



From Rationing to Reformation: a 1940s Study Day

Saturday 20 July 2019

9.00am Arrival, tea and coffee

9.30am **Make do and mend**
Meridith Towne, Costume Historian and Dressmaker

Explore Mrs Sew and Sews magical world of Make Do and Mend in this inspiring talk about the women who used the most innovative, even devious, methods to maintain a fashionable wardrobe in wartime Britain.

About the Presenter

Meridith is a professional dressmaker and costume historian. A graduate of Archaeology from Durham University, Meridith swapped her trowel for a sewing needle at The Northern College of Costume in York, training to make historical costume. When not on tour with The History Wardrobe, she makes historical costumes for museum and re-enactment use, or unique dresses for weddings and parties, based on her growing collection of original items. She also works with the Royal Armouries in Leeds maintaining their costume and presents her own series of lively costume talks covering 200 years of women's history. You may have spotted her recently on the BBC's Great Victorian Sewing Bee.

10.15am **“Doing your bit” in the Black Country: Saving with the Post Office during the Second World War and beyond.**
Dr Rosalind Watkiss Singleton

The National Savings Movement was established in 1916 to encourage the British people to 'Save and Prosper'. Local volunteers, supported by national committees and civil servants, sold a range of products through the Post Office Savings Bank. The need for investment in government savings schemes escalated in 1939 with the War Savings Campaign, and a variety of strategies were used to encourage participation. Exhorted by advertisements in magazines and newspapers, encouraged by long service awards, and employer incentives, the schemes were extremely successful. By 1943, under the leadership of Sir Robert Kindersley, there were almost three hundred thousand individual savings groups in schools, factories and within communities. With increasing numbers of men serving overseas, women played a major role within the movement - serving as committee members, savings group secretaries, collectors and as individual savers. However, although patriotic fervour undoubtedly played a role in women's contributions to the war effort their motives for saving were mixed. Oral testimony from people in the Black Country, will examine the ways in which the National Savings Movement encouraged investment in government schemes and

their response, which was engendered by national pride, the wish to contribute financially to the war effort, and the desire to demonstrate that the family was respectable, financially stable, and aspirational.

About the Presenter

Rosalind Watkiss Singleton holds a PhD from the University of Wolverhampton, which utilised oral testimony to examine change and continuity in post-war working-class societies. She works as an independent researcher and is also employed as a lecturer in Social History and Politics at the University of Wolverhampton. She has also been involved several community projects training volunteers in oral history techniques.

11.00am Break

11.30am **Appointed Day: The Arrival of the NHS in the Black Country**

Dr George Gosling

Britain changed on the 5 July 1948, and the Black Country was not outside that change. This was the 'appointed day' on which a whole raft of Labour's post war legislation came into force, including reforms to pensions, social security and the creation of the National Health Service. This was a moment of totemic change, but it was not Year Zero for healthcare. This talk will consider the impact of the appointed day on healthcare in the Black Country and beyond, for patients, health workers and the wider community.

About the Presenter

Dr George Gosling is a social, cultural and political historian of modern Britain. He is the author of *Payment and Philanthropy in British Healthcare, 1918-48* (Manchester University Press, 2017) and worked on the 'Cultural History of the NHS' project at the University of Warwick before taking up a lectureship at the University of Wolverhampton. He is on the advisory board for a number of heritage projects, including the Infant Welfare Clinic element of the Black Country Living Museum's Forging Ahead project.

12.15pm Lunch

1.00pm **Canals in the 1940s**

Rebecca Wilton, BCLM Boat Demonstrator & Local Historian

2.15pm **Bostin' Fittle: Rationing and British Restaurants**

Clare Weston and Simon Briercliffe, BCLM Researchers

3.00pm Break

3.15pm **Women's Voluntary Service (WVS)**

Anna Muggeridge

4.00pm Questions and finish