

Homes, Food and Farms: WHN National Conference 2021

Abstract Booklet

Helen Antrobus (The National Trust) - Hill Top and Beyond: Beatrix Potter, her land, and her collection.

Beatrix Potter is perhaps the National Trust's most famous supporter. With the fortune amassed from her 'little books', Potter stripped herself of the restrictive life Kensington offered, to pursue her dream of farming in the Lake District. Over almost forty years, Potter bought up farms in the South Lakes and eventually donated parcels of land to the National Trust. The NT have preserved Potter's first purchase, Hill Top farm. Over 100,000 visitors pay homage to Potter each year, arriving from far corners of the world. Through an examination of the displays at Hill Top, my paper will explore Potter's evolving identity from Beatrix Potter: author, to Mrs William Heelis: sheep farmer. By making visible furniture and ephemera depicted in her stories, the curatorial approach to Hill Top has seamlessly blended Potter's two worlds. Potter acted as curator as well as farmer at Hill Top and constructed much of what is on display today. My paper will examine Potter's conflicted identities, constructed realities, and the influences of cultural imperialism, romanticism, and gender on her life in the Lakes, and how they can be seen – whether on full display or hidden in plain sight – at Hill Top today.

Sue Bailey (London Metropolitan University) - The gendering of the blender or the secret life of your kitchen appliances? A review of the role of women in developing and promoting small domestic electric equipment in the UK from the post-war period.

After the Second World War, technology promised women freedom from drudgery. Enticing women back into the domestic sphere of the kitchen and marketing a modern aspirational lifestyle was the goal of utility companies, appliance manufacturers, trade associations, and food product companies. The promotion via demonstrations, advertising, and cooking booklets in the post-World War II period almost exclusively implied that the kitchen was a woman's domain. However, over the last seventy-five years, small kitchen based electrical appliance development and usages have lost their gender stereotype and have moved in and out of fashion. The focus of this research is to explore the importance of domestic small electrical equipment from the nineteen-fifties to the nineteen-eighties linking into gender roles of the period. The paper will draw on the investigation of research articles, ownership data, and organizations such as the electricity board, AMDEA (Association of Manufacturers of Domestic Appliances), the Women's Electrical Association, home economists and demonstrators, equipment manufacturers, professional and trade magazines. It will be suggested that it is important to place the history of the gender usage of equipment within the current context of a focus on the need for multi-skilled, non-stereotypical gender roles.

Francesca Baldwin (University of Reading) - Space, Power and Domesticity: Negotiating Agency and Womanhood in the Ethiopian Coffee Ceremony.

In 1991, nearly two decades of war in Ethiopia drew to a close and revolutionary fighters began the difficult transition to civilian life. Female fighters comprised up to one-third of the insurgent force

and faced significant barriers to reintegration into domestic life after their participation in the conflict.

This paper examines how female combatants in post-war Ethiopia navigated space and power in their return to peace and domesticity at the end of the war. The traditional Ethiopian coffee ceremony is used as the framework through which to explore negotiations of agency and womanhood in the post-war period as a highly significant symbolic ritual which reinforced cultural expectations of gendered order. Drawing on life history testimonies and feminist theories of performativity and liminality, the performance of the coffee ceremony is conceptualised as a strategic act which offered opportunities for social advancement and access to resources, and simultaneously challenged rigid hierarchies in multi-generational households. Dissecting the symbolic coffee ceremony in communities experiencing transitions to peace and reintegration offers a unique lens through which to access Ethiopian women's experiences in the private sphere. Throughout, this paper argues that unpacking domestic spaces and practices requires critical gendered perspectives which take into account intersections of age, marital status and community backgrounds. In doing so, it demonstrates the careful negotiations involved in domestic performances for female veterans in the post-war Ethiopian state.

Sue Bishop (University of Leicester) - What's Love got to do with it? Locating female agency and new cultural identities in Leicester, 1960-1991.

A demographic transformation occurred in Leicester, England during the second half of the twentieth century. As a result, the majority of the city's population now identify as either black, Asian or ethnically minoritised residents. A hidden aspect of this well documented shift is the rising number of people of dual heritage, the result of interethnic and interracial romantic relationships. Historically, we know these relationships and the women in them were considered transgressive until the early 1960s. My research argues that this problematisation continued. Using oral life-histories of women who were in such relationships in Leicester between 1960 and 1991, this paper suggests the women's choices, actions and silences represent a distinct, undocumented form of agency; an informal, everyday romantic agency that sits alongside more commonly recognised forms of contemporary female activism. Their experiences also provide a nuanced perspective of how cultural identities and racisms have evolved in the British city.

Clarice Bland (University College Dublin) - Writing the Garden: Women Gardeners and Print Culture in Britain, 1850-1900.

Technological and industrial advancement as well as rapid population growth in nineteenth-century Britain had resulted in a romanticising of the rural lifestyle, with many in the suburbs creating their own small patches of nature for moral and physical benefits. Women gardeners were given the opportunity to write advice texts that displayed women's relationship to nature, in a way that challenged the gender constructs of the day. I will examine the main British gardening periodicals of the nineteenth century to demonstrate that women authors challenged the construction of the separate spheres through their publications, which encouraged women to stray from their gender codes and use the garden as a site of authority. The garden was a site of challenge and revolution: it was located logistically outside of the home, yet it also fell into the realm of domesticity. Whilst men were engaging in the natural world as botanists and zoologists, women embraced gardens as their purview. Many women became experts in garden culture – however, there still remained a great

reluctance to present themselves as professionals, instead calling themselves “amateurs”. This construction of gardening as a past-time meant that women were not directly challenging the public sphere, meaning that they were able to freely push the boundaries of acceptability through gardening metaphor and language.

Eliska Bujokova (University of Glasgow) - Matrons, Housekeepers and Nurses: Food Provision and Power Relations in Glasgow’s Early Nineteenth c. Hospitals.

The records in the NHS archives for the city of Glasgow relating to female managerial staff in city’s hospitals tell a story of women’s work in the medical environment as well as prominence within the structures of large institutions, employed as matrons, housekeepers and head-nurses. Alongside budgeting and overseeing female staff, food provision, preparation and distribution were the key responsibilities of female managers. Their responsibility extended over the diets of patients as well as staff. This role underlined their importance to the hospitals’ running and strongly resembled a position occupied by female household heads, housewives and housekeepers within households. Drawing on the normative ideals about womanhood and motherhood as conceptualised by the field of care ethics, this paper reimagines female medical and managerial work in the early nineteenth century as an extension of their femininities. Their position in charge of provision as well as discipline closely emulates the imagined household structures and allows for a construction of occupational identities through extending the ‘natural’ sphere of women’s agency. Diet management was seen as related to both care and cure, integral to women’s traditional sphere of engagement. This paper, therefore, investigates the seeming innateness of women’s association with food, care, and provision within and without the home. It aims to extricate the normative framework of this phenomenon and how it transcended into individuals’ social status as well as their negotiating power in the workplace.

Johnathan Burton (University of Kent) - ‘The Witchery of Legitimate Sport’: Femininity, Gender and the Female Hunter, 1800-1914.

By the end of the nineteenth century in Britain, female involvement in the previously male dominated sports of hunting and shooting was increasingly common. However, these pioneers of women’s sport encountered a problem when it came to facing the rest of society. The very nature of such sports clashed with the traditional role of women as familial nurturers leaving practitioners facing the real possibility of becoming social outcasts. This presentation aims to focus on how they avoided such a fate by skilfully constructing a new identity which portrayed them as responsible and enthusiastic sportswomen whilst still attempting to demonstrate their essential femininity. By examining the memoirs, diaries and manuals they left behind, one can reconstruct this identity, observe how it differed from the masculine identities created by male hunters and judge just how successful such gendered constructions were in convincing society that female hunters did not represent a threat.

Katie Carpenter (University of Lincoln) - Women and Food Preparation Technology in the English Kitchen, 1870-1914.

The mid-nineteenth century saw the influx of mechanical technologies into the middle-class domestic kitchen for the preparation of food. This paper gives a material culture analysis of food

preparation kitchen gadgets from the pre-electricity era, such as mincers, marmalade cutters and apple peelers. It is based on a selection of gadgets made by the company Follows and Bates, who produced a range of kitchen technologies for cooking in the 1870s. I argue that an analysis of these objects can reveal the everyday hidden skills that were required of the housewife or the domestic servant in the middle-class domestic kitchen. A level of mechanical skill would be required in using, maintaining and cleaning these items, but this skill was not publicly acknowledged. Indeed, even the company's own advertisements depict a man operating the machines, despite women being the primary users of such devices. This paper illuminates this technological dimension of food preparation before the advent of electricity and demonstrates the skills and experiences of the women by operating mechanical devices. It reflects on how mechanical skills were classed and gendered in contemporary culture as they challenged notions of feminine domestic behaviour.

Ruth Cohen - 'I was utterly at my husband's mercy': co-operative women, marriage, and divorce.

For over thirty years Margaret Llewelyn Davies (1861-1944) was the campaigning leader of the Women's Co-operative Guild, most of whose members were working class housewives. Herself middle class and single, she had advanced ideas about marriage and divorce. But as I found out when researching her biography, in the event many Guildswomen shared them. In 1910, invited to give evidence to a Royal Commission on divorce reform, Davies wrote asking 124 Guild activists for their views on her radical proposals, which included permitting divorce by mutual consent. This talk examines the powerful letters she received in response, around which she built her speech to the Commission. They included shocking accounts of emotional, physical and sexual abuse, hitherto rarely acknowledged in public debate, and highlighted how housewives could be trapped in desperate circumstances by their financial dependence on their husbands. Although a majority of the letters supported Davies' radical proposals there were significant divergences, revealing a fascinating breadth of experience and beliefs about marriage and divorce. Unlike the well-known 'maternity letters' which Davies later gathered these have not been republished, and therefore have not received the attention they deserve.

Lisa Cox-Davies (University of Worcester) - Beat work or housework? Female police officers of the West Midlands in the post-war decades.

In 1946 the marriage bar was removed in the UK, permitting women in professions such as the civil service and policing to remain in their positions after marriage. This paper/presentation will examine the experiences of policewomen in the forces of the West Midlands area during the 1950s and 1960s. It will suggest that some county police forces remained resistant to the idea of married women working and expected that women should continue to resign upon marriage. Using archival research and police documentation, it will further suggest that due to such attitudes police forces subsequently struggled to retain women and that policewomen were unable to establish long-term careers unless they remained single and childless.

Małgorzata Dajnowicz (University of Białystok) - The Household Committee of the League of Women [Komitet Gospodarstwa Domowego Ligi Kobiet] – as an example of women’s movement activities for modernisation of households in the Polish People’s Republic.

The League of Women [Liga Kobiet] was the only official women’s movement accepted by the Polish communist authorities in the Polish People’s Republic of 1945-89. In order to implement the programme of activities promoting reconciliation of work and family life dedicated to women, since the second half of the 1950s, the League of Women established the Household Committee [Komitet Gospodarstwa Domowego]. Within the agenda, it organised courses for women on the subject of household modernisation and modernity, e.g. on the use of modern equipment on farms and home furnishing, savings, healthy diet, hygiene rules. The disseminated principles were often different from the reality of Polish women’s everyday life marked with the effects of the economic crisis in communist Poland. The purpose of the article is to show League of Women’s activities in the field of promoting modernity in Polish households, especially since the late 1950s, in the 1960s and 1970s, and to juxtapose the activities of the Household Committee with the difficult reality of Polish women in the communist era.

Rose Debenham (University of Birmingham) - ‘Those woolly-hatted Greenham women were at it again’: Dress and visual presentation at Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp.

This paper will explore dress and visual presentation as a method of representing and constructing identities for women who attended Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp between 1981-2000. Dress allows for more complicated narratives around feminism in the 1980s and 1990s by moving beyond a focus on leading figures to think more widely about the intersections between different political and social identities. Feminists often had a complicated relationship with dress as it was tied up with the body, consumption, and the media. However, this paper examines how feminists made aesthetic decisions that offered fantasy, a sense of community, and a means of self-exploration. The idea of a cohesive ‘feminist’ or ‘Greenham’ look was defined in part by an oppositional media to act as a visual shorthand for a certain type of women. But, through playing into stereotypes, women at Greenham used humour and role-play to re-define associations made by critics as internal references. Visual presentation also offers an opportunity to disrupt the image of the ‘typical’ Greenham Common supporter as dress demonstrated a huge variety of religious, relational, political, and cultural identities. This paper demonstrates how dress offered both a means of aligning with a collective identity and exploring individuality.

Ceryl Evans - Before Miss Jeanie Dicks flicked the switch – the 1930s domestic electrification project which helped a woman win the contract to electrify Winchester Cathedral against international competition.

In 1931, Miss Jeanie Dicks won her family company, Messrs. Dicks Ltd, the contract to electrify the Deanery in Winchester for Mrs. Phyllis Selwyn and her husband, E Gordon Selwyn, newly appointed cathedral Dean. Introducing electricity into an old, damp, dilapidated house required efficient project management. Miss Dicks rose to the challenge, marrying the requirements of electrifying a domestic home and the official public residence of a senior churchman. She offered a bespoke service, drawing up plans for electrical circuits, designing, ordering or making electrical fittings which enhanced the décor whilst serving the practical needs of a large official household. She built a good working relationship with the couple, protecting Mrs. Selwyn’s wishes against suppliers keen to

dismiss the requirements of a woman which would mean more work for them. This tenacity and loyalty impressed the Dean who was launching a long-term plan for the modernisation of Winchester Cathedral. In 1933, Winchester Cathedral issued a call for tenders for the electric lights and accessory works. Miss Dicks enquired politely about submitting a quote... And so in 1934 Jeanie Dicks came to manage the first electrification of Winchester Cathedral, acquiring an international profile as a “girl engineer” (in her 40s).

Oithane Etayo (University of Warwick) - “Obstacles” leading change: women in food reform through network analysis.

The label of food reform serves as an umbrella term which includes different reform movements concerned with transforming diet systems and standards of preparing food during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including vegetarians, bread reformers, school meals activists, vegans, or anti-vivisection, amongst others. This movement has been argued to facilitate the emergence of discussions about civic and political reforms which affected women’s lives at all levels, including the nourishment of their bodies, allowing them to get “legitimately” involved and publicly campaign for change in an area that was closely related to domesticity and “the private”.

However, while women were campaigners, writers, public speakers, lecturers, organisers, and publishers, they were at the same time “obstacles” for the spread and reproduction of food reform as a daily practice. Analysing the multiple realities of women layered in this heterogeneous and diffuse movement which spanned over many years and sites is complex. In this paper, I attempt to navigate the different roles and conceptions of women in the context of food reform through network analysis of co-occurrences from a carefully curated corpus of food reform texts, which refers back to this heterogeneity, including sources such as articles, papers, letters, manuals, recipe books, monographs, advertisements and lectures.

Laurel Forster (University of Portsmouth) – Self-Sufficiency, Countercultures, and the Dissenting Cookbook.

The 1970s, best remembered by feminist historians for the Women’s Liberation Movement, was, of course, also a decade of other counter-cultural movements in Britain. One of these was self-sufficiency, with numerous ‘how-to’ books, and even a training centre designed to teach people how to live off the land. It offered a self-reliant alternative to city, consumption-driven life. No matter that dreams of the pastoral often fell flat, the idea, if not the actuality, of self-sufficiency, and a related re-imagining of a bucolic alternative to this troubled decade, went on to influence much mainstream culture. Television programmes like *The Good Life* (BBC 1975-8), and its more serious twin, *Survivors* (BBC 1975-7; 2008-10), focused on the implications of a self-sufficient life in suburban and rural locations for women in the patriarchal family. Counter-cultural arguments about farming, food and land use and abuse were made through publications such as *The Ecologist* magazine (1970-). And indeed, feminist writers like Mary Chamberlain in her acclaimed but controversial book, *Fenwomen* (Virago 1975), explored the difficulties of women’s life on the land. This paper will examine the ways in which arguments within and around counter-cultures – particularly self-sufficiency and the green movement as well as feminism – permeated representations of food and cookery on television and in cookbooks from the 1970s. This was often in contradictory ways. For instance, whilst *Spare Rib* and other feminist magazines were encouraging women out of the kitchen, so cookery shows such as the *Farmhouse Kitchen* (YTV/ITV 1971-1990) with its numerous

spin-off cookbooks, appeared to advocate a return to a cosier, 'old-fashioned' self-sufficiency through a rural setting in its staging, and a reminder of a structured domesticity. New methodological approaches to the reading of cookbooks and other media platforms for cookery, have explored how diversity and dissent surface within representations of food. Some critics have used oral testimonies prompted by cookery books to discuss multiculturalism, while others have identified new community cookbooks, necessarily online during COVID. In other contexts, historical cookery books provide fertile ground for discussing print cultures and illustration practices. Moreover, cookbooks are now understood as a cultural lens through which class divisions are exposed, or sexualities explored. In these ways, recent close readings and cultural critiques enable us to understand cookbooks as texts of resistance and even as agents of cultural change.

Matilde Gallardo (Kings College London) - Weaving the past: reminiscences of a weaver's daughter in Edwardian London.

Alice Pike had the wisdom to write down recollections of her life as a child and young adult for her grandchildren. Her notes, slips of paper, photographs and other memorabilia, are a fascinating autobiographical account of domestic life in a Bethnal Green family of silk weavers in the Edwardian and inter-war years. This was the time when the silk industry became almost extinguished in that area of London. In Alice's narrative we see vivid descriptions of her parents' weaving routines and her family's living conditions, including health issues, food habits and the impact of the war on their way of life. Most significantly, we learn about the centrality of Alice's mother to the family's welfare and the household economy. Working class women's autobiographical narratives are unofficial sources of historical knowledge. It can be said that as life-writing narratives unveil the complex interrelationship between the subjective and public spheres, they become mediators between geographical and spatial life experiences and historical facts.

Graeme Gooday and Helen Close (University of Leeds and Women's Engineering Society) - Rethinking the relationship between the Women's Engineering Society and the Electrical Association for Women.

This paper re-investigates the complex relationship between the Women's Engineering Society (WES) founded in 1919, and still running, and the Electrical Association for Women (EAW) founded in 1924, and closed down in 1986. A classic study by Suzette Worden (1989) has identified them as operating on distinct but complementary feminist agendas, with the EAW as a 'splinter' group focused on the elimination of drudgery by domestic technology, contrasting with WES's original focus on promoting professional female participation in engineering. While both organisations were shaped early on by the dynamic agency of Caroline Haslett who helped create thousands of EAW jobs for lecturers and demonstrators, Haslett's sister later highlighted how the EAW's founding arose in part from a controversial rift within WES. We map the evolving nexus between the EAW and WES to show how their divergent agendas were reconciled, focusing on the work of Laura Annie Willson as a professional house builder and Margaret Partridge as a practising electrical engineer focussed on installing new homes. Their activities showed how the promotion of employment of women in engineering was facilitated by the systematic electrification of new housing to optimize women's experience of new electrical technologies, albeit with the EAW losing its feminist agenda in the process.

Isobel Goodman (Cambridge University Library) - Reading between the lines: using mistress/servant book use as a means to understand the relationship dynamics of late medieval households.

Mistress/servant book use (as evidenced by extant manuscripts, inscriptions, illustrations and wills) offers a rare means to explore the little-understood relationship dynamics of late medieval households. References to servants from instructional texts owned by women (such as Christine de Pisan's *Livre des Trois Vertus*, 'How the good wife taught her daughter' and Margaret of York's *Dyalogue de la Ducesse de Bourgogne*) decree how a 'good lady' should manage and nurture her household, both physically and spiritually. However, when these references are considered in conjunction with the wording of mistress-to-servant book inscriptions and bequests, the relationship appears much more reciprocal. Indeed, a lady's wider reputation and spiritual salvation were seemingly determined by her staff, whose shared domestic situation and inferior status offered the perfect formula to provide intercession on her behalf and to disseminate her good name beyond the household (the latter either directly via word-of-mouth or indirectly through charitable bequests and academic sponsorship). Books were evidently key to this relationship, irrespective of literacy, due to the respected authority of the written word in conveying both domestic standards and the 'word of God', their unique intercessory potential as gifts (especially when personalised), and the status they reflected to observers.

Linda Henderson (University of Exeter) - 'To improve the moral habits of young women': Gender and Local Horticultural Shows in the Nineteenth Century.

In the nineteenth century every town and village had its own local horticultural society or cottage garden society (or both) which put on an annual show for cottagers to compete in classes ranging from growing vegetables and fruit to having the cleanest cottage. Local newspaper reports provide rich detail on the classes and prizes won but despite this, little attention has been focused on the experience and involvement of women at these shows. As part of my research, I am compiling a database of local shows reported in *The Bucks Herald* 1820-1920. This database will focus on the gendered spaces of the shows through their physical location (public houses, town halls, open air etc.), the competition classes entered by women and girls and the purpose of those that were restricted to female entrants only, the prizes they won and the importance of these to the household 'economies of makeshifts', and finally, the contribution women made to the shows through the provision of support services such as catering, decoration, and entertainment. Early analysis of these reports indicates that shows organized by village rather than town-based horticultural societies afforded more opportunities for women to compete and engage in their events.

Lyndsey Jenkins (Queen Mary University of London) - Housewives and the House: Women Labour MPs and 'the housewife' in the 1940s and 1950s.

The gender gap in general elections—particularly notable in the immediate post-war period—has led historians to interrogate Labour's apparent recurring failures to successfully appeal to women voters. Yet the Labour Party rarely speaks with one voice—especially on gender. In this paper, I analyse some of the ways that Labour women MPs championed 'the housewife' in the House of Commons in the 1940s and 1950s, raising questions around taxation, pensions, healthcare and the supply and cost of food. This was difficult political territory, as scholars such as James Hinton and Ina

Zweiniger-Bargielowska have shown, given the Housewives League's activities and Conservative eagerness to take up their cause. However, Labour women MPs did not only claim to represent housewives, they proudly asserted that they were housewives, drawing on their own experiences and expertise as they sought to reshape policy and legislation in the housewife's interest. This paper thus argues that elements of the party, if not the government, were actively aware of and responsive to women's concerns, while interrogating the political meanings of 'the housewife' in this period. Serving as a reminder that narrow definitions of feminist activity can obscure more than they reveal, this paper not only contributes to the growing scholarship highlighting women's activism between the first and second waves, but also begins to extend the rich historiography on women and the Labour Party in the first half of the century into the post-war period.

Charlotte Kelsted (European Centre for Palestine Studies) - The Multiplicity of Colonial Intimacy in British Mandate Palestine

Throughout the British Mandate for Palestine (1920-1948), British women travelled to the country as missionaries, teachers, welfare workers, nurses, doctors, journalists and colonial wives. This paper is based on the first extensive history of these women. It uses their correspondence, reports and publications, archived in Britain, Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories, to show that in some contexts, anthropologist Ann Laura Stoler's notion of 'colonial intimacy' needs to be pluralised. An exploration of the intimate spheres of home and family show that in Mandate Palestine, British women's colonial intimacies were multiple: there existed an intrusive intimacy of condescension towards Palestinian Arabs, but a distant intimacy of respect towards the Jewish community. This was based on discourses of difference constructed by British women and underpinned by hierarchies of child-rearing, domesticity, agency and modernity, with the Jewish community typically placed further up these social scales than the Palestinian Arab community. This paper establishes a new framework for grappling with the nature of women's interventions in both colonial and settler colonial contexts. Although it is Palestine-based and focused on British women, it makes an important and original contribution to understandings of women and gender in empire more broadly.

Alice Krzanich (University of Edinburgh) - Female Domestic Servants and the Law in Early Nineteenth-Century Scotland.

My proposed presentation is based upon my PhD research, which looks at the law regarding female domestic servants in the period c 1790 – c 1850 in Scotland. Scots law at this time included rules for masters and servants entering a service contract; the respective rights and responsibilities of the parties under the contract; and the rules for dissolving a service contract. My research seeks to understand the influence of class and gender upon this body of law as it applied to female domestic servants. As such, while this research involves the analysis of legal doctrine, it also relies upon Scottish women's history and gender history to understand how class and gender could shape master-servant law. It is consequently an example of women's legal history that draws upon a number of sources to understand the historical relationship between women and the law.

Tamisan Latherow (University of Reading) - 'Yes, ma'am': Instructresses and the role of 'Rural Domestic Economy' courses in Berkshire, 1920-1950.

The early 1900s saw an increasing interest in women's education and training, predominantly focusing on domestic food production to bolster national reserves during the World Wars. By 1920, female instructresses at the newly established county agricultural colleges combined with demonstrators from the various Women's Institutes and organizations were organized throughout Berkshire to become the testing ground for new courses in 'Rural Domestic Economy' which focused on 'the lighter branches of agriculture', including poultry and dairy keeping and the new technologies of bottling and canning. Utilizing county agricultural instructional records and committee meeting minutes, along with photographic and newspaper records, we uncover a world where female experts trained thousands of farm wives, processed tons of food through newly developed scientific methods for food preservation and safety processes and became the gold standard for agricultural education for women and girls around the country.

Paul Merchant (National Life Stories, British Library) - Oral histories of women in British farming, 1950-2000.

This paper draws on detailed life story interviews with farmers, landowners and advisers – recorded recently by National Life Stories at the British Library – to explore the longstanding and overlooked work of women in British farming in the second half of the twentieth century. In particular, it examines two kinds of evidence in the interviews. First, the narratives of women who developed successful farming businesses in order to make a living, keep family farms alive, follow ambitions, and to contribute to the rising output of British agriculture in the period. Second, the references in other interviews – including those with male interviewees – to women in farming: well-known female farmers in particular villages and districts, wives, mothers, daughters. The interviews reveal the diversity of roles women took on in farming and their centrality to farming businesses and communities. They also point to ways in which women negotiated their identities as farmers in the context of prevailing, gendered norms.

Anna Muggeridge (University of Worcester) - 'Work in the Housewives' Service, just like in the home, seems never to be done': the home, the neighbourhood, and the housewife in the Second World War.

This paper considers the Housewives' Service, a subsection of the Women's Voluntary Service (WVS), in the Second World War. Established in 1938 to encourage women into ARP work, the WVS quickly became a wide-ranging organisation whose volunteers did everything from organising billets for evacuees to driving ambulances through air raids. The Housewives' Service was a subsection of the WVS specifically designed to allow women who were otherwise tied to the home to volunteer with the WVS. It was particularly effective in drawing working-class women, who often had to balance paid work, housework, and any voluntary activity, into the WVS, as voluntary work was done on a very local level. The work of the Housewives' Service was usually domestic in nature, with volunteers essentially undertaking housework in the community. This paper, which focuses specifically on the Black Country, will argue that the Housewives' Service went some way towards acknowledging the value of women's domestic labour. In enabling women to volunteer in and immediately around their own homes, it also considers how the Housewives' Service contributed to the ways in which the

boundary between public and private spaces was stretched, challenged and reworked during wartime.

Victoria Phillips (London School of Economics) - Nourishing Revolt: Women and Food from the West for East Germany, June 1953.

In June 1953, riots broke out in East Berlin: workers protested shortages of basic goods and increased production quotas. Soviet tanks poured into the city; protests spread to the countryside. Yet in Washington, DC, plans for the uprising had already started. With the death of Stalin in March, and women striking in Bulgaria for food in May, the Psychological Strategy Board went to work to inspire uprisings with strikes at the senses of citizens with balloons dropping leaflets, radio broadcasts mixing news with jazzy tunes, and food: cherished lard, meat, snow-white flour, the exotic colour of canned peaches. Those with East German identity cards could travel through Berlin from East to West to get these "Eisenhower Packets," named for the US president. Women hid food under their babies in perambulators as they made their way east. Hidden in plain sight, the sister of his Secretary of State, Eleanor Dulles, began her professional tenure in Berlin with the riot planning and food distribution, becoming known as "The Mother of Berlin." The focus on Dulles, her coordinated work in Washington, and her timely arrival in Berlin for the uprising, allows categories including gender and Cold War power, soft and hard, to inform studies of women, food and homes during the Cold War.

Bethany Rebisz (University of Reading) - 'Oh, come and see the merry-go-round': Reconfiguring and Preserving Domestic Craft and Authority, 1950s Kenya.

From 1954, 1.2 million Kenyans were forcibly uprooted from their homes and resettled into fortified villages. The vast majority of those removed were women and their children. Since 1952, the British colonial government of Kenya had waged a brutal military campaign against Kenyan's fighting for freedom from their colonial oppressors. With Kenyan women witnessing their homes burned to the ground, they were required to rebuild and reconfigure their lives on new land, guarded and controlled by the colonial authorities. In these sites, the British introduced community development and 'rehabilitation' schemes to encourage women and girls to embrace domestic roles in support of colonial visions of social order. While colonial records praise the work of settler women for 'advancing' their Kenyan counterparts through home economics training, the testimonies of Kenyan women tell a different story.

This paper will explore the dichotomy Kenyan women faced to reconfigure but preserve their domestic craft and household authority amidst the war raging around them. Using a 'merry-go-round' method, Kenyan women pulled together their resources and knowledge and took turns to rebuild each woman's home. Women re-negotiated their domestic practices to adapt to the challenges they faced in sustaining their families in a new environment with limited resources. This paper will demonstrate the conflicting narratives presented of Kenyan women by those working with the colonial authorities and Kenyan women themselves.

Emily Rhodes (University of Cambridge) - Female Petitioning to Monarchs and the Criminal Process in England, 1660-1702.

The British State Papers Online archive contains dozens of petitions written by Englishwomen of all classes between 1660-1702 to the English monarchs Charles II, James II and William and Mary. These women were petitioning to secure pardons for themselves or their convict husbands, sons and brothers. Summarising the work of my MPhil thesis, this paper will provide an introduction to these remarkable sources and insert them into the narrative of late seventeenth century petitioning. It will consider the petitions of two women of the era. The first petition would be used to provide a general overview of the practice and how a petition was considered by the monarch and court. The second petition will be one dealing with a case where the petitioner's husband was convicted of high treason. Here, I will demonstrate the differences between high treason petitions and ones for less political crimes, and how women had to deftly balance fighting for their husband with not implicating themselves in the crime. Overall, this paper will examine one of the only ways in which common early modern English women had contact with their monarch and expose how these women considered this 'relationship'.

Iain Riddell - Grampian female farmers, role models, status and motivation: A sub-regional network analysis of kinswomen.

Studies of Grampian's agricultural and socioeconomic development have placed to one side the history of farming women as the tenancy holder, a pattern prevalent within farming historiography; the focus instead being on the gendered sociocultural roles of wife, mother and daughter. With a dearth of actor produced records, Aberdeenshire's general population record base supports a longitudinal analysis and appreciation of the kinswomen role model for female crofters, peasant and capitalist farmers. The reassembly, visualisation and contextualisation of the enumeration, BMD, wills and testaments alongside the occasional newspaper notation enables the creation of relationship and encounter networks within and between the sprawling parishes of north-east Scotland. These networks identify the presence of women principal farmers within micro-localities and their ability to function as matrifocal reciprocal role models for their neighbours and relatives during and post their tenure. The reconstructed record base provides detail as to the motivation background and objectives of female farmers through assessment of the familial circumstances. The paper works with anthropological and continental European theories of kinship to extract from the British record base signals of mutuality of being across gynocentric networks to expose new data on both the Grampian rural society and the experience of women farmers.

Diana Russell (University of Worcester) - Healing Hands: the business of the masseuse in Bath c. 1911-1926.

The city of Bath has always been renowned for its connections with health and healing from its beginnings as a Roman spa through to the present day. Through an investigation of the businesses of masseuses in private practice this ignite talk considers the degree to which female participation in private health care provision was affected by the First World War, using data retrieved from the Bath trade directories between 1911 and 1926. It will explore the numbers of women engaged in the private practice of massage and suggest that although during the First World War the numbers did not rise this was not the case in the early 1920s. The First World War had brought changing attitudes to the use of massage as a physical therapy which offered greater opportunities in the profession.

This talk forms part of my wider doctoral research on the effects of the First World War on female-run small businesses between 1911 and 1926.

Büşra Sati (Binghamton University) - Women Workers, Mothers & Labour Unions: Transnational Women's Labour History during the late 1970s.

This project focuses on the changing ideology and discourses of rival trade unions in addressing the "woman question" during the late 1970s in Turkey. This history of intersection between gender and working-class organizing has been overlooked by the left scholarship on the one hand and liberal feminist scholarship on the other. My paper addresses this gap in the literature by highlighting gender and class concurrently through the transnational development of gender politics in labor organizations. Between 1975-1980, the politics of gender, and specifically motherhood, became another pillar in trade union competition. Following the influences of the Soviet gender regime and the US labor in this transformation, this paper highlights a forgotten period of union organizing and locates it within the history of labor and women's movements at the national and global scale.

Samita Sen (University of Cambridge) - Women, Work and Domesticity: Eastern India in Historical Perspective

In India, women's workforce participation rates have been historically low. Within India, however, there is considerable variation in this regard. From the 1980s, feminist scholars have attempted to analyse long-term patterns and variations in gender division of labour. In the attendant debates what has emerged most strongly is the trope of invisibility. Many of the observed variations, national and regional, represent differences in valuation and measurement and not only the quantum of work women actually perform. In eastern India, for instance, where workforce participation rates have been found to be the lowest, the ideology of domesticity has also been powerful and pervasive. Some women, who have always worked hard and long, had their labours invisibilised because they themselves and most of their work were hidden in the home. New research is drawing attention to the figure of the young bride, labouring from dawn to dusk, subject to near-absolute familial authority. Her 'domestic' work spanned cooking, cleaning and collecting water, but also field labour, home-based wage work, extended domestic work such as cattle-rearing and vegetable-growing, subsistence work such as food processing, fuel gathering, childbirth, childcare and myriad emotional labour in the family. In this paper, I will explore the family-household economy within which this maid-of-all-work with infinitely elastic supply of labour is located. It has been noted that village exogamy and virilocality play a part, removing the young bride from her natal home and kin-network to be isolated in the marital household. In addition, there is no exit from marriage, its irrevocability inviting comparison with forms of bondage. Taking a long-term view of social change from colonial to post-colonial Bengal, the paper will discuss the continued role of the household as a key determinant in labour arrangements, for men too but overwhelmingly so for women. In the late nineteenth century, with the destruction of traditional industry, women became more dependent on the family for access to crucial resources, such as land. Equally, spiralling rent and revenue demands made small peasant households more dependent on women's unpaid work. This mutual dependence was a crucial aspect of the colonial economy. Given that Bengal has seen steady deindustrialisation from the 1970s, the coordinates of domestic femininity continue to subsume the economic activities women. This paper will map a few

aspects of change and continuity in the long term in the pattern of rural women's work in eastern India.

Charlotte Sendall (University of Gloucestershire) - From Wartime Work to Domesticity: How Prefabricated Houses Persuaded Women Back Home in Post War Britain.

This paper will explore the building of prefabricated houses in the post Second World War period and will focus on the experiences of domesticity within these houses. Britain in the Second World War experienced substantial bombings from German airstrikes, with over a million houses destroyed or damaged. The destruction left many of the civilian's homes uninhabitable, resulting in a national housing crisis. The Labour government passed the Temporary Housing Act in 1944, which would produce 500,000 prefabricated houses. The government anticipated the possibility that the return of soldiers from the war, would result in the rise of unemployment. To entice women to go back home from working in the factories during the war, the government designed prefabs with new mod-cons. The design of prefabs with modern conveniences such as; fitted kitchens, refrigerators, spacious fitted cupboards, indoor toilet and a bathroom with heated towel rail were new experience for the average housewife. This paper will examine how new mod-cons changed domesticity for the working-class housewife.

Ellen Sharman (University of Oxford) - "woman ... is bewitchingly lovely in the very act of eating": the beauty of greed in Elizabeth Robins Pennell's *The Feasts of Autolycus: The Diary of a Greedy Woman* (1896).

Feasts is a largely overlooked piece of food literature by Elizabeth Robins Pennell, an American biographer, food columnist, and cycling advocate, who lived in London. Pennell's 'Guide' is striking for its original and creative vision of femininity centred around pleasurable eating. Historians have extensively analysed the New Woman and her activism in this period, but the importance of food has rarely featured in those debates. Yet the ideas of restraint, sacrifice and duty which characterised contemporary norms of femininity has serious consequences for women's relationship with food, while the New Woman herself was often more associated with austere intellectualism than with the sensuality of eating. It is therefore essential to ensure that the study of New Women appreciates that some feminists demanded the right to enjoy corporeal life and all its pleasures. Pennell argued that there was power to be found in eating and created a new model of gastronomic femininity. By arguing that food enhanced the beauty of femininity, she challenged Victorian stereotypes of greedy women as crude and immoral. This paper thus demonstrates how Pennell created an alternative New Woman by utilising the "dormant" power of food.

Erin Shearer (University for Reading) - 'She put arsenic in the bread for the family to eat.' Enslaved women, poison and revenge in the US antebellum South.

Southern plantations became sites of significant conflict between white planters and their enslaved property, as enslaved communities opposed and resisted their enslavement in a variety of ways. Works Progress Administration (WPA) interviews with formerly enslaved people studied in conjunction with judicial records illuminate how bondswomen utilised their enforced domestic servitude to slaveowners as an opportunity for resistance, through the poisoning of the slaveholding family via creative and subversive methods. Through the

examination of *how* and *why* bondswomen utilised the deadly weapon of poison, this paper will highlight the ways in which enslaved women deliberately transformed the genteel domestic sphere of the 'Big House' into one of chaos, violence and death through the poisoning of food and drink white men, women and children consumed.

An interrogation of female slaves' deployment of poison within the white domestic sphere of the 'Big House' through the prism of violence and resistance, will complicate and highlight our understanding of the ways in which resistance and power was renegotiated within slavery and hence help reconceptualise the gendered boundaries we have drawn around strategies for survival.

Carrie de Silva (Harper Adams University) - Pollie Hirst Simpson (1871-1947), the first agricultural adviser to the Women's Institute: a life of public service.

Mary Hirst Simpson, known as Pollie, was the daughter of a provincial solicitor and his wife. She enjoyed a financially comfortable and socially secure small town life of late Victorian middle England, in Higham Ferrers, Northamptonshire being a keen horsewoman, great lover of dogs, a hockey and tennis player and gardener. This paper explores Simpson's role and influence in the Women's Institute in the context, also, of how the WI sought to develop women's confidence, capabilities and involvement in public life. Simpson's public roles started in the village, and she gained a grounding in local posts which might be said to be typical, at the time, of many a middle-class woman. After World War I Simpson's work, which had extended to county level and beyond, was recognised with an MBE for civilian war service, indicating that it was rather more than 'typical'. Her organisational skills were noticed by the swiftly developing countrywomen's organisation, the Women's Institute (WI), and various county and regional roles were undertaken. Outside the WI, Simpson served on the County Agricultural Committee and governing body of the Moulton Farm Institute (the Northamptonshire agricultural college) from 1920-47, and these agricultural interests led to her appointment as the National Federation of Women's Institutes' Agricultural Organiser in 1925. This paper will draw out both a personal biography of Pollie Simpson through her roles (paid and unpaid), and the infrastructure and remit of organisations which sought to develop women's abilities, and sense of entitlement to undertake such roles.

Florence Smith (University of Oxford) - 'Learning and Living: Women's Experiences at Coeducational Oxford Colleges'.

My paper 'Learning and Living: Women's Experiences at Coeducational Oxford Colleges' is based on research for my DPhil thesis. The thesis uses an oral history methodology to acknowledge the individual voices and experiences of the first women to attend coeducational colleges at the University of Oxford in 1974. I use women's accounts of their experiences to examine the concept that coeducation represented an easily definable 'progressive' move towards equality between the sexes at the University of Oxford. The paper I present will focus specifically on the different forms of sexism that women experienced while at college, evidence which thoroughly challenges Nancy Weiss Malkiel's assertion that there is 'no evidence that captures sexist behaviour' in the early years of coeducation at Oxford. However, the paper also explores how the women's interpretation and reaction to such behaviour was often coloured by their contemporary understanding of feminism, women's liberation and equality.

Michelle Staff (The Australian National University) - Doing Feminist Internationalism at Home: Australia and Britain, 1919–1939.

For interwar feminist internationalists, ‘home’ was a word with multiple meanings. While it was often used to refer to activists’ countries of origin, it was also used to describe the domestic, private settings of women’s lives. ‘The home’ represented a source of repression, a place where husbands beat wives and women were confined to household drudgery. At the same time, it was an important space in which activist work could occur. This paper explores how ‘the home’ provided a site for the development of feminist internationalist thought and praxis. Drawing on the lives and archives of several Australian and British women, it shows how ideas about transnational cooperation and international governance were developed not only in public arenas such as conferences, but also in the private spaces of women’s homes. Letter writing, newspaper reading, and encounters with other feminists all frequently occurred in domestic contexts. Individuals’ capacity to use their home for such matters varied, a fact that helped shape the class and racial boundaries of the movement. In the context of great concern over the rights of wives and mothers and debates about women’s unique qualities, such acts represented subversive uses of space and helped shape interwar feminist internationalism.

Ana Teresa (University of Lisbon) - The Female Domestic Daily Life in the 17th Century Goese Convent.

Despite being tutored by man, nunneries were established as places of excellence for the female experience in the modern era. Extremely hierarchical and standardized, the female convent was a kingdom managed and administered by women, and each position brought with it a possibility of exercising power. In this communication we intend to understand the daily lives of the nuns and workers at the convent of Santa Mónica of Goa in the 17th century, questioning how the house was managed, how the convent’s green spaces were used, who was in charge of taking care of these spaces, who performed domestic tasks of the convent as a “home” for those women, among other issues, focused on the “home-food-farm” axis. To this end, we will use the texts of Friar Diogo de Santana (1636) and Friar Agostinho de Santa Maria (1699), who left us excellent descriptions of the conventual space and of the feminine daily life that unfolded between those walls, as well as the “Constitutions of Santa Monica” (1606), which regulate the daily lives of these women and allow us to understand the domestic dynamics of the same.

Lynne Wainwright (Liverpool John Moores University) - Using Domestic Science Training: Teachers, Wives and Mothers.

This paper will look at how students from the F.L. Calder Teacher Training College of Domestic Science 1915-1925 implemented and developed their training throughout their lives. Using case studies and a cradle to grave approach I will show the students’ lives through their roles as teachers, wives and mothers, as well as showing their wider contributions in society. One of the case studies that I will present will be that of Jane Ellen Williams who trained at the college between 1916 and 1919. I will show her educational experience and how this affected her life thereafter, using her school record as a platform to explore her educational experience and genealogical records to explore her background and personal life. Materials held in archives at Liverpool John Moores University provide insight into Jane’s life as a wife and mother including a pocket book of household expenditures. I will critically consider the changing social landscape and the impact of this on

students' lives, with particular focus on marriage and domesticity. Alongside case studies, data will be provided on the lives of the wider cohort of 200 students to provide a clearer understanding of how they developed and used their domestic science training.

Cherish Watton (University of Cambridge) - Materialising memories of Home Front farming in Land Girls' scrapbooks.

During the First and Second World Wars, a new group of female farm labourers emerged under the auspices of the Women's Land Army (WLA) to increase Britain's food production. This paper turns to a much-neglected body of sources, Land Girls' scrapbooks, to uncover a more detailed understanding of women's personal memories of agricultural labour. Cognizant of their unprecedented roles, women used scissors and glue to fashion newspaper clippings, photographs, and letters into a unique record to document their new roles as agricultural workers. The placement and arrangement of this material provides new insights into how women's personal memories of war compare with the broader cultural memory of the WLA. The second part of this paper turns to the more recent past, utilising women's scrapbooks recording their attendance at reunions to consider what they reveal about women's reunion cultures. How did women continue to shape the memory of their wartime work several decades later? In sum, this paper builds on several strands of recent scholarship to spotlight the nexus between farming, material culture, and memory.

Clare Wichbold and Elizabeth Semper O'Keefe - Suffrage, social reform and sheep's head broth: the life and work of Constance Radcliffe Cooke.

Constance Radcliffe Cooke (1877-1963) was the eldest daughter of anti-suffragist MP Charles Walwyn Radcliffe Cooke. She is best known locally for extensive studies on her family's ancestral home, Hellens Manor, Much Marcle, in Herefordshire. Recent research of her previously uncatalogued personal papers at Herefordshire Archives and Records Centre has uncovered that Constance was a very active member of the WSPU. She was also a passionate advocate for the home-making schemes in South Wales run by Miss E P Hughes, and worked at Elsie Randall's Cookery School in Bournemouth, describing herself in the 1911 Census as a "social reformer". Constance campaigned during the First World War about the issue of spiralling food costs for women and families on the Home Front, and the availability of good quality rations for soldiers both at home and abroad. She used her pre-war experiences of continental cooking boxes to produce her own version, and her book "The Cooking Box: How to Make and Use It; Together with Eighty Economical Recipes Adapted for Fireless Cookery" was published in 1917. It sold thousands of copies and was reprinted in WW2. Inspired by Constance, her cooking box has been recreated and tested using some of the original recipes.

Jane Whittle (University of Exeter) – Women's work in English agriculture and food processing 1500-1750.

This talk begins by presenting an overview of women's involvement in the production of food in early modern England using new evidence taken from court documents. This illuminates the range of tasks related to food production and the extent to which they were undertaken by women and men. It then focuses on three types of female worker: the wage labourer, the housewife, and the businesswoman. The types of work each undertook are explored, using examples of specific women from early modern

England. Topics covered include agricultural fieldwork, livestock farming, dairying, vegetable gardening, the raising of pigs and poultry, malting, brewing, and the retailing of food and drink. Evidence is drawn from court depositions, probate inventories and household accounts. It is argued that women's involvement in the food economy was profound but has often been overlooked as a consequence of women's activities being less obviously documented than those of men and as a result of historians' misconceptions.

Jo Willett - Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's Italian Smallholding Experiment.

This talk examines Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's time in the Po Valley 1746—56 and will focus on the following:

Background

- Her circumstances. A woman in late 50s, early 60s alone in war-torn Europe, having left her husband for a relationship which then failed.
- Her background re horticulture and viticulture. Grew up in stately homes, observing but not participating. 20 years in Twickenham where gardening became fashionable.
- Financial means
- Ex-husband one of wealthiest men in Britain. He sent her an annual allowance, so financially secure.
- But Italian nobleman she had met was trying to defraud her throughout.

Specific activities

- silk worms
- dairy
- custards, cheesecakes and mince pies - claimed she brought knowledge to Italians
- vineyard
- fresh fish from river

Visual aid

- Her garden plan.

SWOT chart of the project

- Strengths - local people, healthy diet, introducing recipes to the area.
- Weaknesses - eccentricity, lack of knowledge.
- Opportunities - purpose, status, connections. Increased knowledge.
- Threats - underlying ownership of land in dispute, tied her to the area when her aim was to get back to live in Venice.