

WHOSE LANDSCAPES? ONLINE SYMPOSIUM

Wednesday 8 September 2021, 2pm-5pm

The Museum of English Rural Life, University of Reading



Demonstration, Sunnyside, Bradford, 1930, OSS lantern slide collection, MERL, SR OSS/PH5/J51

The Open Spaces Society is Britain's oldest national conservation body, founded in 1865 as the Commons Preservation Society. <https://www.oss.org.uk/>

The OSS collection at The Museum of English Rural Life includes over 1000 lantern slides from the period 1900 to 1940, and late 19th century legal case material from their campaigns to keep footpaths and access open to commons and other sites of natural beauty. For more information on the collection, go to:

<https://merl.reading.ac.uk/collections/open-spaces-society/>

As 2020-21 OSS Fellow at MERL, Dr Katrina Navickas is working on the contexts and connections of this archive material.

These are some of the central themes arising from the images:

- Access to river and waterway towpaths
- Woods and silviculture - ancient woods and Forestry Commission plantations
- Amenity and natural beauty in landscape preservation
- A North-South divide in preservation priorities?
- Prioritising people or nature in preservation?
- Rural modernism, urbanism and infrastructure

Symposium and call for submissions:

This half-day symposium will explore these themes and sources from the OSS collection. It will offer a range of short talks, discussion, and an opportunity to engage with the images in a 'find the location' challenge. It will be of interest to historians, cultural geographers, landscape conservationists, and anyone seeking to know more about the OSS collection.

Contributors can draw on a wealth of related material in the MERL Library and Archive. Learn more here: <https://collections.reading.ac.uk/collections-overview/themes-and-strengths/landscape-environment-and-rural-life/>

We are now calling for short papers or creative submissions, especially in response to the themes outlined. The focus is on countryside preservation and access in 20th century Britain, but comparative and international perspectives are also welcome.

There is space for up to 5 papers of 15 minutes each, plus practical and creative workshop sessions on the image collection.

To offer a paper or creative response, contact:

Dr Katrina Navickas, k.navickas@herts.ac.uk by 1 July 2021.

For more information on the project, see <http://historyofpublicspace.uk/my-oss-fellowship-at-merl-2021/>

For updates, follow @katrinanavickas on Twitter.

Booking details will be available via The MERL and Eventbrite soon.