

An AHRC funded Collaborative Doctoral Award with the University of Manchester and the Science Museum/BT Archives

'Research is the Door to Tomorrow': The Post Office Research Station, Dollis Hill, c.1935-1970

**** Re-advertisement ****

Have you completed or are you close to completing a Master's degree in History of Science and Technology, Modern History or a related field? Are you interested in twentieth century history and the role that technological R&D played in it? Do you enjoy investigating the personal stories and histories behind major developments? Would you relish the opportunity to work within a national museum? Then this could be the project for you!

Applications are invited for an AHRC-funded PhD studentship on the mid-twentieth century history of the UK's Post Office Research Station at Dollis Hill, London. The studentship will commence in September 2014, and is tenable for three years' full-time study.

Owned and managed by the General Post Office, the UK's largest state bureaucracy in the twentieth century, Dollis Hill was one of the government's most important research establishments in electrical engineering, telecommunications and computing. By the late 1930s, it had an international reputation in an extensive network of telecommunications research, testing and manufacturing facilities encompassing other state civil and military establishments, research associations and industry. With privileged access to the rich collections of the Science Museum and BT Archives this project will explore the institution's organisational development, its technical work and its changing relationship with the state and other institutions from the mid-1930s through WW2, the post-war years and the Cold War up to the 1960s. It will also consider the social history of the station, exploring the hierarchies within the organisation, informal and formal methods for building and sharing knowledge and the day-to-day experiences of life at Dollis Hill.

There is significant scope for the student undertaking this project to develop their own thematic and empirical interests, but among the relevant topics that might be covered are: the mobilisation of Dollis Hill for war work on radio and electronic computers for codebreaking during WW2; the development of submarine cable and repeater technology, culminating in the transatlantic submarine telephone cable in 1956; the development of microwave radio relay transmitters and the establishment's work on the Goonhilly satellite ground station; and the beginnings of fibre optics.

Cutting across all these topics, the project will analyse Dollis Hill as a deep reservoir of skilled practice: its labs and workshops maintained huge expertise on materials and production processes – initially valves and crystals, later semiconductors and transistors. It will also explore the ways in which Dollis Hill was central to the British state's role as a provider of communications infrastructure both for public use, for governmental and national security purposes and as international interests came into play.

The rich sources for the project include the BT Archives with their extensive Post Office records, the telecommunications collections of the Science Museum and the National Archives at Kew. There is also significant scope for oral history work with former Dollis Hill employees.

This PhD studentship will be held at the University of Manchester's Centre for the History of Science, Technology and Medicine, which is internationally recognised for its work on the history of modern and contemporary science, technology and medicine (see <http://www.chstm.manchester.ac.uk/>). It will cover university fees at UK/EU rates, and provide a living allowance subject to the AHRC's residency requirements. The supervisors are Dr Jeff Hughes (CHSTM, Manchester) and Dr Tilly Blyth (Science Museum, London).

The studentship is the second of three linked PhDs mapping Post Office research in the twentieth century under the overall title "Research is the door to tomorrow": the networks and culture of the Post Office Research Stations, Dollis Hill and Martlesham, c. 1910-1983'. The first (on early 20th century Post Office research, based at the University of Leeds) commenced in September 2013. This, and the third (on Dollis Hill's later career and that of its successor institution, Martlesham Heath, based at UCL) will commence in September 2014. The project is supported by the Science Museum's Collaborative Doctoral Partnership scheme, in conjunction with BT Archives.

Candidates should have a strong Master's degree in History of Science, Technology and Medicine, Science Studies or a related subject. Application is by sending 1) a CV 2) a sample of writing and 3) a covering letter outlining reasons for application to jeff.hughes@manchester.ac.uk by 30 May 2014. Interviews will be held on 12 June 2014.

Potential applicants may contact Dr Jeff Hughes (jeff.hughes@manchester.ac.uk) for further information and informal discussion.