

---

## 2.5 New green spaces: landscapes of remembrance, recreation and reconstruction in twentieth-century England and Wales Room 203

*Convener: Clare Griffiths*

*Chair: Paul Brassley*

### 2.51 Keith Grieves – Commemorating the fallen in open spaces

In the Great War military encroachments on open spaces despoiled the countryside. Defence of the Realm legislation undercut the Open Spaces Act 1906 and ‘beauty spots’ were endangered by temporary hutments, telegraph poles, timber-felling and new wheat fields. These scenic settings, mobilised in 1914 as a ‘country worth fighting for’, sometimes became the subject of land purchase schemes in 1919 in memory of the fallen. In the war’s aftermath places of great natural beauty were rediscovered and rededicated as permanent useful memorials in local preservationist campaigns which were suggestive of a variegated Blighty. The richly-textured processes of reassessing the value of open spaces in the era of two world wars offer insights into the persistence of place-related identity, the democratisation of access to panoramic views as social gains, the rendering of rural landscapes historic and thoughts of home among soldiers. In relation to these themes of analysis selected debates which interwove beauty and utility to protect common land, construct recreation grounds, acquire hilltops and provide gardens as war memorials will be evaluated.

**Keith Grieves** is Professor in the School of Education at Kingston University. His many publications focus in particular on rural communities and landscapes in the early twentieth century and on the impact of war. He is the author of *The Politics of Manpower, 1914–1918* (1987), *Sir Eric Geddes: business and government in war and peace* (1989), and *Sussex in the First World War* (2004), and recent published essays include ‘The propinquity of place: home, landscape and soldier poets of the Great War’, in Jessica Meyer, ed., *British popular culture and the First World War* (2008) and ‘War comes to the fields: sacrifice, localism and ploughing up the English countryside in 1917’, in Ian F. W. Beckett, ed., *1917: beyond the Western Front* (2008). He is a member of the committee for the Inter-War Rural History Research Group.

### 2.52 Clare Griffiths – Democratic parklands: writing golf courses into the English landscape

In early twentieth-century England, golf courses were a new type of green space. The period from the 1890s onwards was marked by a dramatic expansion in the construction of golf courses in the English countryside. They presented a significant intervention in the landscape, creating quasi-rural environments defined by modern, urban and suburban cultures. Some saw their potential as a public amenity and a restraint on urban sprawl, but this positive verdict on the contribution of golf courses to national life was undermined by other concerns: issues of access, the artificiality of these new sporting parklands and the diversion of land from productive, agricultural use. This paper considers the golf course’s status in the landscape before the Second World War and discusses the social and aesthetic impact of this novel use of land.

**Clare Griffiths** is Senior Lecturer in the Department of History at the University of Sheffield. She was the Sir John Higgs Fellow at the Museum of English Rural Life during 2008–09, working on a project on the images of British farmers during and after the Second World War, one of the outcomes of which will be an exhibition at the Museum in autumn 2010. Her publications include *Labour and the Countryside: the politics of rural Britain 1918–1939* (2007) and *Classes, Cultures and Politics. Essays for Ross McKibbin* (forthcoming 2010), co-edited with James Nott and William Whyte. She has published articles in *History Workshop Journal*, *Rural History* and *Politix* and a number of reviews for the arts pages of the *Times Literary Supplement*. Recent essays include ‘Socialism and the land question: public ownership and control in Labour Party policy, 1918–1950s’, in Matthew Cragoe and Paul Readman, eds., *The land question in Britain 1750–1950* (2010). She is a member of the committee for the Inter-war Rural History Research Group and was on the steering group for the AHRC-funded network on ‘The Landscape and Environment of Inter-war England’ (2006–08).

### 2.53 Keith Halfacree – Getting it together in the countryside? Revisiting artistic back-to-the-land experiments of the 1970s

This paper stems from a broader body of work examining various manifestations of attempts to go ‘back-to-the-land’ and adopt a more rural and place-based everyday existence, both historical and contemporary. It will examine what we know about the (in)famous flowering of such experimentation in the late 1960s and early 1970s, paying particular attention to more artist-led initiatives, which will be shown to be both pioneering but also rooted in a longer tradition, and to explicit consideration of what exactly these initiatives gained from their new, albeit often very temporary, rural homes. Attention will be paid especially to the experiences of Vashti Bunyan and Robert Lewis via their horse-drawn migration from London to Scotland. The paper will also develop the idea that rather than providing an absolute material space to ‘drop out’ or ‘retreat’ into, the rural can act as an heterotopic counter-site for both rejuvenation and taking one’s dreams forwards.

**Keith Halfacree**’s research interests are many and varied but focus on a number of overlapping areas: Discourses of rurality in the global North; rural futures and their contestation, including the legacies of the past; human migration; marginal geographies: countercultural spaces and practices. Keith has recently completed a two-year Leverhulme Trust funded project with Dr Lewis Holloway (University of Hull) and Dr Larch Maxey (Swansea University) entitled *Rooted in the earth? Going back-to-the-land in millennial Britain*. He is a member of the Inter-War Rural History Group.