Knowing Where You Stand: An Introduction to Local History

Term 2

The Long Revolution of Modernity: 18th–20th Centuries

1. 23rd January: **Early Modern to Modern Landscapes (C17-C19)**

We begin with important transformations in the historic landscape, that would shape local society over subsequent centuries. The period witnessed significant amounts of enclosure in the countryside, now reinforced by parliamentary act, while in the towns historians have suggested an urban renaissance occurred, and new landscapes of leisure were developed.

2. 30th January: **Urban Lives: Societies and Networks**

Towns expanded in the 18th century as population grew, and trade increased along with the communications routes to facilitate it. This session will look at the growth of new forms of urban community and the development of new urban spaces such as the leisure town.

3. 6th February: **Workhouses and the Poor Law (C18-C20)**

Workhouses emerged under the Old Law Poor, but became central to the organisation of the New Poor Law from the 1830s onwards. This session will explore these developments, including the lives of those who inhabited the workhouses as both inmates and staff.

4. 13th February: **Modern Landscapes 1 (C19-21): Extraction, Industry and Movement**

The modern period is associated with the Industrial Revolution in many people's minds, but was this transformation, and how did it actually affect people's lives? This session takes a look at two important centres of this revolution in Staffordshire – the Black Country and the Potteries – as well as the roads, canals and railways that were built to connect them to the rest of the country.

5. 20th February: **Individual Lives: People and Institutions**

The 19th and 20th centuries witnessed a significant increase in the intensity of national government at more local levels of society. The Reform Act of 1832 was followed by others over succeeding decades that gave increasing numbers of people a stake in national government, while centrally directed institutions became more involved in local government through, for example, Boards of Health and Rural and Urban District Councils. Meanwhile, the national population becomes visible for the first time in the census returns compiled every decade from 1841.

6. 27th February: **Religion/s**

From the 18th century new forms of dissenting religion (particularly Methodism) emerged alongside the early protestant groups of the 16th and 17th centuries to create a far more varied religious landscape. Meanwhile, restrictions around Catholicism were loosened in the 19th century and groups practising non-Christian religions became more socially visible in the 20th century. In 1851 an unparalleled religious census provided fine-grained view of religious life across the country.

7. 5th March: **Modern Landscapes 2 (C19-C21): The Warfare State**

Military installations had long formed important elements within the English landscape, but the 18th and 19th centuries witnessed an increasing variety and number, such as militia barracks, training grounds and armaments factories. The mass warfare of the first and second world wars expanded the proportion of the population involved with the country's military infrastructure, as well as evolving new forms of communal memorial.

8. 12th March: **Education**

Formal education had long been open to elite levels of society, but from the 19th century provision was increasingly made for the poorer strata as well. This session looks at charitable foundations, 'National' schools and life in the various forms of organised formal education promoted by central government in the 20th century, as revealed in sources such as school log books.

9. 19th March: **Atomization of the landscape**

The historic landscape has experienced fundamental changes since the 1950s. A decline in industrial production has been mirrored by an increase in the 'service' economy, while formal religious observation has declined and older forms of community have given way to new. What does this mean for local history, itself a significant product of these decades of transformation?

10. 26th March: **Planning a Local History Project**

What next? This final session considers the challenges of planning and undertaking a local history project, seeking to put the work of the previous weeks into practice!