



Voluntary Action and the History of Leisure: An Emerging Field?

A one-day seminar to be held at the
Institute of Historical Research, Senate House, London WC1E 7HU,
Saturday 4 May 2013
10.00-4.00

Voluntary Organisations and the Development of Leisure

Voluntary organisations have played a central part in the development of leisure-time activities from at least the seventeenth century when the growth of urban centres and increased affluence provided significant numbers of people with the opportunity and the means of enjoying a growing amount of 'free' time. This allowed clubs and societies to flourish and provided the more affluent classes with opportunities for drinking and socialising as well as mutual improvement. In the nineteenth century there was 'an explosion of leisure time interests' as a growing proportion of the population enjoyed greater leisure time. In the twentieth century these became even more important to even more people. While much of the added demand for recreation was met by the provision made by commercial interests and central and local government, the opportunities provided by voluntary organisations also expanded.

This important aspect of the history of voluntary action has, however, received comparatively little attention. Historians of leisure do not tend to give detailed attention to the voluntary organisations that provided much of the recreational activities on which they focus, and those who study the history of voluntary organisations rarely look beyond the philanthropic charities and the mutual aid societies that embody Beveridge's twin roots of voluntary action.

The Field

Recreation and leisure-time activities are numerous and diverse. They include:

Culture and the arts: choral societies, orchestras and brass, jazz and other bands; folk, classical, ballroom, modern and tap dancing; museums; amateur dramatics; painting and sculpture.

Education and self-improvement: Sunday schools; archaeological, geological, historical, literary, natural historical and philosophical societies; mechanics' institutes; educational settlements; labour colleges; the Workers' Educational Association; the U3A; and book groups.

Physical activity and sports: angling, caving, climbing, cycling, rambling; exercise and fitness; martial arts; organised sport such as billiards, bowls, boxing, cricket, football, golf, hockey, rugby and tennis.

Sociability and recreation: camping, youth hostelling and group holidays; boys' and girls' clubs; boy scouts, girl guides; working men's clubs and institutes; women's organisations; and hobbyists groups.

The Seminar

As a first step to highlighting the importance of leisure to the developing field of voluntary action history VAHS is holding a day seminar that will explore key aspects of this neglected field. Speakers at the seminar will introduce discussion by exploring some of the main features and issues arising for historians in some of the key areas with a view to exploring synergies and stimulating further analysis.

The Programme

10.00-10.30	Registration
10.30-10.45	Welcome and introduction to the day Colin Rochester and Meta Zimmeck, VAHS
10.45-11.45	Voluntary Action and the History of Leisure: An Overview Barry Doyle,
11.45-12.45	Education and Self-improvement Mark Freeman
12.45-1.30	Lunch
1.30-2.30	Culture and the Arts Natasha Vall
2.30- 3.30	Social and Co-operative Cultures Bob Snape
3.30-4.00	Panel discussion: Where do we go from here?
4.00	Coffee and tea and close

The Speakers

Professor Barry Doyle is Director of the Centre for the History of Public Health and Medicine at Huddersfield University.

Mark Freeman is a Senior Lecturer in economic and social history at the University of Glasgow and currently a Visiting Fellow at the Institute of Education, London. He has written extensively on modern British social, cultural and business history, including twentieth-century adult education and youth movements.

Bob Snape is Reader in Leisure and Sport at the University of Bolton where he is founder and Head of the Centre for Worktown Studies. His research interests are: the social and cultural history of leisure, history of public libraries and museums, Mass Observation and 'Worktown', and The National Home Reading Union.

Natasha Vall is Reader in History at Teesside University specialising in comparative urban and cultural history. She is currently researching the comparative history of community action in inner cities during the 1970s, with particular focus on the European community arts movement.

Registration

There is small charge of £15.00 to cover the costs of refreshments.



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Booking Form (Please return by 15th April 2013)

PERSONAL DETAILS

Surname:

First name:

Title:

Organisation:

Address for correspondence:

Telephone:

Email:

Special needs:

(We will try to cater for any dietary or other special needs wherever possible. It would be very helpful if you could let us know your requirements in advance.)

May we include your e-mail address on delegate list? YES NO

PAYMENT

Please tick as appropriate:

I enclose a cheque for £15.00. (Cheques should be made payable to the Voluntary Action History Society)

Please send an invoice for £15.00.

I wish to pay by bank transfer to the account of the Voluntary Action History Society: Sort code: 40 45 42; Account no: 81117599

I require a receipt.

Signed:

Date:

Please return your completed booking form with payment (where applicable) to:

Meta Zimmeck, Voluntary Action History Society, Flat 33, Queen Alexandra Mansions, Judd Street, London WC1H 9DQ; meta@practicalwisdomr2z.co.uk