

Postgraduate profile: Holly Ellis

Hello! My name is Holly Ellis and I am a postgraduate student in the Department of African Studies and Anthropology, currently in the first year of my



ESRC 1+3 studentship.

I graduated from DASA (formerly CWAS) in July 2011 having spent three wonderful years in the department making great friends and broadening my horizons. I wrote my undergraduate dissertation on the work of an inter-war British women's council, focussing particularly on their 1926 lobbying campaign which aimed to assess the existence of female forced labour in the Colonies. This project came as a result of a trip to Ghana in the summer between my second and my third years. During this trip I had my first experience of the archives, under the guidance of my supervisor [Dr Kate Skinner \(/staff/profiles/dasa/skinner-kate.aspx\)](#), and I was hooked. I found a plethora of interesting material whilst there and realised that I genuinely enjoying the process of locating and reading these colonial and post-colonial documents. It was during this time that I first seriously considered applying for the PhD, I had always had it in the back of my mind as a possibility but undertaking that research made me realise that it was something I really wanted to do.

I am intending to write my PhD thesis on the changing perceptions of female adolescence in Cape Coast, Ghana, over the last century. I am particularly interested in the impact of socio-economic and political changes in the region on women's perceptions of the transition from girlhood to womanhood. In order to explore this question I am intending to undertake extended fieldwork in Ghana using a mixture of archival documents, interviews and ethnographic methods to understand how women and girls perceptions have changed.

I am currently doing an [MA Social Research \(African Studies\) \(/postgraduate/courses/taught/dasa/social-research-african.aspx\)](#) which is equipping me with the tools I need in order to undertake my PhD research. The PhD thesis will incorporate two areas that I became interested in during my undergraduate degree, namely social history and gender studies. I am hoping to begin taking lectures in the first years of my PhD, and although this is an extremely scary prospect it is also very exciting. I am hoping to get a job in academia and thus continue with my research in Ghana whilst lecturing in African history. I am extremely happy to have stayed at Birmingham in a department that is both supportive and intellectually challenging.