

Call for Papers

Conference

Moving, Teaching, Inspiring: The Power of Place & Past in the Future of Adult Learning



Keynote Speaker:

Prof. John Field

Prof. Emeritus
Lifelong Learning,
University of
Stirling

Keynote Speaker:

Simon Murray

NT Senior Director
of Strategy,
Curatorship &
External Affairs

23-24 June 2016, Attingham Park, Shropshire

**Organised by The University of Nottingham, School of Education
& the National Trust, Attingham Park**

In the second decade of the 21st century, British adult education is characterised by diversity, insecurity and informality. With provision mainly self-funded, organisations are re-thinking their missions, target audiences and modes of approach – while trying to hold on to core values.

This conference, organised jointly by the University of Nottingham and the National Trust, will explore some key characteristics of 20th century adult education and lifelong learning and consider their continuing presence and relevance.

The Place. The conference will be held at Attingham Park, a location of great significance in adult education history. For thirty years after the Second World War it housed a residential college for adults: the Shropshire Adult

Education College. Short-term residential colleges were an important experiment in the social history of education, and under the spiritual and charismatic leadership of Sir George Trevelyan (warden 1948-71), Attingham housed arguably the most influential of these. Its significance was local, national, and international. The conference will be held on the 40th anniversary of its closure.

The conference will consider the significance of particular 'places' in people's learning experiences, the role of the residential experience in adult learning, the role of large country houses in public education, and the future of adult education more generally. It will also consider the National Trust's role in engaging people with heritage, and how rich lifelong learning can be accessible to all.

Space & its Role. Stimulating debate and creating courses in pioneering areas, the college at Attingham changed lives, spawned national conservation movements and aimed to democratise learning and access to ‘culture’ across social classes. Its curriculum, covering areas such as the Human Situation and Problems of the Adolescent in Modern Society, as well as Music, the Arts and Drama, conveys the post-war sense of moral and philosophical urgency.

The college is central to the story of Attingham itself and, as one of Britain’s great country houses, negotiated the uncertainty of the post-war years. As an inspirational, almost spiritual, place, many students found it provided space for life-changing experiences. Trevelyan strongly believed that the individuals who attended the *‘eclectic, boundary-spanning and sometimes controversial college courses were not only entitled but obliged to play a part in shaping the world around them’*.

The Project. The conference is linked to a collaborative doctoral research project on the history and role of the college, supported by the University of Nottingham, the National Trust, and the Arts and Humanities Research Council. With a strong visitor engagement remit, it is exploring, recording, sharing and discussing human stories of adult education, as well as examining big themes such as the democratisation of knowledge and values of community.

Sharon Clancy, the Doctoral Researcher, will participate in the conference, providing insights formally and informally into the part it played in adult learning. For Trevelyan, *‘emotional resonance’*, was crucial. Sharon sees this as still *‘powerful in the college context’*.

‘There is a strong sense amongst many people that the post war educational and welfare movements, movements of reconstruction and democracy, have been replaced by something much more instrumental and monetised. The debate and discussion which took place at the college is a microcosm of that whole movement and the debate needs to happen again about where we go from here.’

The National Trust was founded in 1895 ‘for the benefit of the people’. The twin benefits it offers – of spiritual renewal through contact with natural beauty and understanding through history – are today more in demand than ever. By providing experiences at special places that move, teach and inspire, the Trust seeks to remain meaningful and relevant in people’s lives and to change how they care for and shape the places where they live.

Sir George Trevelyan said:

‘Attingham should be a cultural centre for everybody, for all classes ... no-one need be deterred by the feeling that he or she is not a scholar ... why shouldn’t we use our country houses ... as cultural centres, not for the upper classes, but for all classes..?’

Proposals are invited (for academic papers, presentations, workshops, symposia or case studies) on any topic related to these themes, including:

public pedagogy; the democratisation of knowledge; adult education colleges and their role, past, present and future; the role of place and space in learning; residential adult education; spiritual renewal through access to beauty and history; instruction and self-improvement; learning and the historic environment; etc.

Proposals (not more than 300 words) should be submitted to: Attingham2016@nottingham.ac.uk by 31st January 2016. For more information please contact Attingham2016@nottingham.ac.uk