HIGHER DEGREES IN
Societies, Landscapes, Cultures, Identities, Families

MA in English Local History and Family History
MPhil and PhD Research Degrees

www2.le.ac.uk/centres/elh
Centre for English Local History

The Centre for English Local History is the only specifically postgraduate and research centre of its kind in Britain. Founded by W.G. Hoskins in 1948, it is internationally famous for its pioneering approaches and teaching of Local History. It has received exceptionally high ratings in the government's research evaluation and teaching quality exercises. Unlike most other centres for local history, it is entirely serviced by its own staff. You therefore enjoy easy access to lecturers and among staff and students there is a shared enthusiasm for the subject.

MA in English Local History and Family History (full-time or part-time)

The course is the most comprehensive of its kind. It aims to provide a training in the ‘Leicester’ approach to local, regional and contextual family history. It stresses comparative landscape and community approaches, with emphasis on cultural regions, historical ecology, regional identities, and long-term perspectives. It is interdisciplinary and adopts many methods. The course appeals to many people who have, or wish to gain, jobs in ‘heritage’ related subjects, local government, teachers, museum curators, academic researchers, archaeologists, those interested in the built rural or urban environment, potential PhD students and academics, and those who study local and family history for other reasons.

Course Modules

You take four modules each worth 30 credits and write a dissertation, worth 60 credits, to give a total of 180 credits. These normally include a choice of the following modules:

1. Understanding English and Welsh Communities and Cultures, 1750-2000

This module surveys themes and approaches affecting regional communities and cultures between 1750 and 2000. It is concerned with local belonging and identity, cultural regions (the regional novel, religion), gender relations, and the changing nature of ‘community’. It has much emphasis on rural society and welfare history. It presents approaches to minority groups (e.g. gypsy-travellers). It deals with family and demographic history, farming, and the decline of the ‘family economy’. Visual interpretations are stressed: landscape art, churchyards, nineteenth-century photography. It covers many methods of study such as oral history, and appropriate sources.

2. The Local Identities and Palaeography of Early Modern England 1500-1700

This module enables students to reconstruct local identities in early modern England. It builds upon a merger of social and political history, a development in which local history has been at the forefront. Themes include the impact upon local identities of riot, rebellion, and popular politics, while problems of governance are explored through analyses of custom, crime and immigration. The second half of each session tackles the manuscript sources upon which these and family histories have been based, developing strategies for reading, analysing and interpreting archival documents.

3. Medieval Landscapes

The foundations of modern landscape and society were largely laid down as a result of significant reconfigurations in the middle ages. This module focuses on this period of intense and dynamic change during which both the physical and mental maps of England were redrawn. It shows how the landscape can be seen as a product of, and as a contributory factor in shaping, medieval society. Wide-ranging and interdisciplinary coverage includes settlement history, place-names, cartography, the literary landscape tradition, climate and weather, field systems, trees and woodland, elite display, ecclesiastical signatures, peasant families, and medieval concepts of nature.
4. Field Course

This field course introduces the comparative study of regional landscapes as artefacts of historical cultures (very broadly defined to include, e.g. religion, work, leisure, class). The course stresses continuities between periods from sub-Roman times to today; contrasts between sub-regions; and the evidence of the built environment whether familial, ecclesiastical or industrial. Particular emphasis is laid on the personal development of observational skills.

5. Family History

This covers many modern approaches to family history, such as genealogy, population history, the census, oral history, autobiography, historical occupations, personal mobility, surnames, Jewish and ethnic identities, 'colonial' families, American family history, new work on genetics and origins, childhood and fostering, and class differences in historical familial experiences. Many sources and methods relevant to such topics are discussed.

One of your chosen four modules can be another History MA module which you can take instead of the options listed above.

The Dissertation

Provides training and experience in setting up (from literature search and source identification to planning) and completing a research project within a set time limit, potentially to publishable standard. If you wish you may work on an aspect of the history of your home area, or region of your choice, or how the history of a family can be related to wider historical questions and contexts. (20,000 words)

Timetabling

For full-time students the course runs for twelve months, beginning in October, with classes and the field course concentrated in the period between October and April. For part-time students the course runs over two years (with an extension for completion of the dissertation and some assessed work), beginning each October. You may attend either one morning per week or one evening per week between October and March.

Teaching methods

Lectures, many illustrated, practical classes with sources, computer demonstrations; outdoor schools in the field; a week-long residential field course.

Assessment

Assessment is by projects, reviews, skill tests and dissertation. Through your projects and dissertation you may build up expertise on a region of your choice.

Qualifications and applications

Applicants are normally expected to have a degree in History or a related subject. If you do not have a first degree you may be able to qualify with a ‘long essay’. Application forms may be obtained from the address given at the end of this brochure.

Research Degrees: PhD and MPhil

The Centre also welcomes applicants for the degrees of PhD and MPhil degrees, and we always have about 30 such students (from all over the country) researching in this way. Their recent research topics include medieval families and land, long-term landscape history, medieval towns, women’s work during Industrialisation, familial folklore, rural housing, the Channel Islands, the poor law, rural out-migration in Wales, immigration to Britain, midland urban history, and many other subjects.

The ‘Friends of the Centre’ (comprising a large number of ex-students and others) award grants.

The University Library

The University Library houses an exceptional local and family history collection covering all counties of England and Wales, and includes volumes dating back to the sixteenth century. This holding, together with the Marc Fitch Library, makes Leicester unique among provincial English universities for the comprehensiveness of its holdings in local, regional and family history.
Unique Facilities of the Centre

The Centre is in The Marc Fitch Historical Institute. Leicester railway station is nearby. The Marc Fitch Library is an important collection covering all English regions, as well as historical sources, architecture, landscape, and family history. There are superb map, oral history, film, photographic and print collections. There are excellent computer facilities.

Teaching staff of the Centre:
Dr Andrew Hopper
Dr Richard Jones
Professor Keith Snell

Research fellows include:
Professor Charles Phythian-Adams
Professor Christopher Dyer
Dr Graham Jones
Dr Susan Kilby
Dr Mark Page
Dr David Parsons
Dr Sylvia Pinches
Dr Kate Tiller
Dr Mandy de Belin

Please send enquiries to:
Dr Andrew Hopper
Admissions Tutor
Centre for English Local History
Marc Fitch Historical Institute
University of Leicester
5 Salisbury Road
Leicester LE1 7QR
UK

Phone: 0116 2522762
Email: ajh69@le.ac.uk
Web: www2.le.ac.uk/centres/elh