



Workshop Overview

VOLUNTARY WORK

University of Southampton

10TH October 212



Workshop Overview

This one day workshop will brought together new researchers from around the UK to discuss the important issue of unpaid voluntary work over the last hundred years. At present there is considerable unemployment, particularly among young adults, coupled with shifting expectations as to what individuals can expect from employers, and vice versa. Part of this process includes the increasing number of UK graduates conducting unpaid internships (currently 250,000), an area not overseen by industrial policies, but in fact by government legislation relating to voluntary work. Current research into this phenomenon offers little or no historical context with regard to unpaid voluntary work in twentieth century Britain, which in turn hinders our understanding of it today. The workshop worked to bridge this significant knowledge gap.

With the presence of the [Work Futures Research Centre \(WFRC\)](#) the University of Southampton was an ideal location for the event. The workshop aimed to attract social scientists and historians with interests in charity and the voluntary sector, social care, government policy, unions, gender, industry, and activism.

The conference was free of charge and we were able to cover lunch and other refreshments, all travel costs and workshop materials.

About the Funders



The Work Futures

Research Centre gave

£600 towards the

organisation of the

workshop which more

than covered our costs.

The WFRC Steering

Group is comprised of

the four Directors of

WFRC. Members bring

a breadth of expertise to

the Centre in various

research areas and

provide advice on the

work and strategic

direction of the Centre:

• [Alison Fuller](#)

• [Susan Halford](#)

• [Pauline Leonard](#)

• [Catherine Pope](#)



Programme

10:30-11:00 - Registration and coffee

11:00-11:15 - Welcome from Dr Pauline Leonard, WFRC

Panel 1. Unpaid work as employability strategy

11:15 – 11:35 - Jane Parry, TSRC

Becoming a Worker: Interning labour market strategies in a new world of work

11:35 – 11:55 - Anjelica Finnegan, Southampton

Voluntary work as an 'appropriate activity' for the unemployed: government policy from 1980-2010

11:55 – 12:15 - Questions and discussion

12:15 – 13:00 – Lunch

Panel 2. Unpaid work in the 20th Century: from the Religious Tract Society to the Riding for Disabled Association via a Welsh communist milkman

13:00-13:20 - Michael Weatherburn, Imperial College

Motorcycles, Mattresses and Microscopes: Geoffrey Pyke, the Communist Party, and Voluntary Industrial Aid for Spain, 1936-9

13:20-13:40 - Victoria Davis, IHR

'It's what you can do that counts': The history and role of the Riding for Disabled Association within local communities

13:40-14:00 - Alison Enever, Southampton

Sales or Souls: voluntary work, evangelicalism and commercialism in the production of the Boy's Own Paper and Girl's Own Paper

14:00-14:30 - Questions and discussion

14:30-14:45 – Coffee

14:45-15:45 - Round table discussion with Dr Rebecca Taylor, TSRC

15:45-16:00 – Close



Delegates

Kate Boyer, University of Southampton

Naomi Harflett, Southampton

Charlotte Clements, Kent

Mine Karatas-Ozkan, Southampton

Victoria Davis, IHR

Bridget Lockyer, York

Jane Dunleavy, Southampton

Jane Parry, Southampton (TSRC)

Janina Emig, Southampton

Rebecca Taylor, Birmingham (TSRC)

Alison Enever, Southampton

Michael Weatherburn, Imperial

Anjelica Finnegan, Southampton

Speaker's Bios

Vicky Davis read her BA in History at the University of Chichester, her MA in Modern British and Gender History at Royal Holloway, University of London and is now undertaking an AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Award at the Institute of Historical Research, London. Her thesis focuses on the employee and welfare culture of the Victorian Post Office. In addition, she has substantial voluntary experience, previously with the NHS and currently with the RDA and the Poppy Appeal.

Alison Enever is an AHRC-funded postgraduate research student just entering her final year at the University of Southampton, within the School of History. A mature student, she has returned to research after working as a Project Manager for a Local Authority. Her PhD is looking at the Boy's Own Paper and the Girl's Own Paper and organised youth 1914-1967. She is particularly interested in issues of gender, identity, and interactions within institutions between those in positions of power and those they are attempting to influence.

Anjelica Finnegan is a second year PhD student at the University of Southampton in the department of Politics and International Relations researching the relationship between the state and volunteering. Whilst her focus is on the New Labour government, Anjelica will employ two case studies, youth and unemployment volunteering, to identify changes/consistencies in government's attitude towards and policy for supporting/encouraging volunteering. Although primarily a social scientist, Anjelica's interest in the history of voluntary action grew whilst working with to preserve [Volunteering](#)



England's Archive, now housed at the LSE, with Dr Georgina Brewis and she is now the chair of the VAHS New Researchers' committee.

Professor Pauline Leonard Pauline is a founding member of the Work Futures Research Centre at the University of Southampton. Her research interests are in work and organization, primarily in the areas of organizational change, gender, race and identity and skilled labour migration. Her research has included projects on gender and professional change in the NHS and in Tertiary Education, skilled migration and the social and economic benefits of EU immigration. She has also acted as a consultant for the NHS and the King's Fund. She is author of numerous publications including *Gender, Power and Organisations* (with Susan Halford)(2001) and *Negotiating Gendered Identities at Work: Place, Space and Time* (with Susan Halford)(2006).

Dr Jane Parry is a qualitative sociologist with a particular interest in class and work, who is a Research Fellow at the Third Sector Research Centre (TSRC) and a member of the Work Futures Research Centre (WFRC). Her recently completed research at TSRC has focused around theory and policy, including projects on the recession and the third sector, and the third sector's campaigning around and the shaping of the agenda in the 2010 general election. She previously worked in the Employment Group at the Policy Studies Institute, where she specialised in labour market deprivation, supporting transitions, and labour market programme evaluation.

Dr Rebecca Taylor joined TSRC in April 2009 and is working on several research programmes, including Real Times, its core qualitative longitudinal research project, and the Theory and Policy work stream. Rebecca's research interests include: the meaning of work in its various forms; work outside the labour market, such as voluntary and informal work; career transitions and experiences of disadvantaged or excluded groups (older people, ethnic minorities) in the labour market; conceptualising labour markets (across all sectors) and the intersection between different fields and forms of work.

Michael Weatherburn has a BA in history from Oxford University and is completing a PhD in the history of 20th century British scientific management at the Centre for the History of Science, Technology, and Medicine, Imperial College. In 2011 he was ESRC fellow at ACCA, where he researched international business policy and accountancy practice. Read Michael's essay on Co-Ops and industrial cooperation on the VAHS blog here.



Organisers' Evaluation

The audience was split roughly 50:50 between social scientists and historians. Numerous attendees came from Southampton itself, with representatives from Kent, York, Birmingham, the Institute of Historical Research and Imperial College.

The morning panel was geared towards social policy, featuring presentations from Dr Jane Parry (Southampton) and Anjelica Finnegan (Southampton). Jane addressed the important issue of internships and the issues which young graduates face in gaining employment after leaving university. Her particular case study was Waste Foodie. It was good to hear that some employers are sympathetic to the challenges which graduates face, and design training schemes - even job titles - which really give the interns confidence in the workplace.

Anjelica considered how British governments since 1979 have attempted to draw the unemployed into voluntary work programmes, the aim being to impart experience and skills (and thus improve employability), as well as imputing a spirit of responsible citizenship.

The afternoon's session consisted of three historians, including myself. Michael Weatherburn's paper was on Voluntary Industrial Aid for Spain (VIAS), a grassroots depression-era organisation which collected and manufactured civilian materials to send to the embattled Spanish republic. The famous inventor Geoffrey Pyke was VIAS's main organiser and he was also able to utilise his doctoral work on the Communist Party of Great Britain.

Victoria Davis (IHR) followed with an interesting paper on the history of the Riding for the Disabled Association (RDA), which was formed in 1969. The RDA of course features two sets of volunteers: the trainers and also the horses, sometimes both of which are more aware of potential dangers than inexperienced riders. Victoria addressed the issues which the association faced, Given Britain's success in the recent London Paralympics, this is of course a highly topical issue.

Alison Enever (Southampton) delivered a very professional paper on the Religious Tract Society (RTS), the former publishers of the Boy's Own Paper and the Girl's Own Paper. She highlighted the tensions between the RTS's mission as an evangelical organisation and its desire to be self-sustaining, even profit making. Alison embedded her study within changing notions of evangelism in the mid-twentieth century, and it was fascinating to hear how the RTS used its profits to fund its overseas missionary work.



Dr Rebecca Taylor (TSRC) kindly agreed to chair the round table discussion. She raised four main themes for discussion: diversity; discourse and language; power, status and knowledge; and policy implications. She highlighted the important issue of who uses what terms to define the activities being undertaken, and how diffuse much terminology surrounding this issue is. Do people define themselves as volunteers? Or is the term being imprinted on them from somewhere else? It was noted in the ensuing discussion that it is often middle class people who've defined working class people as volunteers, even amateurs, while stressing their own expert roles.

The conference closed with some thought-provoking comments on corporate volunteer schemes, in which employers offer volunteering opportunities for their employees. Much discussion ensued as to what happens when an employee wishes to volunteer for a cause of their own choice, particularly if only the employer-sponsored cause counts in promotions. The excellent day was rounded off with a drink and a lively chat in a nearby pub. This was followed with excellent meal at a nearby Indian restaurant.

Abstracts can be found on the workshop [website](#).

Feedback

Thirteen people, including the speakers, attended the workshop. Eight attendees were from the University of Southampton and a further five from York, Imperial, Birmingham, Kent and the Institute of Historical Research. In addition to new researchers, among the delegates were lecturers, research fellows and one member of the wider University staff who had a particular interest in the third sector. There was no mention of the size of the event (either positively or negatively) in the feedback. What was good to see was the range of ways in which the delegates found out about the conference: Twitter, the VSSN Network, the IHR website, e-mail and the VAHS New Researchers were all listed.

The event received an average score of 9.4/10, with the roundtable session and the discussions following the paper presentations cited as the best aspects of the event. This echoes feedback from other VAHS New Researcher workshops and reinforces that the current format - 2-3 short papers grouped together followed by discussion and a closing roundtable session – is a good one. When asked what could be improved one person suggested that the two panels could have been tied together more explicitly, no other suggestions were made.