent nations of the ‘developing world’, and the legacies of colonial policies, rhetoric and ideology can be traced in the Ministry of Overseas Development (est. 1964) and the Department for International Development (1997).

This paper argues that, after the empire was ended, ideas about ‘civilising missions’ and imperial burdens did not melt away; instead, they were absorbed into a wider dialogue about Britain’s (and Britons’) place in the world. The construction of a British identity within the international community as a giver of aid, within a network of international and transnational humanitarian organisations, has been fundamentally shaped by the ongoing legacy of British colonialism and decolonisation. In turn, this international identity has shaped, and been shaped by, domestic British politics; as the paper will demonstrate, this identity has been most enthusiastically embraced by the British left. This paper will explore how these ideas about aid, humanitarianism and development can contribute to a broader understanding of political cultures and social values in modern British history, as well as a wider conception of Britain as an actor within a network of transnational ideas and supranational politics.

**Paper 2 Abstract:** ‘Humanitarianism as Civic Internationalism in 1960s Britain’
Anna Bocking-Welch, University of Liverpool

In the inter-war period there was a rich tradition of internationalist public ritual, best characterised by the pageantry of League of Nations Day and other civic events. Although the pageantry of internationalism declined after the second world war, this paper will argue that
public engagement with internationalism did not disappear, but continued, instead, in new forms. Reframed and relocated in response to changing domestic and international circumstances, by the 1960s, civic participation in internationalism had come to focus on interpersonal relationships. Using the activities of the United Nations Freedom from Hunger Campaign and Christian Aid in the 1960s, this paper will show that humanitarian campaigns came to provide an important means by which the British public could articulate and participate in these forms of civic—or people-to-people—internationalism. To do this, it will focus on two key elements of public participation in humanitarian campaigns: claims and performances of solidarity with the recipients of aid; and the pursuit of knowledge about recipient countries and their populations. In both cases, participants saw their relationship to the humanitarian organisations that they supported as more than just financial. Both also raise important questions about the extent to which public support of humanitarian campaigns can be understood as political behaviour.

**Paper 3 Abstract:** ‘The Humanitarian Industry in Britain’

Andrew Jones, University of Birmingham

Humanitarianism is big business in contemporary Britain. Today, the leading international aid agencies are all household names, characterised by big resources, professionalised bureaucracies, and global influence. In 2014, Oxfam alone raised just under £400 million in income. The British public consistently donates large amounts to humanitarian causes, and the current official aid budget is unprecedented in size. Many observers refer to an aid ‘industry’ when describing contemporary humanitarianism, evoking notions of commercial activity and market dynamics which appear removed from traditional voluntarism. However, there is still much that we do not understand about how this infrastructure developed and took shape historically. This paper will provide a brief introduction to the emergence of this humanitarian industry in post-war Britain, which can be heavily attributed to an enduring cycle of major disasters in the global South. This was also problematic, as from as early as the 1960s many leading aid agencies wanted to move away from disaster relief work, towards tackling the long-term structural causes of global poverty instead. This apparent contradiction can be attributed to a number of structural constraints, which worked to shape and contain the development of British humanitarianism. It will be concluded that this history also sheds light on important themes in modern British studies, including the development of non-governmental activism; public engagement in global issues; and the impact of decolonisation and legacies and empire within the metropole.

**Creative History: a dangerous undertaking – Arts, Main Lecture Room**

Speakers: Alison Twells, Matt Houlbrook, Helen Rogers

Chair: Charlotte Greenhalgh
The Modern British Studies @ Birmingham Working Paper No. 1 argues that the task of developing new national narratives of modern Britain is made particularly pressing by a popular history that is ‘dominated by a growing number of entertaining, evocative, yet deeply problematic accounts of social, cultural and political change.’ At the same time as countering these narratives, the paper argues that ‘everything we do must take place in a way that encourages constructive interaction between public history and the academy.’ This panel explores the problematic nature of this relationship. How does a discipline which continues to eschew the evocative and the entertaining engage constructively with history outside of the academy?

As academic historians, we write for an audience of specialists; fellow academics who are engaged with specific historiographical debates in our field. This style allows us to tackle questions with rigour and complexity. However, this approach is not inviting for the non-academic reader. Members of the wider public who are interested in, even passionate about, history go elsewhere, principally to public history sites and to memoir, biography and fiction. They want something more than to be told; they want to experience, to feel. For those of us who work in the broad field of ‘history from below’, there are additional difficulties. Is it possible to create a broader and more democratic community of historians which is able to engage creatively and respectfully with the richness of history beyond the academy? This panel asks: what are the options for the academic historian who wishes to communicate beyond the academy? Is it possible to combine rigour with a concern for audience? Is accessibility enough, or do we need to change how we write, to rethink the elements that currently constitute academic practice? Is it possible to successfully present research in different genres; for analysis and interpretation to be conveyed through other means, principally through narrative and story telling?

**Paper 1 Abstract:** “The reader wants to be intrigued’: imagination, interpretation and history from and for below.’
Alison Twells, Sheffield Hallam University

When I inherited a suitcase of diaries and letters from my great aunt in 2009 and began to unravel an absorbing story about romance and deception during WW2, I was quite certain that alongside academic explorations of the significance of the ordinary pocket diary, I wanted to write a book that both worked for me as a historian but which my aunt would recognise as her story. I felt uneasy about narrative history, particularly the many texts that seem to do little more than present research without footnotes and cumbersome historiography. Eventually, despite professional anxieties about both family history and ‘storytelling’, I signed up for a Life-writing module on the MA Writing at SHU. The outcome, Socks for the Boys!, combines the WW2 narrative, as derived from the diaries and letters, with an exploration of the process of uncovering the story. Along the way, I reflect upon the benefits of showing rather than telling,
the power of images over analysis, the desire of the reader to not be told, and the conflict between literary aesthetics and historical truth.

This paper explores issues raised by being an academic historian moving between genres where questions of audience are uppermost. In particular, I focus on a meeting with a women’s book club who read my manuscript in its entirety. Mostly retired, they came from a range of backgrounds and careers, and read (critically) a range of literary fiction, historical fiction, history, memoirs and diaries (including published Mass Observation diaries). I explore the significance for historians of the readers’ simultaneous desire for truth and intrigue. The paper also addresses wider questions concerning techniques borrowed from fiction, life writing and public history and asks what they can bring to our practice and to the development of a wider, more inclusive, community of historians.

**Paper 2 Abstract:** ‘Tucked away in the shadows: Storytelling as history’

Matt Houlbrook, University of Birmingham

‘Analysis does not always declare itself as such. It can find expression in allegory and be tucked away in the shadows of significant narrative detail.’ (Fraser MacDonald, ‘The Ruins of Erskine Beveridge’, Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, 39 (4) 2014, 2–3.)

This is a paper that does nothing more than tell stories. Fragments of the lives of the confidence trickster, crime writer, and royal biographer sometimes known as Netley Lucas (1903-40) appear as melodrama, romantic fiction, screenplay, or gossip. Telling stories about a prolific storyteller is, perhaps, my way of exploring Alan Munslow’s injunction that history is a ‘form of narrative making — a fictive undertaking’ with its own disciplinary conventions. Time becomes autobiography through the narratives inscribed through a soft lead pencil; the past becomes history through stories we tell, and decisions we make about how to order those stories; history is an ‘authorial act.’ Drawing attention to the process of my own storytelling, I show you the acts I have undertaken, and those moments when interpretation and speculation elide; I acknowledge the limits of my arguments, and the creative expediencies on which they rest. Like Lucas, I try out different ways of telling stories. Unlike Lucas, I do so to explore how other kinds of narrative nonfiction might convey meaning and interpretation, entertain or intrigue. Moving between voices, I leave frayed edges that invite you to scrutinize the expediences of writing history, and the uncertainties of our knowledge of the past. In moving between the familiar tropes of academic history and different forms of storytelling, my aim is to trouble the “apparent coherence and ultimate ‘given-ness’” of much historical writing, to think critically about how the discipline of history works, and how it might be made differently.
**Paper 3 Abstract: ‘Writing Aloud: Blogging and Creative History’**
Helen Rogers, Liverpool John Moores University

It is often said blogging is a good way of ‘thinking aloud’ but, while growing numbers of historians are turning to the blogosphere to share work-in-progress, there has been little consideration of how the medium might shape – even transform – the way we write history, in conventional and online formats. In my paper I reflect on how my writing began to evolve through blogging and how, unexpectedly, it is encouraging me to engage more imaginatively and creatively with narrative as both story-telling and analytical device. My blog, Conviction: stories from a nineteenth-century prison, began as an attempt to find a narrative style and framework for a book based on fragmentary evidence of multiple lives. Surprisingly, the visual, short, serial format of blogging opened up story-telling as a technique for interweaving, contextualizing and analyzing myriad lives. In the paper I identify the strategies I devised and consider what these share with, and where they depart from, those used by creative fiction writers. In doing so, I will ask whether the differences between historians who write creative non-fiction and writers of historical fiction have to do with our approaches to invention and imagination.

**Post-war Britain: from social democracy to neoliberalism? – Arts, Lecture Room 6**
Speakers: Aled Davies, Ben Jackson, Peter Sloman

Chair: Hugh Pemberton

The first Modern British Studies working paper notes ‘the difficulties of identifying organising narratives for understanding modern Britain’. This is an acute problem for ‘histories of Britain since the mid-twentieth century [as] older and triumphant narratives of democratisation and welfarism, and more pessimistic studies of economic and Imperial decline, have been displaced, but left little in their wake.’

One organising narrative which has found favour in recent years is that of the decomposition of the social democratic post-war settlement and the emergence of ‘neoliberalism’ in its place. James Vernon, for instance, has written that ‘the central historical problem in twentieth-century Britain was… the brief life of its social democracy’, forged through two world wars but undermined by globalization, decolonization, and a ‘transformation of the political’ during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. In this panel we will consider whether the transition from social democracy to neoliberalism is a useful frame through which to understand the transformation of British politics and society over the last half-century. In many ways, it is an attractive organising concept because it allows historians to set Britain’s experience in a transnational context and to engage with a burgeoning literature in political science, sociology, and economics. Yet there are also potential problems which need to be confronted. Can ‘neoliberalism’ be defined
satisfactorily? Does the supposed novelty of neoliberalism obscure significant continuities in post-war Britain? And might a focus on neoliberalism prioritise political and economic history over the study of culture, gender, and ethnicity?

Our three panellists will each discuss their own historical research, and in the light of this will then reflect on the validity of the ‘social democracy to neoliberalism’ framing of post-war Britain.

**Paper 1 Abstract:** ‘Currents of neo-liberalism: British political ideologies and the New Right.’

Ben Jackson

The pervasive ideological influence of neo-liberalism has been a fertile theme in the study of post-1970s Britain. Historians, political scientists and cultural theorists have all detected a set of common liberal markets ideas that have deeply influenced Conservative, Labour and now Conservative-Liberal Democratic governments. The assumption that usually underpins this diagnosis is that neo-liberalism spread, like a virus, from the Conservatives to Labour and the Liberal Democrats as a result of the electoral success of Margaret Thatcher.

This paper turns the spotlight on a more obscure aspect of the making of British neo-liberalism. It argues that neo-liberalism was so influential on British political argument in part because it enjoyed an affinity with long-standing traditions within British conservatism, liberalism, and even socialism. It was for this reason easier than we might expect for politicians and intellectuals of varying partisan stripes to imbibe the lessons of neo-liberalism and produce policy discourses that presented neo-liberal ideas as an authentic expression of their own ideological traditions.

The periodisation that emerges from this analysis therefore suggests that some of this absorption of neo-liberalism into the blood-stream of the British left pre-dated the electoral success of Margaret Thatcher. These pre-Thatcher currents of neo-liberalism gained a hearing on the centre and left of British politics because they articulated anxieties about the character of the post-war British state that resonated with similar concerns among a vocal minority of liberals and socialists, in particular those who were sceptical about corporatist economic management and the growing reach of the universal welfare state. The paper concludes that neo-liberalism, although frequently characterised as rigid and dogmatic, has in fact proved itself to be a flexible body of ideas, capable of mutating into a variety of ideological forms.

**Paper 2 Abstract:** ‘Transfer state: neoliberalism, social democracy, and the rise of income support, 1964-2010’

Peter Sloman
Over the past half-century, the British welfare state has undergone a radical transformation, as the social insurance model devised by William Beveridge has given way towards a complex system of income-related support for the poor. During the 1950s and 1960s, means-tested benefits accounted for less than one-quarter of social security payments to working-age adults and children; by 2010 they made up almost two-thirds. This shift has often been understood in terms of the residualization of out-of-work benefits, leading to a ‘return to the Poor Law’ for the sick, unemployed, and disabled. Just as important, however, has been the expansion of income support for low-paid workers in the form of tax credits and housing benefit, which now form the second and third largest elements in the social security budget after the state pension.

This paper will examine how historians and social scientists have conceptualized the growth of income support since the 1960s and 1970s, and will consider how far this shift can be seen as part of a wider transition from social democracy to neoliberalism. It will suggest that the expansion of transfer payments in the late twentieth century stemmed not so much from the displacement of social democratic concerns about poverty and inequality as from the way they came to be refracted through neoclassical ideas about economic efficiency, market pricing, and consumer choice. This distinctive combination of ideas came to the fore in the era of Wilson and Heath but reached its apogee under Blair and Brown. As governments of all stripes turned away from the dirigisme of the post-war settlement, income support became the dominant element in both the Thatcher government’s social safety net and New Labour’s egalitarian strategy.

**Paper 3 Abstract:** ‘The City of London: from Social Democracy to Neoliberalism’

Aled Davies

This paper considers the role of the ‘City of London’ in the transition from social democracy to neoliberalism in post-war Britain. It contends that in the two decades prior to the election of Margaret Thatcher the social democratic economic settlement was challenged by substantial changes to the financial system. The emergence of institutional investment, and new pressures on the banking system, undermined the social democratic methods for managing and controlling credit and investment. Furthermore, structural changes to the international financial system imposed new limits on government freedom to undertake domestic-focused macroeconomic management. Inventive attempts by social democrats to adapt their economic strategy to these changes were jointly-resisted by financial and industrial interests. Against this backdrop representatives of the City campaigned against the social democratic ideal of building an advanced industrial economy through State coordination. The source of future national prosperity, according to the influential City-dominated ‘Committee on Invisible Exports’, lay in Britain’s ability to provide financial services to the global economy.
This paper asserts four key points concerning the transition from social democracy to neoliberalism:

i. The adoption of neoliberal economic policy norms cannot be isolated from the structural changes to the domestic and international economy which took place during the post-war period.

ii. The social democratic project was not moribund in the 1970s. Historians should try to understand how its proponents attempted to adapt to the new material conditions they faced in this tumultuous period.

iii. Despite their normally fractious relationship, industrialists and financial interests were united in their pursuit of proto-Thatcherite policies after 1974. However, their engagement with neoliberal ‘thought’ was ambiguous.

iv. The transition to neoliberalism was rooted in a long-standing cultural contest over the character and purpose of the national economy. This drew on historic tensions between industry and services; production and trade; and over Britain’s engagement with the world economy.

**Beyond Fatherhood: Histories of masculinity and the family in the 19th and 20th centuries – Arts, Lecture Room 3**

Speakers: Laura King, Jessica Meyer, Julie-Marie Strange

Chair: Helen Smith

Why write histories of masculinities? As Tosh noted, the study of both gender in the past and the gendered past can fully engage with the political project underpinning the discipline. This panel will consider what the history of masculinity does and should look like in twenty-first century Britain. In a still highly unequal world – within Britain and, to even greater extremes, beyond – the panellists will consider the continued political impetus to analyse and deconstruct conceptions of male identity in past and present. The growth of gender history over past decades has reiterated how men are both everywhere and nowhere within history writing – history has often been written almost exclusively about men, but the gendered nature of the past, and writing about it, remains under-emphasised. This panel considers the importance of gender – alongside other categories of analysis such as race and class – in researching a period characterised by ‘changing forms of self and subjectivity’.

In particular, this panel identifies a range of masculine identities related to the family, using gender analysis to explore the family as a transformative and transforming social space in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Britain. By examining the variety of ways in which men lived
within and interacted with family, the papers in this panel seek to both complicate understandings of gender relations and to interrogate the boundaries between public and private, a project which can help disrupt apparently timeless constructions of gender roles and identities in past and parent. The panel papers address issues including the role of grandparents, state provision for men disabled in war, and the uses of histories of masculinities beyond the campus. This panel thus makes the case for the importance of complex, interdisciplinary histories of masculinity and of the family to the wider understanding of modern British studies.

**Paper 1 Abstract:** ‘Creating ‘usable’ histories of masculinity: men and family life in twentieth-century Britain’
Laura King, University of Leeds

What does, and should, the history of masculinity look like in twenty-first century Britain? This paper will consider the role of histories of masculinities, considering their potential in informing contemporary debates about feminism and gender inequality, and as part of new ways of making history within the higher education landscape of impact and public engagement.

The impetus to study masculinities, emerging from women’s history and Scott’s seminal paper on gender as a key category for analysis, remains as strong as ever, particularly as histories of masculinities in twentieth-century Britain remain relatively scarce. In this paper, I will consider the role of histories of masculinities within history as a field, but also their political potential beyond the academy. Furthermore, I consider how we can best problematise gender when we ourselves are part of a patriarchal system, within higher education and beyond, which continues to capitalises on gender (as well as race and class), and the power relations inherent in it.

Secondly, this paper responds to the idea of ‘cultures of democracy’, using gender history as an example to think about who does and should make history. As Samuel stated, history is ‘a social form of knowledge; the work, in any given instance, of a thousand different hands’. Here I consider what history should look like in a ‘post-impact’ world, focusing particularly on my work around the history of fatherhood and masculinity in modern Britain, and experience in collaborating with theatre groups, arts organisations, museums, NGOs and others.

Finally, this paper turns to considerations of how we research masculinity, thinking about whether institutional archives hold the answers for gender historians. Drawing on work for an AHRC-funded project on ‘The Family Archive’, I consider what is left out of archives when we are considering the most private aspects of people’s lives.

**Paper 2 Abstract:** “The strain of constantly pushing me up these hills’: Masculinity and familial care-giving for disabled ex-servicemen’
Jessica Meyer, University of Leeds
Much of twentieth-century British history has been defined or influenced by the two great mass conflicts that were the world wars. Both saw men conscripted into the British armed forces with consequences for the social and political relationship between the male citizen and the State. Key among the issues raised by mass participation in warfare was that of war disability and the debt owed by the State to the disabled ex-serviceman for health of lost in its defence.

The study of the intersection between the politicization of war disability and fluctuating constructions of masculinity across the 20th century has been the subject of a number of important studies by gender historians. There have similarly been numerous studies of the ways in which post-war periods saw a turn to the domestic among men returning home from war. However, the role of the family in providing medical and social care has yet to be fully examined as a significant aspect of disabled male experience.

This paper will examine this role and the impact that it had on understanding of the family as a gendered space in interwar society. It will argue that greater insight into the role of the family in caring for disabled ex-servicemen in this period not only has the potential to affect historic understandings of the importance of the family as a social force and a gendered sphere, but can also influence understandings of contemporary debates over State responsibility for medical and social care for ex-service personnel within context of the so-called ‘military covenant’. In doing so, it will suggest that interdisciplinary perspectives, in this instance disability studies and the history of masculinity, may offer one approach to the challenge recently posed by John Tosh to revive the political project underpinning the history of masculinity in the modern period.

**Paper 3 Abstract:** “Invisible men’: aged masculinity in social histories of nineteenth and early twentieth-century Britain’
Julie-Marie Strange, University of Manchester

There is a growing scholarship on masculinities in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Overwhelmingly, this scholarship takes normative masculinity as placed somewhere between the post-juvenile years (what we would call the late teens) and forty-ish (that is, the age after which men were more likely to experience unemployment and deskilling). With working-class masculinities, the normative age range is even more entrenched as conceptions of labouring masculinity depend so much on able-bodied independence. As social surveyors found in 1910, men over the age of forty-five were far more likely to lose jobs, experience higher rates of sickness, become less mobile and deskill. Histories of welfare show that aged and ageing men were far more likely to enter workhouses or to live alone, suggesting that older men were disconnected from networks of family and friendship. There is also a scholarship on the social
This paper shifts focus towards aged and ageing men. Taking ‘grandfathers’ as a point of entry, the paper especially interrogates the dynamic between older men and family life. In doing so, it reflects on why aged men are under-represented in histories of both masculinity and age, how we might redress this imbalance and what could be the benefits of doing so for our understandings of masculinity and age.

3:30 – 4 pm – Break – Arts, Mason Lounge

4 – 5:30 pm – Panel Session 5

Destitution and its Discontents – Arts, Lecture Room 1
Speakers: Raminder Saini, Hilary Buxton, Sarah Mass

Chair: Julia Laite

This panel will bring together three cases of disadvantaged actors in the metropole and the Empire to consider how the British dealt with problematic and incapacitated groups in their midst. Looking at cases extending from London and Cardiff to Leeds and Bombay, the panelists consider how voluntary societies and private charities filled gaps in British welfare policy through efforts at rescue and rehabilitation. Raminder Saini’s paper centers on the 1857 establishment of the Stranger’s Home for Asiatics, Africans, and South Sea Islanders, which provided aid to destitute lascars in Britain by cloistering them in a space specifically designed for the “other.” Saini argues that this space, while altruistic in nature, sought to curtail Indians’ movement and opportunities in Britain. Moving into the twentieth century, Hilary Buxton’s paper addresses British efforts to rehabilitate and re-train disabled colonial troops of the Great War. Focusing on the Queen Mary Technical School for soldiers in Bombay, Buxton argues that this intervention formed part of a wider effort to define British obligations to its veterans while simultaneously managing the threat of colonial unrest. Sarah Mass turns to the question of civic engagement and community support in postwar Britain, questioning how market traders styled their work as connected to the public good. Mass contends that the desperate state of the marketplace in the aftermath of WWII led traders to idealize their role as social providers. Together, these papers discuss to what extent the British state, private institutions, and individual civilians defined responsibility, adjudicated merit, and negotiated boundaries in an era of imperial expansion and global warfare.
**Paper 1 Abstract:** ‘A Home for “Strangers”: Providing Christian Charity to the Destitute Indian’
Raminder Saini, McGill University

In 1856, a year before the outbreak of the “Indian Mutiny,” the Church Missionary Society founded the Strangers’ Home for Asiatics, Africans and South Sea Islanders in London’s East End. The Home officially opened in 1857, providing temporary lodgings, exposure to Christian doctrine as well as aid to destitute Indians so they could escape the drudgery of London’s East End. These efforts were spurred by the increasing number of destitute lascars stranded in the metropole in early nineteenth-century Britain. Lodging houses, such as the Sailors’ Home, were established to provide food and shelter to seamen, but these lodgings did not solve the problem of impoverished lascars wandering the streets of London. The East India Company, and later the India Office, were supposed to provide provisions for lascars and other Indians, but ineffective government policy resulted in Indians who had no intention of settling in Britain to become its unintended immigrants. By the 1840s, an increasing number of impoverished Indians caught the attention of Henry Venn and the Church Missionary Society who took concerted efforts to provide aid to these unintended immigrants.

This paper charts the significance of the Strangers’ Home as an important physical space for both colonial sojourners and destitute lascars. It argues that while the Home provided much needed charity, in establishing a defined space in which “strangers” from the Empire could and should congregate, evangelicals were attempting to isolate imperial subjects, especially Indians, from participating in white British society. Nevertheless, it is significant that where imperial policy failed, philanthropic efforts succeeded. In this way, this paper illustrates the contradictory or dualistic elements that formed with the opening of the Strangers’ Home in 1857.

**Paper 2 Abstract:** “The Crippled Natives”: Rehabilitating and Re-educating Colonial Veterans of WWI
Hilary Buxton, Rutgers University

In the last two decades, an increasing number of studies have attempted to examine soldiers and their post-WWI experiences. While the experience and treatment of British soldiers has been extensively explored, the same questions with regards to colonial troops. How did their “Otherness” affect the location and character of the bodily and psychological treatments that the British wartime state offered its non-white veterans?

This paper will look at a series of rehabilitative homes and health institutions formed during and after the war in India and the West Indies, to compare the experiences of servicemen in their attempts to access healthcare from the British state. It argues that healing colonial soldiers’ bodies was part of a wider propaganda effort to safeguard against a rising tide of anti-colonial
demonstrations in the Empire. Healthcare provision for veterans, while partial and contested, was focused in areas where anti-imperial threats seemed greatest. As a critical component of military control and administration in India, retraining and healing Indian veterans became a high priority. In contrast, officials found it easier to relinquish responsibility for colonies with dwindling profits and which lacked a cohesive anti-colonial agenda, leaving black soldiers of the Caribbean adrift.

Out of a mediocre network of government-run hospitals and pension centers, only one rehabilitation center was founded to retrain disabled non-white servicemen in suitable work: the Queen Mary Technical School in Bombay, established in 1917. Lauded as evidence of Britain’s devotion to its imperial children, the center was funded by private donations from British and Indian benefactors. It offered instruction in accessible employment, yet its scope was limited, accepting only a fraction of esteemed Sepoys and ignoring Indian laborers. Tracing the history of this institution, the paper demonstrates how apparatuses of healing became devices of inequality.

**Paper 3 Abstract:** ‘Market Traders and the Parameters of British Municipal Citizenship’
Sarah Mass, University of Michigan

British marketplaces served as the multi-faceted core of provincial cities over the course of the twentieth century. As public institutions, they conveyed the ethos of providing quality staples to the most vulnerable citizens. And as hubs in urban shopping districts, the renting of a market stall was a relatively affordable way to grow a business. Yet what were the limits of the market’s “value” as British cities were physically and ideologically strained during and after the Second World War?

Focusing on the perspectives of traders themselves (set down in the pages of their journal, *The Market Traders’ Review*), and drawing on case studies in cities such as Leeds and Cardiff, this paper will argue that in periods of crisis, the public marketplace became a space where entrepreneurs parsed the meaning of civic belonging. Market traders — as the mediators between the responsibilities of local government and the basic shopping needs of the populace — could claim that their citizenship flowed from their commitment to the public good. This role was especially pronounced during the bombing of the Second World War, when marketplaces became stopgap solutions in the disrupted supply of provisions. Yet there were limits to this “public” utility. In the aftermath of the Second World War, impromptu markets cropped up on vacant bombed land, and spiv and transient interlopers took advantage of fluid market culture. In the face of these blemishes and the attacks they encouraged among authorities, market traders were forced to confront who was an insider and who was an outsider in their nominally “open” business community. The desperate situation of the wartime and postwar urban economy
idealized the social provision role of the marketplace by excluding forms of trade deemed unworthy of this civic space.

**Bringing Subcultures Back – Arts, Main Lecture Room**

Speakers: Lucy Robinson, Keith Gildart, Matthew Worley, Chris Warne

Chair: Ben Jones

This panel explores the implications of bringing together the legacies of the subcultural work made famous by the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies with the current work growing out the Birmingham Centre for Modern British Studies as outlined in its manifesto. We seek to re-evaluate the possibilities of subcultural practice in order to illuminate the wider cultures of democracy. To that end we have brought together case studies which look at subcultural identities as both a reaction against and an interaction with formal social, political and economic institutions. In this context, we suggest that rather than being viewed through simplistic ideas of deviance or rebellion, subcultural identities should be seen in their own right as distinctive and influential ways of imagining and re-imagining Britain’s global position.

**Paper 1 Abstract: ‘Class, Youth and Dirty Jobs: The working-class and post-war Britain in Pete Townshend’s *Quadrophenia*’**

Keith Gildart, University of Wolverhampton

This paper examines Pete Townshend’s *Quadrophenia* (1973) and the way in which it depicts continuity and change in the lives of the British working-class in the period that the album documents (1964) and the political milieu in which it was written (1972-3). *Quadrophenia* was recorded and released in a period of industrial militancy in Britain that had not been witnessed since the general strike of 1926. The album can be ‘read’ as both a social history of an element of youth culture in the 1960s, but also a reflection on contemporary anxieties relating to youth, class and national identity. Along with the novels and films of the British ‘new wave’ and contemporary sociological examinations of working-class communities and youth culture *Quadrophenia* represents a classic slice of ‘social realism’, social history and political commentary. In contrast to the conventional images of modernity, affluence, colour, and the mythology of the ‘swinging sixties’, Townshend’s *Quadrophenia* and his British ‘sixties’ is a ‘black and white world’ of domestic drudgery, egg and chip breakfasts, dirty jobs, vandalism, political alienation, class divisions and deference. As such, Townshend’s role as musician, writer, performer and commentator was more nuanced than some of his musical contemporaries. Here was an attempt not to just capture the popular zeitgeist, but a sophisticated attempt to understand the
complexity of the British working-class and the place of youth, fashion and popular music in its ‘everyday life’.

**Paper 2 Abstract:** “While the world was dying, did you wonder why?: Punk, Politics and British (fan)zines, 1976–84”  
Matthew Worley, University of Reading

This paper recovers and contextualizes the politics of British punk fanzines produced in the late 1970s and early 1980s. It argues that fanzines – and youth cultures more generally – serve to provide a contested cultural space for young people to express their ideas, opinions and anxieties. Simultaneously, it maintains that punk fanzines offer the historian a portal into a period of significant socio-economic, political and cultural change. As well as presenting alternative cultural narratives to the formulaic accounts of punk and popular music now common in the mainstream media, fanzines allow us a glimpse of the often radical ideas held by a youthful milieu rarely given expression in the political arena.

**Paper 3 Abstract:** “Embracing the divine chaos”: the 1990s British rave church movement caught between the local and the global”  
Lucy Robinson and Chris Warne, University of Sussex

From 1985-1995 the Sheffield-based Nine O’Clock Service (NOS) attracted young people in their hundreds, blending rave culture with a vision of Christian spiritual renewal, typified by its use of electronic music and multi-media visuals in the Planetary Mass, all within an officially sanctioned Church of England framework. In many ways, it can be seen as the most visible expression of a broader contemporary movement within British Christianity to explore new cultural expressions and forms of belonging.

However, the potential paradoxes of this movement appeared to come to a spectacular head in 1995 when the Church of England removed Chris Brain, NOS’s acknowledged leader and figurehead following accusations of sexual abuse and financial mismanagement. Pilloried in the popular media as a rave cult within the Church of England, NOS seemed to handily combine moral panics about rave culture on the one hand, and about religious cults run by ‘Sexy Vicars’ and charismatic evangelicals on the other.

In this two handed paper we seek to interrogate two interwoven threads of the local and global that ran through the Sheffield Church, and the responses to its dismantling. In particular, we will explore the value of subcultural theory as a means of illuminating the importance of both the local and the global within the NOS phenomenon. Firstly, we will read 1980s British evangelicalism as a series of interconnected subcultures, seeing NOS as the most visible
expression of its complex of local activism, global networks and transnational exchanges. Secondly we will situate NOS within the global networks of rave culture, emphasising the importance of the specific context, Sheffield, and of its localisation of rave as a global party tribe.

**Visualising British Public Health— Arts, Lecture Room 6**
Speakers: Amanda Sciampacone, Alex Mold, Hannah Kershaw

Chairs: Jonathan Reinarz and Vanessa Heggie

**Paper 1 Abstract:** ‘The “Shadow of Death”: Cholera and British Medical Topography in the Nineteenth Century’
Amanda Sciampacone, Birkbeck, University of London

With the emergence of cholera in India in 1817, the repeated and deadly epidemics that struck England between 1831 and 1866, and the mysterious nature of its epidemiology, British medics were compelled to determine the cause of the disease. Since the dominant miasma theory provided only partial answers, medics looked for other factors that may have propagated cholera. Increasingly in government and medical reports, writers concentrated on the climate of India and unusual meteorological phenomena in England as the cause of cholera’s morbidity and spread. The tropical heat and jungle miasmas were blamed for first producing cholera, while odd weather was identified as spreading the malady in Britain. While much of this discourse was textual, images were marshalled to support and visualize the arguments made about the disease and the conditions in which it spread. In these visual representations, medics mapped the disease to a certain type of ‘cholera weather’ that could spread across the nation. In attempting to visualize cholera, these representations suggested that the invisible disease had substance and a very real material presence. Cholera could be quantified and measured against other seemingly intangible phenomena. As my paper will demonstrate, the conflation of cholera with the climate of India, strange weather, and a heavy atmosphere powerfully evoked visual tropes of cholera as an elusive and malignant disease that had the potential to contaminate the very landscape of the British nation.

**Paper 2 Abstract:** ‘Envisaging the public: public health, the public and the visual in modern Britain’
Alex Mold, Centre for History in Public Health, LSHTM
Dorothy Porter, in her wide-ranging survey of public health history, asserts that ‘For many students the idea of studying the history of public health provokes a very big yawn since it conjures up an image of investigating toilets, drains and political statutes through the ages.’ For the student of modern Britain, the recent history of public health is perhaps more likely to provoke a blank look than a yawn. The relevance of public health to the formation of the modern state in the nineteenth century is well established, but what can it tell us about more contemporary cultures of democracy?

If there is a grand narrative in the recent development of public health, it is that of the epidemiological transition. As mortality and morbidity from infectious disease declined towards the end of the nineteenth century, the incidence of chronic conditions increased. Public health, so long configured around combating infectious disease, ‘lost its role’. So too, in some ways, have its historians. Public health rarely features in the popular historical accounts of modern Britain, and the histories that do exist tend to focus on specific issues such as AIDS and smoking, or on the workings of public health services. Yet there is much to be gained by thinking more broadly about the nature of public health and its changing relationship with the public during the second half of the twentieth century and beyond.

This paper will contribute to a discussion about the meaning of the public in modern Britain through an analysis of a selection of public health posters. What do images of the public, and of public health, tell us about the relationship between these? Through visual sources we can begin to assess how the public were envisaged by public health, and what this means for wider discussions about the nature of the public in modern Britain.

**Paper 3 Abstract:** ‘Envisioning teenagers and imagining risk: the construction of HIV-positive identities in British teenage girls’ magazines, 1985-1997’
Hannah Kershaw, CSTM, University of Manchester

This paper explores the development of AIDS representations produced for the consumption of teenage girls in the popular teen-magazines Just Seventeen and MIZZ. Although AIDS coverage in teen-magazines changed significantly between 1985 and 1997, with new narratives, characters and focuses added to their representational repertoire, ideologically the underlying motives behind the magazine’s portrayals of the disease and ‘at risk’ and HIV-positive identities did not change radically. It will be argued that the changes in representational practices wrought by AIDS around teenage womanhood, sexuality and disease were more a multiplication than transformation of existing discourses and identities. Representations of AIDS were motivated by a complex interaction between profit and government edicts; with early coverage displaying a will to prevent the magazines’ predominantly white heterosexual underage female readership from panic and prejudice. Later, when the focus of AIDS-education was dominated by safer-sex,
pervasive victim-blaming narratives which suggested those who risked ‘unsafe-sex’ were to blame for their HIV-positivity were juxtaposed by extensive sympathetic coverage of reasons why teenagers continued to practice ‘unsafe-sex’. This sympathetic coverage constructed several teenage identities from the vulnerable but oppositional frustrated teen existing in the confessional space of the magazine, to the empowered knowing teen who, through the consumption of safer-sex knowledge, could defend her unenlightened sisters.

An analysis of teenage media enriches and challenges those accounts provided by histories which track more conventional sources of public health information by reasserting the importance of asking which public(s) we are speaking of in histories of public health and recognising the uniqueness and agency of teenagers as subjects of historic investigation. Furthermore, focusing on magazines – multimedia texts characterised both by their interactivity and ability to respond rapidly to both their audience and political and cultural context – gives the historian a unique purchase on that most elusive of artefacts, the audience.

**The history of emotions in modern Britain—Arts, Lecture Room 3**

*Speakers: Charlotte Greenhalgh, Martin Francis, Celia Hughes*

*Chair: Claire Langhamer*

Students of modern Britain can now read accomplished histories of love, of fear, of shame, and of tears, tantrums, and bared teeth—many of them published within recent years. The authors of these studies suggest that thinking about the experience and expression of emotions over time provides a valuable perspective on modern Britain and its institutions, politics, conflicts, and changing social mores. This panel presents three case studies of current research in the history of emotions in order to reflect on the state of the field and its contributions to Modern British Studies. Does the history of emotions provide new ways of thinking about the transformation of British society, culture, politics and economy in the period—the stated aim of Modern British Studies at Birmingham? Does this field provide an opportunity for political, economic, social, and cultural history to come into closer conversation? Or is the ‘emotional turn’ a further example of the fragmentation of the discipline that is identified and critiqued in the first Birmingham Working Paper?

The history of emotions is a mature field with its own textbooks, research centres, and theorists. Its concern with tracing the history of emotional expression and experience is not a dominant topic at British Studies conferences or in the field’s prestigious journals. Yet publications by Claire Langhamer, Deborah Cohen, Martin Francis, Michael Roper, and others, have made clear its interest and relevance. The speakers in this panel discuss the value of the historical study of emotions for understanding aspects of modern British history that include the end of empire, the
development of the welfare state, the lifecycle, and the formation of individual subjectivity. Keeping the first Birmingham Working Paper in mind, the speakers ask whether the field engages with broad processes that reshaped life in modern Britain. To what extent does the history of emotions offer a useful, coherent, and distinctive perspective on this period of British history? Should more British historians adopt this approach?

**Paper 1 Abstract: ‘Private Feelings and Imperial Performativity in Second World War Egypt: Addressing the Intimate and the Global in Modern British History’**

Martin Francis, University of Cincinnati

Among the key imperatives identified by the Birmingham Working Paper Number One is an acknowledgment of Britain’s status as ‘a nodal point in a broader global history’. However an apparent commitment to the project of provincializing Britain is immediately compromised by a resort to a rather unimaginative reassembling of some historiographical categories—mass democracy, mass culture, governance, the public sphere—that appear to be stuck in a time warp from the 1990s, if not before. Antoinette Burton’s unforgettable call to arms in her 1997 essay “Who Needs the Nation” therefore remains as pertinent as ever, her plea to address the disavowals and confinements (both geographical and methodological) that dominate the writing of modern British history still only half-heartedly addressed, even by some of the more thoughtful and reflective scholars in the field.

The history of emotions—with its concern for the personal, the subjective and the intimate—might seem singularly ill-equipped to effect the broadening of the geographical and conceptual horizons demanded by Burton. In fact, this paper argues the very opposite. It uses the worlds of feeling of Britain’s ambassador to Egypt during the Second World War, Sir Miles Lampson, to uncover the psychic wounds created by the seminal event in modern British history: the end of empire. More specifically it argues for the value of so-called secondary emotions—pride, jealousy, disapproval, embarrassment (rather than the primary emotions of fear, love, anger and grief that have attracted most prior attention)—in creating a more holistic understanding of how imperial eclipse was negotiated at the level of individual subjectivity. By using the domains of the personal and the intimate as a primary mode of understanding Britain’s globalized history, this paper hopes to bring British history into closer dialogue with recent debates about the question of ‘scale’ in the writing of history.

**Paper 2 Abstract: ‘Writing the History of Old Age in Twentieth-Century Britain: An Age of Emotion?’**

Charlotte Greenhalgh, Monash University
Scholars and social scientists have long identified distinctive patterns of emotional experience in old age. They have theorised that emotional feeling is numbed with age, drawing an analogy with the waning of physical senses such as hearing and sight, or that the elderly are steadily cut off from personal interactions that cause emotion, experiencing a form of 'social death'. These theories are disproved by interview and autobiographical evidence from the middle of the twentieth century that records the emotional intensity of older Britons' memories and private lives. They do not fit with the widespread public interest in personal experiences of ageing during the period that produced these first-person sources. The historical record has captured the efforts of multiple varieties of the twentieth-century expert—including social surveyors, psychologists, old age advocacy groups, and welfare and voluntary organisations—to catalogue and address the emotional needs of the aged during the twentieth century, often reshaping public services in the process.

This paper is a reflection on the experience of researching and writing a doctoral thesis and a book manuscript (that latter is a current project) in the history of old age. Its central purpose is to interrogate the relationship between histories of old age and the history of emotions. At first I imagined that my doctoral research would become a history of the emotional experience of ageing. Yet the history of growing old is as much about politics and poverty as it is about feeling. What benefits and what challenges have resulted from thinking about this topic as part of the history of emotions? Now that I am writing for publication, how should the story of old age be told? How might it be received when framed as a history of emotions, rather than a history of political change? This paper draws on research in the history of old age in order to consider some of the possibilities and limitations of our historiographical allegiances, and, in particular, of engagement with the history of emotions.

**Paper 3 Abstract:** ‘Writing the Young Everyday Male Self in Post-war Britain’
Celia Hughes, University of Copenhagen

This paper will explore a selection of private diaries written by lower middle- and middle-class adolescent boys and young men during the long 1960s. Drawing upon recent historical work on gender, subjectivities and the ordinary diary, it will focus on the possibilities and challenges these texts present for how to read and understand the emotional experiences and self-making of young (selective secondary and higher educated) men coming of age in post-war Britain.

Although recent years have seen historians presenting new narratives of sixties girlhood and young womanhood, little is understood about what it actually felt like to be a young man growing up in this extraordinary decade. Since the nineteenth century the private diary has been seen as a space inhabited by women and associated with the domestic world. However, these young men’s diaries reveal that at a time of expanding educational and leisure opportunities,
commercial youth cultures, travel, and sexual and moral change, the domestic space framing the ordinary diary was an important setting for young post-war men trying to make sense of who they were.

This paper will discuss what the diaries reveal about the writers' lived experiences of parental relationships, friendships, love and early sexual relationships, and the place home and region played in shaping these. Through attention to the materiality of the diaries, and the style and form of self-writing young men employed at particular moments in time, it will reflect upon the role the diaries played in helping them to manage the social and emotional processes of becoming young adults. The paper seeks to contribute to the panel’s discussion by arguing that these rarely seen diaries offer new insights into the processes of making gendered subjectivities in a period only just starting to be addressed by social and cultural historians of modern Britain.

5:30 – 5:45 pm – Break

5:45 – 6:45 pm – Plenary 4 – Vaughn Jeffries Lecture Theatre, Education Building
Catherine Hall, ‘Slavery and Freedom re-visited: or What is a Man?’

FRIDAY 3rd JULY

9 – 10 am – Plenary 5 – Vaughn Jeffries Lecture Theatre, Education Building
Deborah Cohen, “Love and Money in the Informal Empire”

10 – 11:30 am – Panel Session 6

Technologies of Rule between Colony and Metropole – Arts, Lecture Room 1
Speakers: Erik Linstrum, Mircea Raianu, Toby Harper
Chair: David Edgerton

Empire’s potential to function as a “laboratory of modernity” — a space for sometimes radical, often authoritarian experiments in governance beyond the constraints of the metropole — is a key concept in the historiography of French imperialism. Historians of British imperialism, by comparison, have paid little attention to the movement of technologies of rule between colony and metropole. Studies of transimperial movement tend to focus on commodities and bodies rather than the less visible world of ideas and practices which governed both; perhaps as a result, they often overlook the frustrated aims, unexpected consequences, and points of friction which confront all globalizing projects. This panel brings together intellectual, scientific, and social
histories of empire to ask how techniques for making citizens into subjects migrated between Britain and its empire in the twentieth century — a process marked by discontinuities and disillusionments on a scale to match the ambitions which fueled it. Mircea Raianu traces the circulation of Fabian social science and Taylorist industrial psychology between Britain and India from the 1920s to the 1940s, taking the Tata family’s patronage and use of expert knowledge as a case study in the limits of technocracy. Erik Linstrum shows that the use of tear gas by British police originated with visions of chemical warfare as a form of colonial counterinsurgency — a bloodless means of controlling space and atomizing opposition considered too controversial for deployment at home until the Troubles of the 1970s. Toby Harper examines the strange career of the imperial honours system, highlighting the plasticity and persistence of a conspicuous anachronism in post-imperial Britain. Against the backdrop of debates about the portability of expertise and the politics of knowledge, these papers suggest that empire made a seductive but imperfect laboratory for British life.

**Paper 1 Abstract:** ‘The Limits of Technocracy at the End of Empire: British Capital and Expertise in the Indian Steel Industry, ca. 1900-1960’
Mircea Raianu

The Tata Iron and Steel Company at Jamshedpur was the largest integrated steelworks in the British Empire, founded in 1907 as a pioneering enterprise in a quintessentially ‘backward’ agrarian region of eastern India. From the very beginning, the Tatas experienced recurring tensions between their nationalist claims to swadeshi (self-sufficiency) and reliance on foreign capital and expertise. This paper begins by situating the origins of the Tatas’ cultivation of technocratic management in the work of the Department of Social Science and Administration at LSE, funded by a Tata philanthropic foundation and tasked with making recommendations on welfare policy at Jamshedpur. I then show how TISCO resisted the implementation of both Fabian ideas and modified Taylorist programmes of labour efficiency from the 1920s until the aftermath of the Second World War. As the vision to make Jamshedpur into another Bournville or Port Sunlight faded, Indian industrial psychology provided the conceptual vocabulary necessary for the problems of ‘indigenous’ or ‘vernacular’ capitalism to be resolved within a global and comparative frame. In so doing, the paper re-thinks the transition from paternalism or welfare capitalism to industrial relations and personnel management across the metropolitan-colonial divide. The marginalisation of British expertise continued in the 1950s, amidst the pressures of Cold War competition, the nationalisation of the steel industry in Britain and the establishment of state-run steel plants in Nehru’s India that could effectively compete with the Tatas. I conclude by reflecting on the possibilities of new economic and intellectual histories of
the British Empire opened up by the archives of a business firm once on the ‘periphery’ – now very much at the centre after Tata Steel’s acquisition of Corus (the erstwhile British Steel) in 2007.

**Paper 2 Abstract:** ‘Normalizing Chemical Weapons: Tear Gas and State Violence in the British Empire, 1919-1981’
Erik Linstrum

In her essay On Violence (1969), Hannah Arendt identified a recurring anxiety of British imperialism: the prospect that “rule by violence in faraway lands would end by affecting the government of England.” The history of the technology known as tear gas suggests that Arendt’s definition of state violence — exacting temporary obedience through the use of force when unable to command loyalty — did indeed travel from colony to metropole. For more than fifty years beginning in 1919, British authorities deployed varieties of toxic but nonlethal gas to combat riots and insurgencies in India, the Middle East, and Africa while observing a prohibition on its use for the same purpose in the British Isles. When that taboo was broached at last — first during the Troubles in Northern Ireland in 1969 and then more permanently in response to unrest in Brixton and Liverpool in 1981 — it was not only a chemical formula but a set of tactics which arrived in Britain from the colonies. The use of violence against bodies was less an end in itself than an instrument for the fulfillment of other aims: establishing control over physical space, frustrating collective action, and demoralizing opposition by projecting a pervasive form of power. Each of these rationales for chemical violence originated in the colonial context but ultimately guided and justified the militarization of the police in late twentieth-century Britain.

**Paper 3 Abstract:** ‘The Imperial Origins of the Modern British Honours System’
Toby Harper

Lloyd George’s war government created the Order of the British Empire in 1917 to reward voluntary service by British civilians to the war effort, but it quickly became something far bigger. The military used it around the empire to reward non-combatant and sometimes combatant service; imperial governors and governments applied it to their subject populations in various ways; and the British government found it a useful tool for integrating interest groups deemed to be in need of recognition. In theory, the new order provided a unified trans-imperial
system for marking both social status and the relative value of service to the state. It also borrowed from a late nineteenth-century technology of imperial management, refined in India, through which the crown promised status and recognition to colonial elites and professional classes in exchange for a symbolic demonstration of their loyalty. From the 1960s, however, politicians and administrators in Britain downplayed the imperial character of this order, in terms of both its origin and name. As governments of former colonies adopted national orders, discarding the Order of the British Empire, it was transformed into an almost purely domestic honour with a focus on local service. Attempts to rename it were rejected using the argument that it was important to keep the name of the Order of the British Empire because the British Empire itself was no longer important. Defenders of the honours system argued that the Order’s name was an unproblematic, apolitical and traditional reflection of national will. This paper examines the connection between the imperial genealogy of the modern British honours system and its domestic use. Even (perhaps especially) after the decline of the formal empire, these imperial connections remained and remain an important part of the way in which Britain celebrates its “heroes”.

The 1970s and the Stories we Tell – Arts, Main Lecture Room
Speakers: Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, Natalie Thomlinson, Camilla Schofield, Emily Robinson

Despite efforts to problematize received political narratives of post-war Britain and its periodization, the decade of the 1970s continues to be treated as a singular moment of social democratic crisis and transformation. It is seen as a gateway into the neoliberal present, wherein all the tensions of the present have their roots in the ideational, economic and political battles lost in those years. As Reassessing the 1970s puts it, out of the battle of ideas of this decade ‘emerged the Britain of the late twentieth century.’ This panel will query four dominant narratives of the 1970s (decade of de-alignment, the empire strikes back, the road to neoliberalism, feminist awakening), seeking to unearth the sometimes overlapping and sometimes contradictory processes of change at the social/cultural level and at the point of political narrativization.

The MBS working paper focuses on ‘cultures of democracy’, and emphasizes the interplay between individual subjectivities and the overarching narratives of both high politics and historical analysis. Recently, Jo Guldi and David Armitage, in The History Manifesto, have emphasised the pressing need for a return to ‘big history’, signalling—perhaps—a return to the fold of ‘grand narratives’ within the historical discipline. This panel explores the ways in which
both collective expressions of mass opinion and the cries of individual experience have run up against attempts at synthesis and generalization (both at the time and in retrospect). Social, cultural, and individual narratives have been employed in order to frame political and economic problems in particular ways, despite having told very different and disparate stories themselves. It therefore needs to be asked how such overarching frameworks come to resonate with a public who may have experienced things quite differently. In addition, it is important to ask what happens to historical understanding (both scholarly and popular) when such stories are unravelled. This panel tackles these two questions by unpicking one of the central moments in the story of modern Britain, understandings of which continue to constrain political possibilities today.

The panel will not simply work to deconstruct the ‘Seventies’, but will critically respond to MBS’s call for a new ‘interpretative framework’ and ‘synthesis’ of modern British history. It will ask what processes / innovations / agents of historical change are left out of our often politicized, often overly determined, history of the 1970s? Who is left out of the story? What happens to our understanding of twentieth-century British history if the 1970s is not prioritized as a point of rupture? Does an emphasis on political/economic rupture obfuscate other key historical arcs (for instance, the history of selfhood and subjectivity)? What histories come to light if we do not ask the 1970s to serve as the birthplace of the present? And how might we begin to build a new synthesis of the fascinating micro-histories and sociological case studies, of the complex divergent political paths, of this decade?

**Structure:** This panel will differ from the traditional format of three papers and a chair. We are interested in the ways forms of writing and presenting history profoundly shape the conclusions we draw, and as such, we want to explore how detailed, specific case studies can both stand on their own and be woven into a polyphonic overall story. Many people (from Walter Benjamin on) have explored how the complexity, diversity and contradictory trends of modern society, politics and culture are only problematically captured by traditional narratives. Yet stories are, and will surely remain, the key way historians communicate with each other and with the public and politicians. We therefore aim to tell four short, micro-histories or case studies, but also to co-write a concluding section of the panel discussing the overall themes that emerge, the overall narrative but also the limits to the coherence of that narrative.

**Case Study 1: Decade of De-alignment?**
Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite

Lawrence Black and Hugh Pemberton argue in the introduction to *Reassessing 70s Britain* that this decade saw the reinstatement of the ‘political salience of class’. Yet in political science and psephology, the 1970s was studied at the time, and has continued to be thought about since, as
the ‘decade of dealignment’ (as the title of one important book put it), when class plummeted in importance as a factor determining voting. There is an apparent match here with what Thatcher and her supporters claimed in the late 1970s and 1980s had happened to class: they argued (sometimes slightly contradictorily) that much of working-class Britain was more ‘bourgeois’ in the 1970s than it had been a decade or two before, and that class was now ‘relegated, in the minds of the workers, to something unimportant’ (in the words of a Centre for Policy Studies publication in 1976). There is a superficially compelling story about the decline of ‘class’ in the 1970s and the rise of Thatcherism. But it is a story which does not do justice to the real complexities in ordinary people’s thinking about ‘class’ and politics in the 1970s. This paper examines autobiographies, oral histories and other interviews from the 1970s and later to examine what people thought and said about ‘class’ in this period, telling a more polyphonic and sometimes contradictory story about attitudes to ‘class’.

Case Study 2: The Empire Strikes Back?
Camilla Schofield

One dominant narrative of the 1970s as a ‘crisis’ of social democracy points the finger at the challenges of multiculturalism, English nationalism and the politics of race. Here, popular support for social democracy is problematically limited by the need to define who belongs and who can claim social rights. Meanwhile, Black Power politics in the 1970s, in both the United States and in Britain, is often depicted as moving from a broad engagement with equality and citizenship, towards a (negative) oppositional politics, embracing cultural separatism, the bitter fruit of identity politics. This contributed, so the argument goes, to the ideological limits of multiculturalism: as Sivanandan puts it, ‘the political concerns of the black community [became] the cultural concerns of different communities, the struggle against racism [became] the struggle for culture.’ This case study will look to black radical groups, such as Black Unity and the Croydon Collective, and their critical engagement with social democratic ideals (in this sense, too, it will consider a particularly British formation of Black Power politics). Community control and freedom from police harassment will also be placed in the ‘big history’ of British liberal democracy. This case study will thereby attempt to situate Black Power in a battle over the meaning of social citizenship, transforming and sometimes expanding its limits, in Britain in the 70s.

Case Study 3: The Road to Neoliberalism?
Emily Robinson

One of the master narratives of the 1970s concerns the collapse of the post-war social democratic consensus and the turn to neoliberalism. Another tells of the Labour Party’s electorally suicidal abandonment of social democracy, before recovering this heritage in the
1990s. The contradiction between these two accounts has been obscured by the political and historiographical emphasis on the route to Thatcherism and then New Labour. In order to escape such determinism, this case study focuses on public discussions around the idea of a ‘centre party’ in the long 1970s. Not only were public understandings of ‘the centre’ at that time rather more radical than we might expect, but they cast the perceived collapse of social democracy in a rather different light. This is not a story that fits easily into the received narratives of either right or left, but it does allow us to reflect on a number of alternate imagined futures.

**Case Study 4: Feminist Awakenings?**
Natalie Thomlinson

The 1970s are often understood as the quintessential ‘feminist’ decade. A compelling story of female emancipation is told that links together the activism of Women’s Liberation Movement, the passage of equal pay and sexual discrimination, and the significant rise in the amount of women working outside the home. Yet it is also widely accepted that the numbers of women who identified as ‘feminist’ outside of the Women’s Liberation Movement was limited, and largely confined to the educated middle classes. How do we reconcile these two stories? Whilst it is undoubtedly true that relatively few women consistently aligned themselves with a feminist position, in this paper I argue that to simply divide the female population into feminist/not feminist sets up a false dichotomy that fails to capture the complexity of ‘ordinary’ women’s engagement with feminist ideas. Rather, using a variety of oral history and media sources, I explore the ways in which ‘feminism’ was taken up (or not) and reworked in popular political discourses, the various and sometimes contradictory meanings that attached themselves to ‘feminism’ during this process, and what individual women themselves understood ‘feminism’ to be. Beginning this work will allow us a much more nuanced insight into women’s subjective experiences of gendered changes, and how it is that these shifts in individual lives came to be narrativized on a macro-level as ‘feminist’ despite the very small numbers of women who were overtly active in the politics of women’s liberation.

**Rethinking Right-Wing Women: Women’s Political Engagement and Leadership in Conservative Politics, 1930s-1950s – Arts, Lecture Room 6**
Speakers: Julie V. Gottlieb, Clarisse Berthezène, Krista Cowman

Chair: Laura Beers

Conservative women have been under-researched for the paradoxical reason that they have not been of much interest to androcentric historians of the Tory Party, while they have never been embraced by women’s historians because of their presumed reactionary views and their complicity with the patriarchal establishment. By casting our attention to Conservative women,
women leading, and the changing features of institutionalization of the party’s attitudes to gender issues and sexual equality, we will unpack and contest these assumptions that have prevented serious and sustained study of gender politics in the most successful political party of the 20th century, the ‘Conservative Century.’ The party’s historical appeals to women and by women have been to a settled domesticity alongside the promotion of forthright women moved by the spirit of public service (women’s responsibilities rather than rights). At face value at least this has been a very distinct approach from the (evolving) feminist movement seeking to politicize, mobilise and engage women. However, the particular and peculiar relationship between women and Conservative politics is vital to understanding the nature of mass politics and cultures of democracy in 20th century Britain. The papers in this panel will explore this relationship through examining Conservative women’s broad approaches to gender politics, as well as considering how leading Conservative women positioned themselves in the cultures of democracy inside and outside the party.

**Paper 1 Abstract:** ‘Conservative feminists? Conservative women and gender politics, 1929-1945’

Clarisse Berthezène, Paris Diderot University

Rethinking Tory women implies challenging the focus and the methods of traditional political history where the study of women is often regarded as secondary and ‘gender’ is mostly understood as an optional analytical category. It also implies questioning the history of feminism, which has largely been written as a history of women’s emancipation and, as such, inextricably aligned with a progressive tradition defended by the Left. This paper will question the framework of emancipation and focus on the contribution that Conservative women made to ‘the formulation of a policy of special interest to women’ in the interwar period and during the second world war and their strategies to promote their interests. It will explore their claim that they were ‘practical’, ‘commonsense’ women, as opposed to what they saw as their cerebral, theoretically minded Labour and Liberal counterparts. The deliberate cultivation of the identity of the ‘middlebrow’ was an important means to embrace democracy and speak to all social classes, which led them to develop a particular view of ‘responsible womanhood’ and citizenship, notions which they felt had been inappropriately annexed by the Left.

**Paper 2 Abstract:** “The statutory woman who’s main task was to explore what women…were likely to think.” Margaret Thatcher and women’s politics in the 1950s.

Krista Cowman, University of Lincoln

Most media discussions of Margaret Thatcher’s life in the aftermath of her death made much of her anti-feminism, commenting on the irony of her being at best an unwilling pioneer for women’s political involvement. Her later comments which expressed contempt for the women’s movement of the 1960s and 70s were frequently quoted in support of an interpretation of her
character which emphasized her individualism over any collective identity. Very few commentators offered alternative readings, yet as the title quotation from Thatcher’s memoirs suggests, the reality of her career, especially in its early years, was more complex than that. This paper investigates Margaret Thatcher’s engagement with political issues and causes that were identified with women in the 1950s. It considers her involvement with a range of issues, some, such as making space for mothers in modern housing developments, connected to her role as an MP and others engaging with organisations drawn from a wider women’s movement such as the Women’s Freedom League. These case studies will show how her attitude to women’s organisations and so-called women’s issues was complex and sometimes contradictory. Building from this exploration the paper will argue that simplistic divisions of Conservative women’s politics into ‘pro’ or ‘anti’ feminist are no longer sufficient.

**Paper 3 Abstract:** ‘Models of Tory Women’s Leadership and Political Celebrity between the Wars: Comparisons and Contrasts between the feminist Nancy Astor v. the non-feminist Duchess of Atholl’

Julie Gottlieb, University of Sheffield

Women came into their own in the Conservative Party in the aftermath of suffrage as party workers, as MPs, as local and national leaders, and as part of a notional women’s bloc of voters that Conservatives felt they could rely on at election time. The valuable work performed by Conservative women at grass roots has been acknowledged in the scholarship, as have the strategies developed by the party to mobilise women as both party workers and voters, while much less attention has been conferred on those Conservative women who became virtual national celebrities. By the late 1930s the two women Conservative MPs to achieve this celebrity and notoriety were Lady Nancy Astor, the first woman MP to take her seat, a committed feminist, and hostess of the so-called Cliveden Set, and the Duchess of Atholl, the first woman MP from Scotland, an avowed anti-(non) feminist, and the Chamberlain scourge at the height of appeasement. Both defied stereotypes of Tory femininity with their own personal styles, by taking an abiding interest in international affairs when most Conservative women were expected to be focused on the local and parochial, and by engaging with women across party lines to advance their favoured policies.

**Economic Life in the British Past and How its History Can Help Us Rethink Modern British History—Arts, Lecture Room 3**

Speakers: Desmond Fitz-Gibbon, Penelope Ismay, Nick Valvo

Chair: James Vernon
At the turn of the 19th c., Britons worried about how to balance the freedom of the individual with the collective needs of society. For many economic thinkers at different times from the late 18th to the late 19th c, the idea that economic individualism, or self-interested individuals pursuing their own economic best interests, could solve this social problem inadvertently was a powerful one. But while the idea that economic individual, freed from all social constraints, could produce a new kind of social solidarity has a history, it never dominated the actual practices of economic life in this period. Wages were still paid in kind, through credit or entitlements; insurance premiums were determined as much by assessing character as by calculating numbers; the start up capital of the great industrialists came as much from family and friends as from banks and lawyers; property contracts were adjudicated by the character of the litigants as much as the letter of the law; and, the credit that made the circulation of goods and species possible was a mix of the economic and social assessment of risk. In other words, economic life was always embedded in social and cultural relationships that Britons continually and very self-consciously created and reinforced. There was nothing inadvertent about it.

While historians and literary critics have been revising our understanding of the history of economic life in Britain for a few decades now, we have yet to take a step back and ask what do these new stories tell us about the narrative of British modernity more broadly? This panel proposes to do just that. We are three historians and one literary critic who study different aspects of economic life in the long 19th c. Speaking from our work on property markets, parish credit networks, cultures of risk, and mutual aid economies, we propose to engage the question: how should the social and cultural histories of economic life in this period change the story of modern British history?

Paper 1 Abstract: ‘Savings Banks and the Myth of Market Society’
Penelope Ismay, Boston College

Even after the onslaught of revisionist histories demonstrating that the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth century economy in Britain was primarily a credit economy and not a moneyed economy, historians continue to insist on an inverse relationship between the rise of a market economy and the decline of community.[1] Unlike moneyed economies where anonymous economic exchanges are possible, a credit economy like Britain’s in these centuries was based on hundreds of thousands of personal relationships held together by networks or communities of trust.[2] And yet, the market driven shift from Gemeinschaft to Gesellschaft remains the shorthand for describing the origin of modern society—the effect of which is to give the idea of what Karl Polanyi called a ‘market society’ a life in social reality that it never had.

In this paper I will show that in the period most commonly cited as the origin of ‘market society,’ moral reformers, social thinkers, and legislators did indeed toy with the idea of using the cash-nexus to stand in for relations between man and man in the form of savings banks. But
within two years of theorizing and experimenting with this model, these same reformers firmly rejected it. They rejected it because a laborer’s individual savings were no match for the caprice of the life-cycle and the ruthlessness of the trade-cycles. They also rejected it because instead of promoting trust between the classes, it bred distrust. In our proposed panel discussion, I will talk about how this episode and the problem of social trust more broadly can help us rethink the narrative of modern British history.


**Paper 2 Abstract:** ‘Back to the Land: Land Politics and the Creation of the Property Market in Nineteenth-Century Britain’

Desmond Fitzgibbon, Mount Holyoke College

Though historians have not always sufficiently acknowledged it, the ‘land question’ was a persistent theme animating a broad range of political and social movements from the late eighteenth century to the early twentieth. The politics of land would seem to fit very well within a narrative of modern British history that includes the development of commercial and industrial capitalism, the growth of cities and the further commoditization of land associated with urbanization, and the diffusion of property ownership towards what early-twentieth century politicians would term a ‘property-owning democracy.’ And yet, until quite recently, historians have viewed land politics as an anachronism, a residual and irrational hope for a long-forgotten and sentimentally-tinged arcadia or pastoral village community, a reflexive response to deeper currents of socio-economic change for which calls to nationalize land or dole out three acres and a cow seem quaint at best. In other words, the political culture of land sat in relation to the market culture of property as a songbird would trying to drown out the chorus of a congested highway.

My paper re-examines the relationship between the cultural politics of land and the cultural economy of property marketization, arguing that various land movements did not simply respond belatedly to the increasing commoditization of land (be it in the form of bankrupt country estates or speculative suburban expansion). Rather, in trying to frame the limits of alienable private property, they helped construct the cultural understandings of what commoditized property would and would not look like in modern Britain. Viewing nineteenth-century land politics in this way, as co-constitutive of the property market, opens up new perspectives on the cultural history of economic life in modern Britain and on the approaches that historians in the 21st century should take to interpret this history.
**Paper 3 Abstract:** ‘Status to Contract Revisited: Sir Henry Maine and Literary History’
Nick Valvo, Bates College

Much of nineteenth-century social thought places, at the base of modernization theory, a transition in the structures that coordinate the relationship between individual affect and social forms of life. Most strikingly recognizable in Ferdinand Tönnies’ distinction between Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft, this tendency is also discernible in the work of Maine, Hegel, Simmel, and even the Young Marx.

My contribution to the panel will seek to theorize the relationship between such accounts of late-eighteenth-century transitions and the literary resources on which they rely. Chief among these is sentimentalism, a set of formal techniques and thematic concerns that conspire to enforce an incompatibility between individual self-interest on the one hand and humane feeling or moral action on the other. Sentimentalism is thus a theory of disinterest, preoccupied with the emotional heroism of isolated individuals, whose idiosyncrasy and alienation heighten the tension with what is thus visible as a fallen social world. These theoretical appropriations of literary modes come with a degree of distortion and refiguration, but the signature of the sentimental remains legible. Sometimes the putative incompatibility between the humane and the self-interested is used rhetorically, as the horns of a paradox (as in Adam Smith) which nonetheless governs the operation of his text; sometimes these synchronic accounts of social action are mapped instead diachronically, as a theory of social development (as in Hegel, Tönnies, or the Marx of the 1844 Manuscripte).

I argue that these theorists are thus participants in the historical development they seek to describe. The analytical opposition between the eighteenth-century ancien regime and nineteenth-century liberal modernity depends on historically-specific modes of observation of affect and social relations that are themselves part of the phenomenon under discussion.

**11:30 – 12 pm – Break – Arts, Mason Lounge**

**12 – 1:30 pm – Panel Session 7**

**Money, Belief and Politics in Modern British Studies – Arts, Lecture Room 1**
Speakers: Julie-Marie Strange, Thomas Scriven, Sarah Roddy, Bertrand Taithe

Chair: Matthew Hilton

The three papers in this panel focus on nineteenth century fundraising in three key areas: religion, politics and philanthropy. Drawing on particular cases studies, each paper will address
the expanding culture of donating in a national and transnational context. Together, the papers ask what it meant for individuals to donate to a ‘cause’; how donations helped constitute subjectivities; what funds raised meant; and how money raised was disbursed. It is intended that the papers, running in chronological order, will be relatively short to allow time for the panelists to draw out the common questions in the papers, not least: how social and cultural historians within Modern British Studies can and should enter into dialogue with the ‘new economic history’ and how histories of money are pertinent to fundraisers today.

**Paper 1 Abstract:** “To move in a dignified way and place my own character high above reproach”: Character, Chartism and Electoral Fundraising in the 1840s

Thomas Scriven

Chartism and popular Liberalism have broadly been seen as continuous, with the ideas, principles and political culture of the former transitioning into the latter by the mid-Victorian period. As part of this process, historians have highlighted how mass politics, with a bawdy, tap-room tone, gave way to the rise of respectability, a broad change in manners, and class cooperation. Following historians who have seen this as a more problematic transition than initially proposed, this paper will use the career of the noted Chartist leader, journalist and orator, Henry Vincent, following his release from prison in 1841. Vincent made his name for his acerbic, ribald satire, his convivial populism and his skills as a speaker, but during his imprisonment he fell under the mentorship of Francis Place. This paper will discuss the virtues and characteristics that Place sought to inculcate within Vincent in order to turn him into the model political actor suitable for more refined popular politics, and how Vincent found these characteristics unwieldy in the actual practice of Radical electioneering in the 1840s. Most notably, the high costs of an election campaign for an independent candidate during the mid-Victorian period clashed decisively with the sort of morality that Place hoped Vincent and his generation would develop; it forced him into compromise, accusations of impropriety, and broke him from friends and co-agitators. Fundraising, in Vincent’s case, clearly undermined the dignity and refinement that he had hoped for as part of his transition into popular Liberalism. With that it muddied popular Liberalism’s claim to moralism, and illustrates how a move from Chartism to moralistic Liberalism was problematized by matters of logistics and finance.

**Paper 2 Abstract:** ‘Paying and praying: the meanings of religious fundraising after 1850’

Sarah Roddy

The relationship between religion and economics is a perennial preoccupation within the humanities. Since Max Weber identified the ‘Protestant ethic’ as a key enabling factor in the development of the ‘spirit of capitalism’, and since R.H. Tawney similarly credited religion with the ‘rise of capitalism’, the influence of theology and religious thought on economic activity has
been much debated by scholars, including historians working with multiple different religious groups, regions and periods. As many have discovered, however, attempting to match interpretations of scripture with transactions in the market is no easy task.

Yet studies that try to divine religious influence on economic lives tend to ignore one rather salient fact. That is, that the primary economic exchange within a church setting is never, and has never been, an intellectual one; rather, it has always been a material one. Sermons preached in favour of stewardship or railing against base materialism may or may not have hit home with those in the pews; what is certain however, is that pennies (and larger denominations besides) invariably hit the collecting plate, and both they and their effects are at least to some extent measurable. Thus, using records related to the Irish Catholic Church during its post-1850 ‘devotional revolution’ period, and drawing on recent literature in economic sociology and economic anthropology, this paper explores the question: can close examination of the financing of the church itself by the laity tell us anything about how that laity viewed their economic license, obligations, limitations or potential?

**Paper 3 Abstract:** ‘The Politics of British International Humanitarian Aid: The Turkish relief and its discontents’

Julie-Marie Strange & Bertrand Taithe

This paper develops an analysis of the political debates at the heart of the British Response to the ‘humanitarian crisis’ arising from the Russo Turkish war of 1877–8. Building on the archives of Stafford House papers (a major fundraising and distribution organization), this paper investigates the collusion of High British politics and private financial investment in the deployment of relief to Turkish troops and civilians. Stafford House sponsored medical relief represented the largest venture of its kind during the war and the single most significant privately funded humanitarian deployment of relief in recent British history. This case study opens a window in the complex negotiations at the heart of modern humanitarian aid in Victorian Britain and its relevance for NGO fundraising today.

**Expanding on the Eighties – Arts, Main Lecture Room**

Speakers: Amy Edwards, Daisy Payling, Sam Wetherell

Chair: Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite

This panel seeks to build upon some of the ideas that resulted from the *New Times Revisited: Examining Society, Culture and Politics in the long 1980s* conference in 2013. As such it takes the long 1980s as its focus and seeks to question what it can tell us about the ‘new political and cultural forms [which] transformed the nature of political and social life’.
Politically, socially and culturally, what do the changes and continuities of the 1980s reveal about the relationship between the individual and the state, and the type of subjectivities that were being expressed by the end of twentieth century? Explorations of consumer society and the changing position of the consumer in financial services, of the intersections between class, race, gender, and sexuality in left-wing activism, and of the reframing of ideological interventions in housing policy as technocratic common-sense, all speak to the changing state of social democracy in Britain.

The drives and mechanisms of change in this period are complex, often complicated by the diverse agents involved, whether as opponents, supporters or ideologically indifferent drivers of neoliberal reform. These papers look to explore the uneven pace and domains of change as the neoliberal agenda of the new right enmeshed with Britain’s social democratic settlement to better understand how participation was articulated and constrained during the late twentieth century.

Amy Edwards, University of Birmingham

Popular capitalism has been widely recognized as an integral part of Thatcherism. The growth of the number of private shareholders was a defining feature of the 1980s, one undoubtedly facilitated by successive Conservative government policies such as privatization and deregulation. However, historians have yet to comprehensively explore the underlying drives and mechanisms of Thatcherism in the realm of popular share ownership. This paper takes a small pressure group, the Wider Share Ownership Council (WSOC), as a case study to question current narratives of the 1980s, and particularly the extent to which Thatcherism was a strictly ideological endeavour.

The WSOCs ideology was based on an ardent belief that wider share ownership was the best way to create a nation of well-informed capitalists, enfranchised in the economic life of the country and supportive of a free-market system. However, loyalty to this agenda eventually alienated it from the project of Thatcherism and certain financial institutions by the end of the 1980s. It is in the intensely ideological motives of the WSOC that the relative ideological indifference of much of the City and many of the proponents of Thatcherism is revealed. This paper will argue that, seen as a set of institutional reforms, Thatcher’s economic revolution was based on the defence of financial capitalism, as opposed to the advancement of consumer capitalism.

Panel 2: “So it wasn’t for me’: negotiating political participation in 1980s Sheffield’
Daisy Payling, University of Birmingham
In the 1980s Sheffield was known as the ‘Socialist Republic of South Yorkshire’. This reputation for radicalism was constructed by the Labour-led City Council searching for alternatives to Thatcherism. The Council called for ‘like-minded’ activists to come to the city and collectively remembered past victories of the labour movement. Despite fears of the ‘forward march of labour halted,’ many activists came to Sheffield to live and work in a ‘real working class city’ and be part of a strong labour movement. Whilst many of these activists would describe themselves as ‘left-wing’, ‘socialist’ or ‘alternative’, many of them were active in very different movements. Shared resource centres, large demonstrations, and a focus on collectivism brought many activists in contact with each other but each movement had its focus and support to others was not always freely given.

This paper takes the activism in one city in the long 1980s and uses it to test the notions of crisis and renewal that dominate representations of the British left in this period. By using oral history interviews with activists from a number of movements alongside archive material, this paper produces a nuanced account of how activists from different movements and political backgrounds interacted with each other. While this is not a simple story of exclusion and inclusion, the way that class, race, gender and sexuality intersected in Sheffield’s politics does point to a hierarchy of values on the left that, in this period, was in flux. That this hierarchy of values placed limits on how far the left could unite in the face of Thatcherism is unsurprising, and the possibilities of class uniting with identity politics was the focus of much theorising at the time. Yet this paper pushes past the fixed notion of ‘identity’ in ‘identity politics,’ and shows that the activists involved in Sheffield’s politics expressed complex subjectivities that speak to how the left was changing in the 1980s.

**Panel 3: “Privatization Begins At Home”: Rethinking the End of Mass State Housing in Britain**

Sam Wetherell, UC Berkeley

The termination of Britain’s once extensive high-density public housing programme in widespread denigration and a handful of high-profile demolitions is a well-known story. Historians attempting to understand the strange death of the British tower block have looked to either the whims of policy makers or to the shoddiness of construction techniques to make their case. This paper is an attempt to move towards a new explanation. It will show how a new set of psychological and criminological assumptions about the relationship between space and ownership emerged in Britain and America in the 1970s and 80s to undermine high density housing projects. It will discuss the work of Alice Coleman, a British conservative geographer and Oscar Newman, an American criminologist, who were leading academic critics of high density housing programs. Together they concluded that the high rates of poverty and crime among the residents of such housing developments was primarily determined by the walkways, courtyards and stairwells of the environments they inhabited.
The effect of Coleman and Newman’s work, and the criminological ideas and practices that followed in their wake, served to codify a host of new essentialist ideas about the relationship between space, ownership and crime for the residents of public housing programs. Their work helped to remove debates about housing from politics, rendering privatization a commonsensical technocratic intervention, rather than an ideological undermining of Britain’s social democratic settlement.

**The Economy of Freedom: Consumption and Self-government in Mid Twentieth-Century Britain– Arts, Lecture Room 6**

Speakers: Eloise Moss, Simeon Koole, Ashley Wilkinson

Chair: Chris Moores

This panel suggests new environments, practices, and sensory registers through which the ‘responsible’ self-governing citizen was defined in modern Britain. In a critical reflection on the work of Patrick Joyce, Nikolas Rose and others, we re-examine the relationship between commercial and political constructions of the moral and enterprising self. In what ways did consumption – whether of hotels, coal, or alcohol – give rise to new concepts about a citizen’s possible self-government and support or subvert the ostensible autonomy of the private sphere in mid twentieth-century Britain? Simeon Koole investigates how the regulation and understanding of illicit touch intersected with the meteorological shift wrought by greater coal consumption (and the attendant fog) in London between 1880 and 1960. Eloise Moss foregrounds the hotel as a consumer commodity at the centre of efforts to define ‘British’ values and behaviours historically, using a case-study analysis of the British Pathé newsreel Lady’s Mail (1946) to demonstrate how encounters between staff and guests mediated an inherently politicized dialogue over the right to privacy. Finally, by interrogating the manuals disseminated by Dale Carnegie and Alcoholics Anonymous Ashley Wilkinson asserts the role of the Self-help industry in propagating Neoliberal ideas of productive and efficient citizenship in postwar Britain. Together, we engage with the theme of ‘Cultures of Democracy’ by thinking critically about the procedures, sites, and discourses through which participatory or ‘responsible’ modes of self-governance, and the construction of selfhood, have supposedly been cultivated. We therefore crucially spotlight the way in which a citizen’s perceptibility to politics and the law was conditioned by new understandings of their own capacity to perceive, itself determined by their economic and sensory relation to the market in mid twentieth-century Britain.

**Paper 1 Abstract: ‘A Moral History of Touch in London Fog’**

Simeon Koole, Magdalen College, University of Oxford
What is the relation between fog, coal smoke, environmental regulation, and illicit touch? This paper examines interactions between the political economy of coal and the illicit tactile economy of bodies in London from the late-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century. It traces how the increasing frequency and intensity of smog from the 1880s, its gradual decline and then dramatic return in 1952 shaped conditions of urban visibility and both the geographical and conceptual boundaries of illicit touch.

A parallel reading of prosecutions for illicit touch at Tower Bridge and Lambeth police courts – both sites of typically dense fog concentration – and the records of the Coal Smoke Abatement Society and Meteorological Office provides an entry. At first glance, this appears a task of mapping illicit touch onto spatial and temporal variations in smog, or rehearsing a familiar story of decreasing sensory tolerance of pollution and increasing environmental regulation (Corbin). I argue instead that the changing environmental conditions of visibility and policing – both of fog and the poorly-lit wharves and alleys of east and south London where it concentrated – not only shaped the nature and incidence of illicit touch but also its shifting moral and legislative boundaries; boundaries conditional on individuals’ sensory constitution of themselves as objects in relation to others and therefore, for the law, as legal subjects. For it is the environmentally conditioned, historically specific capacity to sense which structures the constitution of individuals as objects to themselves and of the law, and therefore the boundaries of licit and illicit touch.

This takes seriously Marx’s assertion that it is not only the objective world but the objectivity of an individual to him- or herself and, I argue, their legal relation to others, which is shaped by sensation; sensation itself historically conditioned by transformations in production and consumption, in this case of coal. Linking the histories of fog and illicit touch sheds light on the broader environmental and economic underpinnings of the sensory constitution of the legal subject and its hidden materialization in the 1956 Clean Air Act. It questions the assumption, overwhelming in sensory history, of an a priori physiological capacity to sense which is only culturally mediated rather than also itself being contingent on tactile practices in particular material conditions. These conditions were shaped by the consumption of coal and themselves shaped the individual’s inscription in law as a sensing, and sensible, subject; one who senses and is sensed by police straining through the fog but also one who acts ‘sensibly’ and is perceptible as such in the ‘eyes’ of the law. The consumption of coal and its meteorological effects, then, intersected with understandings of the self-government, governability, and indeed the possible definition of the legal subject.

Examining how political economy and law shape, and shape each other through, the body of the sensing subject therefore suggests a contingency for that subject and for its relation to the state which urges us to rethink narratives of British governmentality predicated on its constancy.
**Paper 2 Abstract:** ‘Paying for a ‘Private Shadow’: Forging Democracy and Surveillance in the Environs of the Hotel in Modern Britain’
Eloise Moss, University of Manchester

Hotels represent nations. Historically, they have facilitated international, interracial, and interpersonal encounters; hosting diplomatic rendezvous and political negotiations as well as holidays and sexual assignations, and securing a vital source of economic and cultural investment through sustaining global networks of visiting and domestic tourism. Yet the hotel space has remained largely unexplored in the historiography of modern Britain, thereby effacing the ways in which these commercial institutions have fundamentally shaped British identities in the very nature of their architecture, interior design, management, clientele, and staff. This paper introduces the hotel space as a fresh point of departure for examining the impact of mass consumption and tourism on everyday lives and on conceptualisations of democracy in Britain. In so doing, it offers a case-study analysis of the British Pathé newsreel Lady’s Maid (1946) depicting a day in the life of a maid at the Savoy hotel in London. An instalment of the hugely popular and enduring Pathé Pictorial cinemagazine series, Lady’s Maid exposed the paid-for intimacy of hotel staff and guests, whose nominal anonymity while resident in the hotel was continually assailed by their physical proximity to those by whom they were ‘served.’ Indeed, despite the accelerating demise of the ‘servant class’ in post-war domestic homes, hotels’ infrastructure of maids, butlers, waiters, and porters appeared to reproduce class-based forms of servile labour that were marketed as an attractive aspect of British heritage and culture. This paper explores how Lady’s Maid sought to navigate these tensions by reframing the hotel as the crucible for a new, more equitable model of post-war class relations. By foregrounding narratives of maids’ professionalism and economic independence, as well as their agency in accessing guests’ bodies and possessions, it refashioned ‘servitude’ as a form of civil contract in which staff were recognised as responsible for maintaining the fragile privacy of guests — and commensurately, the integrity of the relationship between individual, society, business, and state.

**Paper 3 Abstract:** ‘Self-help in Postwar Britain’
Ashley Wilkinson, University of Manchester

If the self is the subject of one’s own experience of phenomena, then the commercial and civic domain of Self-help (disseminated through published advice literature and institutions like Alcoholics Anonymous) offers a reflexive approach to one’s ‘life project’, predicated on an intentional attempt to reconfigure one’s way of thinking, behaving, feeling, being. The rise of the discourses and practices of Self-Help has been identified as a central development after 1945, a key facet of a broader shift in ‘governmentality’ described by Nikolas Rose (Rose; 1999) and others. Historical case studies of the British experience of Self-help have been rare, however. Most work has focused on the USA, usually from sociological or feminist perspectives, with
British studies often restricted to the nineteenth century. Frank Furedi has addressed postwar Britain, but covered a more general topic of ‘therapy culture’ (Furedi; 2003).

By analysing political party manifestos and speeches alongside Self-help manuals, e.g. by Dale Carnegie and Alcoholics Anonymous, this paper will argue that the ideas, the language and the practices of Self-help have had a reciprocal relationship with postwar developments in public policy. Self-help ideology and Neoliberalism shared a concept of the individual as an isolated subject or ‘entrepreneurial self’, responsible for themselves and their circumstances, a form of human capital which must sell itself in the marketplace. In this formulation Welfare Statism did harm by rewarding economic unproductivity and cultivating dependency. It will be shown that Self-help has served the function of creating entrepreneurial selves in the cause of Neoliberalism, whereby citizenship is exercised via economic rather than political activity, and is undertaken individually rather than collectively. Furthermore, in viewing the self as an object to be reassembled the subject was simultaneously reconstructed as a commodity to be displayed, as a living advertisement for Self-help and the Neoliberal project.

**Public Opinion, Polling and Cultural and Religious Change in Twentieth- and Twenty-First Century Britain— Arts, Lecture Room 3**
Speakers: Marcus Collins, Clive D. Field, Ben Clements

Chair: Laura Beers

Historians studying the mid-twentieth century and later periods are uniquely privileged to have access to opinion polls. These data provide snapshots of attitudes and reported behaviours of samples of the entire population and its constituent elements. When studied across time, polls can illuminate the ‘changing forms of self and subjectivity in the context of an emerging mass democracy and culture’ described in the Working Paper. Yet the analysis of polling data by modern British historians is underdeveloped, especially regarding the cultural and religious topics examined in this panel. The ‘cultural turn’ has taken historians away from the quantitative and social scientific approaches that accompany polling analysis, even though polls provide otherwise inaccessible insights into the issues of mentality and belief that most fascinate cultural historians. The three papers in this panel will explore what polling data can tell us about secularisation and changing religious beliefs and practices within the broader context of the significant but uneven growth of permissive attitudes over recent decades.

**Paper 1 Abstract:** ‘Secularizing Selfhood? Polling Data on Religiosity as another Lens on Religious Change in Modern Britain’

Clive D. Field, University of Birmingham and University of Manchester
Historians and sociologists continue to debate the nature, chronology, and causation of religious change in modern Britain. Their quantitative evidence has disproportionately derived from time series of church membership statistics, which are fairly continuous throughout the twentieth century, but of variable quality and comparability. Beyond that, the focus has often been on churchgoing trends, where figures are more discontinuous and less comprehensive. Unlike other countries, the British State has been relatively inactive in gathering religious data, until its belated adoption of a religion question in the population censuses of 2001 and 2011.

During the past quarter-century, there has been a growing realization that sample surveys of cross sections of the British public, generally as opinion polls, might extend the range of performance measures for quantifying religious change in modern Britain. Several scholars, for example, have investigated time series of ‘traditional’ religious beliefs, assisted by the inclusion of relevant questions in multinational studies such as European/World Values Surveys and the International Social Survey Programme. The present author has broadened the scope of investigation still further, examining, in a sequence of articles, the light shed by polls on religious change in terms of attitudes to religious festivals (Christmas, Lent, Easter), Sunday observance, religious minorities (Jews, Muslims, Catholics), and religious authority (establishment, Church and clergy, the Bible).

This paper will unlock another set of data, those which ask respondents how religious they actually feel, over and above whether they profess any religious allegiance or not. Several different religious self-rating questions have been posed in polls since the 1980s (and even a few before), for instance about perceived religiosity (or spirituality), the importance attached to their religion, the importance of God in their lives, and so forth. These metrics will be collated, with analysis by demographic sub-groups where appropriate and practicable, to determine whether there is a declining sense of religious selfhood running parallel with other indicators of secularization.

**Paper 2 Abstract:** ‘Surveying the Religious Beliefs and Social Attitudes of British Catholics Across Time’

Ben Clements, Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Leicester

This paper provides a long-term perspective on Catholics’ religious beliefs and social attitudes in Britain, a minority denomination which historically was socio-economically disadvantaged, and subject to institutional discrimination and anti-Catholic feeling. Earlier research in the post-war era showed that the ‘distinctive subculture’ of the Catholic community was evolving and dissolving in complex ways due to processes of social change and to developments within the
wider faith, such as the Second Vatican Council. This research also demonstrated growing internal heterogeneity in religious engagement – beliefs and practices – and social attitudes.

This paper uses nationally representative surveys to contribute to scholarly inquiry into the nature and extent of religious change in post-war Britain, specifically in relation to the Catholic community. The paper has two distinct but interrelated parts, which have, respectively, a historical and contemporary focus. The first part uses a range of nationally-representative recurrent social surveys to assess in which areas Catholics have shown change or continuity in their religious beliefs and in their secular attitudes (in particular, ‘sanctity of life’ issues). The second part provides analysis of the contemporary socio-demographic sources of variation in the religious beliefs and social attitudes of adult Catholics in Britain using a denomination-specific survey.

The results engage with wider scholarly debates about the nature and extent of religious change and secularisation in Britain, while specifically focusing on attitudinal change and continuity within a religious minority population. The detailed analysis of grassroots’ beliefs and attitudes speaks to current debates affecting the Roman Catholic Church in Britain, including ongoing demographic changes, greater disaffection with official teachings on social issues and wider public criticism of the institutional response to recent controversies.

Paper 3 Abstract: ‘Measuring Permissiveness in Postwar Britain’
Marcus Collins, Department of Politics, History and International Relations, Loughborough University

Were the ‘swinging sixties’ confined to the young, the middle class and the metropolitan? When (if ever) did Britain become a ‘permissive society’? These questions have been a matter of debate within academic and popular circles ever since the 1960s, but remain fundamentally unresolved due to the source materials deployed. Those who identify a ‘cultural revolution’ largely base their arguments on canonical cultural artefacts of the period (music, films, writings, fashions). Revisionists such as Dominic Sandbrook either point to a series of other cultural artefacts that provide a more conservative view of the sixties or else contrast a minority permissive ‘culture’ with a broader ‘society’ displaying stronger continuities with the earlier twentieth century.

This paper seeks to further the ‘rapprochement between social and cultural history’ mentioned in the Modern British Studies Working Paper by examining the attitudes and beliefs exhibited by representative samples of the British population in opinion polls. Drawing upon polls conducted by Gallup, MORI and the BBC Audience Research Unit covering the period from 1945 to 1990, it argues that public attitudes towards permissiveness (broadly defined as a libertarian stance towards social and cultural norms) varied widely from issue to issue and across different sections
of the population. Its working hypothesis is that there was a shift towards more acceptance of individual self-governance, particularly regarding heterosexual sexuality and relationships. Yet most people were still not prepared to sanction behaviours which they perceived to disrupt the stability of society. What united such disparate issues as pornography, illicit drug-taking, unregulated immigration, murder in the absence of capital punishment and male homosexuality with the advent of HIV/AIDS was the perceived damage caused by individual behaviour on others. Even when critical of permissive change, the majority did perceive such change as having taken place. In that sense, opinion polls suggest that people in postwar Britain tended to believe that they belonged to a ‘permissive society’ that they opposed in many crucial respects.

1:30 – 2:30 pm – Lunch – Arts, Mason Lounge

2:30 – 4:00 pm – Panel Session 8

**Roundtable: Future Histories of Race** – Arts, Lecture Room 1

Speakers: Sadiah Qureshi, David Feldman, Caroline Bressey, Tony Kushner, Doreen Foster, Hannah Ishmael, Rob Waters, Camilla Schofield, Radhika Natarajan, Gavin Schaffer

In the run-up to the General Election of 2015, we are witnessing extraordinary discussions regarding race and immigration on a near daily basis. Many politicians continually reiterate that discussing immigration isn’t racist and that it is ‘common sense’ to be concerned about the future of Modern Britain. Yet, the undertones of these debates, and the accompanying reportage and analysis, frequently stray into long-standing racist tropes.

This workshop will enable a discussion about the ways in which historians can understand the nature of discussions about race in Modern Britain? It will question how future histories of race might engage with current political debates and will contribute to incorporating such debates into ongoing discussions on the nature of race, racism, immigration and multiculturalism within British Studies. The format of this session will be an open discussion between leading scholars of race, immigration and multiculturalism. Workshop participants will not give papers, but will instead discuss key questions which will be selected in advance through a group email discussion.

The workshop will be chaired by Gavin Schaffer. Confirmed contributors include David Feldman (Director of the Pears Institute for the Study of Antisemitism), Caroline Bressey (Founder of the Equiano Centre for black history), Tony Kushner (historian of race and migration), Doreen Foster (Black Cultural Archives), Hannah Ishmael (UCL), Rob Waters (Birkbeck), Camilla Schofield and Radhika Natarajan, both leading scholars on multiculturalism, and Sadiah Qureshi.
Rethinking the Postwar City – Arts, Main Lecture Room

Speakers: Samantha Caslin, Kieran Connell, Sean O’Connell

Chair: Stephen Brooke

Using the case-studies of Belfast, Birmingham and Liverpool, this panel examines the changing dynamics of the post-war city. The papers explore how urban spaces were both perceived and experienced during a period of rapid social change. As they had been in an earlier period, urban spaces were a key site of moral panic in post-war Britain – over issues such as prostitution and crime, and increasingly over the issues of race, immigration, deindustrialisation and urban redevelopment. The panel will explore ongoing efforts to curb the perceived immorality of urban spaces, the historic attempts by photographers and academic researchers to produce alternative representations, as well as the ways in which the residents of particular areas lived and attempted to come to terms with change in their daily lives.

Samantha Caslin

The postwar years were not, as they are popularly characterised, simply about social purity’s decline and the rise of a more permissive, youth-orientated culture. Concerns about street prostitution abounded and the prostitute continued to be identified as moral other. Questions about urban immorality and the need for official and more informal methods of social control were asked at both the national and local level after the Second World War. Consequently, official and unofficial attempts to control solicitation continued to reflect wider fears about female morality. In 1957 the Wolfenden Report led to more stringent regulation of sex workers and promoted the notion that the law had a legitimate part to play in pushing prostitution out of public view. Focusing on Liverpool, I will show how the Wolfenden debate was part of a broader cultural concern about young women and the morally corrupting effects of urban living. Liverpool had long been home to moral anxieties about young women’s virtue being corrupted by spending time on the streets of the port. Since 1908 the Liverpool Vigilance Association had run patrols around the docks and Lime Street train station. Though the organisation went into decline in the postwar years, this paper draws upon the Wolfenden debate to show that the moral discourses that the organisation engaged in still mattered. The idea that urban space was inimical to female respectability continued to have a currency, with the 1959 Street Offences Act
that followed Wolfenden being about more than just punishing prostitution, it was about controlling urban, female sexuality in general.

**Paper 2 Abstract:** “‘Turning Tricks’: prostitution, race and the city in the photography of Janet Mendelsohn”

Kieran Connell

This paper examines the changing dynamics of the post-war inner-city through the photographic lens of Janet Mendelsohn, an American postgraduate student at the pioneering Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. Mendelsohn arrived at the Centre in 1966, two years after it was established by Richard Hoggart as a means of undertaking scholarly research into ‘mass’ culture. She was encouraged by Stuart Hall, then Hoggart’s deputy at the Centre, to use photography as a means of doing cultural studies. Over a two year period Mendelsohn would take more than 3,000 photographs and conduct scores of interviews with her subjects. She was drawn to Balsall Heath, an area of Birmingham that – as the city’s largest ‘red light’ district – was the focus of considerable external anxiety. This paper examines Mendelsohn’s attempts, as both a photographer and an academic researcher, at providing an alternative representation of the area and its residents. It argues that Mendelsohn’s work provides an insight into the ways in which the city ‘in process’ was experienced – including by immigrants from south-Asia, Ireland and the Caribbean, as well as sex workers, their families and their clients. Mendelsohn’s photographs, it will be argued, not only provide a view of the private lives of Balsall Heath’s residents, but also offer a starting point for thinking about how the intersections between class, race, gender and sex combined to transform urban space in the post-war period.

**Paper 3 Abstract:** ‘Double Trouble: Social memory and Belfast’s Sailortown district’

Sean O’Connell

Like other major UK cities, post-war Belfast underwent extensive ‘slum clearances’ and redevelopment that destroyed or dramatically re-shaped numerous inner city working class districts. Social historians have debated the nature of the impact of this traumatic experience on the working class social memory they examine in oral history testimonies and autobiographies. This paper will set out to offer a new case study for this particular debate, whilst also offering a fresh twist to the discussion. It will argue that inner city Belfast underwent two sets of ‘Troubles’ from the late 1960s to the 1980s. The first was the sectarian violence most associated with the term, which broke down the uneasy social relations established between Catholic and Protestant workmates, neighbours, and communities. The second was the process of urban redevelopment, which alongside accelerating deindustrialisation, features as traumatic memory in popular representations of the city’s working class past. Examining oral testimony, short stories and novels, photographs, and street art, this paper explores how the former residents of Sailortown
have attempted to come to terms with the impact of urban redevelopment and deindustrialisation on their lives. This dockside district was one of Belfast’s most cosmopolitan areas. Theft, illegal gambling, and prostitution were all features of life in the district. The Sailortown area prided itself on being ‘mixed’: meaning that unlike most Belfast working class districts, Catholics and Protestants co-existed in large numbers. The fracturing of those relationships by sectarian violence adds – potentially – an interesting gloss to the urban pastoral dynamic. This paper will investigate that issue as well as identifying the themes that feature most prominently (or are omitted) in the social memory of Sailortown.

**The political history blues (or whatever happened to Political History)? – Arts, Lecture Room 6**

Speakers: Kit Kowol, Laura Beers, David Ellis

Chair: Lawrence Black

The strange dearth of political history is the focus of this panel. Compared with earlier periods or recent debates about social movements and NGOs, a “new political history” or the role of language, 20th century political history has drawn back from the methodological barricades. The politics of history are worked out elsewhere in arenas such as empire and sexuality; whereas political history finds itself at something of an impasse (in the case of labour history, as Richard Price has recently commented, chronically so). The panel explores both political and historiographical reasons for this: from the shift in historians gaze from politics to political culture and culture more generally, to a popular politics where we have to understand “Why we hate Politics”, as Colin Hay’s 2010 study put it.

But in part, it questions these anxieties, by assembling key, newer practitioners working on grassroots Conservatism (Kowol), local urban activism (Ellis) and transnational practices (Beers) to demonstrate there is significant new empirical work being done and new ways of thinking about modern British politics being forged. It flags up areas where historical debates engage current practice, like the Blue Labour thinkers. If one of the insights of more creative political histories since the 1980s was to take note of signs and meanings happening beyond the radar of official politics, these papers suggest we also need to rethink the centre as well as the periphery. Political history is undoubtedly too important to be left to either political historians or cultural historians alone.

**Paper 1 Abstract:** ‘Towards a Dynamic of Ginger-Groups: Edward Martell and British Conservatism 1955-1964’

Kit Kowol, Teesside
The development of ‘new political history’ witnessed a renaissance of interest in pressure groups. But an understanding of the role of ‘ginger-groups’ within British popular politics remains lacking. This paper argues that this is a result of the hybrid nature of such groups, which include functions such as external pressure groups, internal party caucuses, and, at times, political parties. This diversity precludes ginger groups from traditional political science classifications and masks their multi-levelled influence.

Examining the relationship between the right-wing ‘Freedom Groups’ created by ex-Liberal activist Edward Martell and Conservative Central Office, this paper offers a new template for the analysis of ginger-groups both in British Conservatism and other political contexts. It demonstrates that both Martell and Central Office were well aware of the multiple constituencies of activists who made up these “Freedom Groups” and the negotiations over functions this entailed. Tracing the history of these groups between 1955 and 1964 the paper shows how a contest over the definition, purpose, and nature of these organisations subsequently emerged. It concludes by demonstrating that despite precluding Martell’s organisations from significance within the Party this conflict nonetheless increased their influence on wider British political culture, arguably paving the way for Thatcherism.

**Paper 2 Abstract:** ‘Bringing the international home: the relationship between the international and the domestic in modern British politics.’
Laura Beers, Birmingham

We are all transnational historians now, or at least we all do our best to pretend to be. If British historians in the 1990s were transfixed by the empire, for the last decade, historians of modern Britain have been the lured less towards the so-called “periphery” that towards Europe, or more rightly towards Geneva. The establishment of the League of Nations and the new “international society” purportedly established by the League and the network of associated pressure groups and non-governmental organizations that sprung up to lobby and advise the new body have attracted considerable scholarly attention, as scholars such as Susan Pedersen have reconceptualized Britain’s and Britons’ relationship to the wider world. This scholarship has largely existed in parallel to an older historiography on the other international society, which took its lead from Moscow and the Third International, although as Susan Penny backer’s recent work has shown these liberal democratic and communist networks not infrequently overlapped. While such scholarship has helped illuminate the extent and impact of Britons’ engagement in international affairs, there has been little effort to explore the linkages between international engagement and domestic British politics. Yet, historians of domestic British politics can and should reclaim the international for their own ends. An unprecedented number of British politicians were engaged outside of Britain’s borders in the interwar period, and this international work informed and impacted their domestic political agendas, and vice versa. Taking as its focal
point the career of the Labour MP Ellen Wilkinson, this argues that, for many British politicians, their international political engagement was constitutive of their domestic politics in fundamental ways.

David Ellis, York

There can be no doubt that the New Political History has invigorated political historiography in recent decades. For all this innovation, however, the topics studied by practitioners of the New Political History are remarkably conventional. They have been chiefly concerned with politics at the national level and with political parties, elections, political leaders and the electorate. If the New Political History poses a new set of questions, its subject matter would be instantly familiar to an earlier generation of political historians. This paper follows recent trends in historiography by widening the focus of the political history of late twentieth century Britain. It is interested in politics at the level of city and the neighbourhood, and it adopts a “bottom up” approach to analysing political change. The main actors are not political parties but grassroots community groups and local NGOs. And it is largely concerned with local rather than national government. It argues that the political life of the urban neighbourhood offers fertile ground for political historians.

The paper investigates the work of community activists in late twentieth century Leeds who sought to build a more liveable and humane city in the context of urban decline, deindustrialisation and suburbanisation. These community activists contested the dominant approach to urban renewal which was orientated around comprehensive redevelopment, mass housing, zoning and highway construction. They advocated for a city that informed by traditional urban principles and subject to greater democratic control. This city would be socially mixed, walkable and cyclable. It would mix uses, promote sustainable densities and conserve the historic urban fabric. These community activists were particularly interested in the inner and central city, which they wanted to revive by restoring residential communities, enhancing the natural and built environment and encouraging social enterprise.

The paper focuses in particular on the work of the Leeds Civic Trust (established in 1965) and a number of neighbourhood-based organisations across the city who shared its goals. Whilst the Trust was initially formed to conserve heritage buildings, it quickly broadened its remit to the health of the city and the quality of urban amenities. The paper analyses the relationship between community activists and public bodies and it assesses the extent to which activists overcame official resistance and informed urban policy. It discusses why their vision was never fully realised. The paper situates this case study of urban activism in the wider national and
transnational context of the “back to the city” movement in Britain, western Europe and North America. Activists in Leeds were influenced by these networks. In the context of a world where policy makers are, once again, excited by cities, this paper enriches our historical understanding of the revival of the western city following its nadir in the 1960s and 1970s. It highlights the role of grassroots activism in this process whilst illuminating the “paths not taken” in urban development.

‘Sex and Common Sense’: Secularization and ‘Modern’ Sexual Subjectivities in Evolution– Arts, Lecture Room 3
Speakers: Alana Harris, Sue Morgan, Timothy W. Jones
Chair: Lucy Delap

In much of the historiography of modern Britain, it is taken as ‘common sense’ that ‘sex, love and rock n roll’ have unequivocally ousted an older, obsolete trinity of ‘character, duty and Christian morality’. Building upon recent studies that highlight religion’s continued currency in the negotiation and formation of ‘modern’ sexual subjectivities, the papers in this panel explore the ways in which three middle-class women (Maud Royden, Letitia Fairfield and Mary Whitehouse) mobilized diverse church traditions and differing theological priorities to address pressing contemporaneous problems about love, sex and right living in modern Britain. The diversity of their interventions into these debates is a fitting illustration of the ways in which concepts of ‘modernity’ remained fluid and problematic in the religious context, as elsewhere, across the twentieth century.

Spanning the Edwardian era to the ‘permissive age’, this panel will explore the sexual and spiritual subjectivities of these three intelligent, highly educated and prominent women and their efforts to ‘translate’ (or restate) Christian precepts on marriage, contraception and homosexuality for a wider audience. In their professional lives, publications and social action, it is possible to trace the ways in which they sought to incorporate religious values into evolving ‘cultures of democracy’ and utilized, as women, the continuing valence of religion as a platform and discourse for intervention in the public sphere and political debates. Moreover, attention to the persistent presence of class-based perspectives within their thinking offers important perspectives on the problematics surrounding historical (re)construction of belief and religious experience, and the ways in which the classed dynamics of sexual politics shifted across the period. As such, the papers within this panel – with commentary from Dr Lucy Delap drawing on her ESRC project on post-war child sex abuse – will contribute to the re-narration of the place of religion in twentieth century Britain (and beyond), critiquing the totalizing paradigm of secularization and inadequate chronologies of change that pivot on the Second World War and the presumed watershed of the sixties.
**Paper 1 Abstract:** ‘Sacramental sex? Religion, feminism and new sexual discourses in interwar Britain’  
Sue Morgan, University of Chichester

Despite recent studies highlighting religion’s continued influence upon the formation of twentieth-century sexual identities, the tendency to privilege secular rather than spiritual discourses remains dominant in histories of modern sexuality. Shifting attitudes towards sexual morality provided organized religion with some of its keenest opportunities to demonstrate the relevance of faith to a modern age, however, and the success or otherwise with which it has embraced this challenge remains under-investigated.

This paper explores the intriguing intersections of religion, feminism and new sexual discourses in interwar Britain in order to reveal the uneven developments and meanings attached to the term ‘modern’. It focuses primarily on the writings of the Anglican feminist Maude Royden and the women’s rights campaigner Dora Russell who represented two important competing strands of postwar sexual ideology – Christian progressivism and sex radicalism. These women clashed not only over their particular sexual manifestos but also over the authority of religion as a cultural determinant of modern subjectivity. According to Royden, New Testament Christianity offered an enlightened code of sexual, spiritual and social self-fulfilment for women and men alike within the bounds of modern matrimony; Russell, on the other hand, regarded organized religion as the antithesis of all things modern, responsible for distorting the sexual instinct and imposing centuries of female degradation and infantilization. This paper juxtaposes these women’s differing attitudes towards Christianity and sexuality alongside their many ideological convergences as emblematic of the exploratory, shifting moral landscape in which they wrote and campaigned, and of the multifarious notions of the modern sexual self they correspondingly produced.

**Paper 2 Abstract:** ‘Sex in the Maltese Position: Dr Letitia Fairfield and Catholic Attitudes to Contraception before and after the Second World War’  
Alana Harris, King’s College London

In 1938 the Senior Medical Officer for the London County Council, Dr Letitia Fairfield, undertook a social-scientific mission to the then predominantly Catholic colony of Malta to examine the prevalence and prevention of the spread of venereal disease. It was a revelatory experience, leading the staunch Catholic convert to acknowledge, empirically, the link between overpopulation and poverty and thereby revisit her earlier opposition to birth control at home and throughout the Catholic world.
Honoured with a papal medal in 1965 for her services to the Church, and a regular commentator in the Catholic press on miracles, visionaries and stigmata, there is a marked tendency within the scant historiography discussing Fairfield (cf. her sister Rebecca West) to compartmentalize her public life and leftist politics from her faith, ethics and intense curiosity about the supernatural.

This paper seeks to interrogate the ways in which Fairfield integrated her feminist principles and Fabian networks with her continuing commitment to Roman Catholicism. Through the lens of her experiences in Malta, it examines her own ‘hierarchy of values’ cutting across gender, class, race and religion and the ways in which she theologised her shifting stance on contraception and the dictates of conscience.

In doing so, it also seeks to connect Fairfield’s experience to changing attitudes to contraception across a cross-section of the Catholic population in the 1940s. British Catholics, whether middle-class professionals or the more numerous working class, were not quarantined from the ‘democratization’ of sexual knowledge and a growing awareness of contraceptive practices in this period. Through these frameworks, this paper disrupts traditional chronologies that date the advent of a ‘modern sexual (Catholic) self’ to the sixties and demonstrates the diversity and malleability of Catholic attitudes to contraception well before the furore of Humanae Vitae (1968).

**Paper 3 Abstract:** ‘Postsecular Blasphemy: Mary Whitehouse and the emergence of the liberal homosexual subject’
Timothy W. Jones, La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia

Historians of secularization have long been debating the rates and dates of de-Christianization in Britain. This focus on the history of religious decline, however, has elided the continued influence of religion in secularized societies. The relegation of religion to the ‘private’ in histories of secular societies has deprived us of an analytical language through which to understand religious difference and negotiate religious conflict. This elision has become increasingly problematic as secularized societies in Western Europe and Australasia attempt to deal with new Islamic movements in particular, but also conflicts between religious and sexual discrimination.

This paper explores Mary Whitehouse’s influence on sex in modern Britain. Whitehouse was a schoolteacher who became Britain’s most notorious morals campaigner. Concerned about the influence of mass culture, and particularly television, on public morality, Whitehouse founded the National Viewers and Listeners Association in 1965, and campaigned vigorously against sex and violence on television. She had a particular zeal to oppose permissiveness on the BBC, but also prosecuted her case against other the channels and the print media. Whitehouse is often presented as a crank, an anachronistic promoter of Victorian sexual repression in an era of sexual...
liberation. Her significance appears much greater, however, if we analyze her work through a postsecular lens. Whitehouse was part of the emergent transnational New Christian Right. Her campaigns influenced, mirrored and were directly linked to campaigns around the Anglophone world. An examination of her simultaneous prosecution of Gay News for blasphemy and her international campaign against child pornography reveals her role in the emergence of the liberal homosexual subject.

4:00 – 4:15 pm – Break

4:15 – 5:30 pm – Plenary Roundtable: New Directions in MBS – Vaughn Jeffries Lecture Theatre, Education Building
Stephen Brooke, Deborah Cohen, Geoff Eley, Catherine Hall, Seth Koven, James Vernon, Daisy Payling