

Broken Bonds: New Perspectives on Marital Breakdown in the English Common Law World 1801–1969

One-Day Hybrid Academic Conference – In Person & Online.
Northumbria University
Monday 20 April 2026

REGISTRATION: <https://www.northumbria.ac.uk/about-us/news-events/events/2026/04/broken-bonds---new-perspectives-on-marital-breakdown-in-the-english-common-law-world-1801-1969/>

08.45 – 09.00: Registration & Coffee

09:00 – 09:15: Welcome & Opening Remarks

09:15 – 10.00: A New Methodological Approach to the History of Divorce, 1858–1923: An Overview, *Dr Jennifer Aston (Northumbria University)*

10:00 – 11.00: Session One

- Percy Shelley's Children: Marital Breakdown in a Time of Revolution, *Prof. Danaya Wright (University of Florida)*
- 'I have been examined a great Many times': Parliamentary divorce 1801–1857, *Chloe Challender (Warwick University)*

11.00 – 11:15: Morning Coffee

11.15 – 12.45: Session Two

- The Court for Divorce and Matrimonial Causes 1857: Brave New World? *Penelope Russell (University of Sheffield)*
- Bad Wives, Violent Husbands: Gendered Narratives of Abuse in Welsh Murder Trials, 1850–1900, *Dr Stephanie Brown (University of Hull)*
- 'Til Death Do Us Part: Domestic Violence and Marital Separation in 1870s Peterborough, *Dr Sophie Michell (Open University)*

12.45– 13.30: Lunch

13.30 – 14.30: Keynote Address given by Baroness Hale of Richmond, DBE.

- 'Are the Ghosts of the Past still Clanking their Chains?': The Role of Conduct in Matrimonial Law

14:30 – 14.45: Afternoon Coffee Break

14.45 – 15.45: Session Three

- Assimilation or autonomy? Mapping the Relationships between English and Scots Divorce Law Before and After 1857, *Dr Rosemary Elliot (University of Glasgow)*
- Bigamous Bonds: Examining the Stability of the Second Marriage, *Prof. Rebecca Probert (University of Exeter)*

15.45 – 16:00: Afternoon Tea

16:00 – 17:30: Session Four

- Agatha Christie on Divorce: A Litmus Test for Changing Moral and Legal Standards in the 20th Century? *Dr Naomi Cousins (Leeds Beckett University)*
- Married Lesbian Mothers? Pathologization of Homosexuality in the Mid-Twentieth Century English Divorce Court, *Dr Ellen Durban (Independent Scholar)*
- Love, Honour and Obey: The Enduring Grip of Coverture on Modern Family Law: Child Arrangements and Domestic Violence in the Modern FJS, *Ruth Tweedale (University of Westminster)*

17:30 – 17.45: Closing Remarks

All speakers and attendees are warmly invited to stay and enjoy a drinks reception following the Closing Remarks.