



VOLUNTARY ACTION HISTORY SEMINARS

VAHS seminar series at the Institute of Historical Research

SEMINAR ABSTRACT

4th November 2013

David Bills

Witness

David Billis was the outstanding pioneer of the academic study of the voluntary sector in the United Kingdom. He established the UK's first university-based programme of research and teaching about voluntary action (PORTVAC) at Brunel University in 1978 and launched the first specialist postgraduate course for the sector in 1987. He moved to LSE in 1989 to set up the influential Centre for Voluntary Organisation (CVO). He developed a theoretical framework for understanding the sector in a series of papers and articles and two major books – *Organising Public and Voluntary Agencies* (Routledge, 1993) and *Hybrid Organizations and the Third Sector* (Palgrave, 2010).

In this witness seminar David will talk about his life and his intellectual formation; discuss the way in which he became involved in the study of the sector; tell us about the establishment of PORTVAC and the CVO; set out his approach to building a theory of the sector; give us his reflections on what was going on at that time in the worlds of policy and practice; review the development of an academic field of voluntary sector studies; reflect on his links with the American scholarly community; and end with a short postscript on the state of the sector and the field of study today.