

Gazette

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CHASING THE AMBULANCE REVISITED

In a recent issue of *Social History of Medicine*, Jo Melling and Eddy Higgs drew attention to the 'emerging crisis' in the preservation of modern health records. This issue has been given added urgency by the Department of Health's decision to issue new guidelines for retention and disposal of NHS records. Following representations by Alasdair Paterson, the Librarian of the University of Exeter, on behalf of the Standing Conference of National and University Libraries (SCONUL), the Department invited the authors of the original article to attend a meeting at the Wellcome Institute to discuss the matter further. Bernard Harris also attended the meeting, which took place on 1 October 1997, on behalf of the Society for the Social History of Medicine.

The primary purpose of the new guidelines is to advise NHS managers of the minimum length of time for which different sets of records should be retained. The records in question range from hospital accounts and accident registers to tax forms, unsuccessful tenders, time sheets and title deeds. In the majority of cases, the Department recommends that records be retained for periods of between eighteen months and ten years, but some items are to be retained for longer periods, and others are marked for possible permanent retention.

From the point of view of medical historians, the most serious difficulty is that the Circular is concerned primarily with the retention of records for current administrative and clinical purposes. In practical terms, the Circular recommends that items should be retained for as long as they remain relevant to the administration of a particular hospital or the treatment of individual patients. There is therefore a serious risk that records which might be of interest to future historians, or to historically-minded epidemiologists, may be destroyed before their true worth can be ascertained.

The Department's decision to convene a meeting with members of the historical community shows that it is aware of the importance of these issues, but historians also need to recognise the difficulties involved in finding sufficient accommodation for the vast amount of records which the modern health service can generate. As a first step towards the establishment of more effective procedures for safeguarding the interests of future historians, the Department proposes to invite Jo Melling to join a small sub-committee, to be chaired by the Deputy Chief Medical Officer. Members of the Society who wish to contribute to these discussions are invited to contact Dr Melling at the following address: Department of Economic and Social History, University of Exeter, Amory Building, Rennes Drive, Exeter EX4 4RJ; email: j.l.melling@exeter.ac.uk.

INFORMATION

Disclaimer: It is stressed that any views expressed in this Gazette are those of the Editor or the named contributor; they are not necessarily those of the Executive Committee or general membership. While every care is taken to provide accurate and helpful information in this Gazette, the Society for the Social History of Medicine, the Chair of its Executive Committee and the Editor of the Gazette accept no responsibility for omissions or errors or their subsequent effects. Readers are expected to check all essential information appropriate to specific circumstances.

Membership of the Society for the Social History of Medicine includes a subscription to the journal and is paid through: Journal Subscription Department, Oxford University Press, Walton Street, Oxford, OX2 6DP. Membership rates for 1997 are: £26 or £16.50 for students (UK and Europe), and \$46/\$32 for the rest of the world. Send subscriptions to: Journal Subscriptions Department, Oxford University Press, Walton Street, Oxford, OX2 6DP. Tel: 44(0)1865 267907. Fax: 44(0)1865 267485.

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Society News

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 1997

Draft Unconfirmed Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Society for the Social History of Medicine, held at the Atlantic Tower Hotel, Liverpool on 5 September 1997.

1. Apologies. There were none.

2. Minutes of the last AGM. The Minutes were agreed.

3. Matters Arising from the Minutes. There were none.

4. Annual Report. The Annual Report of the Executive Committee was presented by the chair, Anne Marie Rafferty. She began by thanking all those who had contributed so diligently and generously to the continuing success of the Society. David Smith, her predecessor, had completed his term on EC and would be greatly missed for his poise and panache. Kelly Boyd, who was also retiring, was thanked for her contribution. The editorial structure of Social History of Medicine had seen the addition of Elizabeth Fee and thus a raising of its American profile. She joined Paul Weindling and Hilary Marland, whose expertise had piloted the journal to higher levels of popularity. Tim Boon was standing down as conference convenor. His collaborative initiatives had brought the Society to the attention of new organisations and audiences, and he would be greatly missed. The EC was delighted that Jo Melling has agreed to take on the conference brief. Helen Power had kindly assumed editorial responsibility for the Gazette which she has undertaken with characteristic efficiency. Bernard Harris had shepherded a number of volumes through the Society's book series as well as encouraging its expansion. Steve Sturdy continued the crucial task of publicity, and Anne Borsay continued to bring her skills and diplomacy to the task of Honorary Secretary.

The Society has organised and sponsored a clutch of successful conferences, often in communion with other societies. In August 1996 Steve Sturdy convened a session at the SHOT conference in London; a conference on 'Race, Science and Medicine' at Southampton, organised by Bernard Harris and Waltraud Ernst in September 1996 received many tributes; and Jo Melling organised a highly successful conference on 'Madness, Law and Institutions' at Exeter in April 1997. Other events included 'The History of Music Therapy' conference with Peregrine Horden as the architect of an innovative programme. The Society was especially grateful to Helen Power and Sally Sheard for the excellent annual conference this year and acknowledged support from the International Network for the History of Public Health. Forthcoming conference events included 'The Meanings of Practice: Historical and Sociological Perspectives on the Practice of Science, Technology and Medicine', a joint meeting with the British Society for the History of Science, organised by Paulo Palladino in Manchester on 14 November 1997. A conference on 'Medicine and the Public Sphere' was currently being planned by Steve Sturdy for Summer 1998.

The Society was privileged to have Alfons Labisch as its president for 1997 and looked forward to expanding the international repertoire of its activities through collegial connections. Gratitude was expressed to Shula Marks for presiding over the Society's proceedings so perfectly last year. David Wright had navigated the Society's finances with skill and zest and had also designed the SSHM web site. As a consequence of last year's conference on 'Medicine and the Colonies', Harriet Deacon, Molly Sutphen and Richard Drayton were extending the Society's IT portfolio through the Science, Medicine and Empire Special Interest Group.

Such had been the success of the Society that it had proved necessary to appoint an Administrative Assistant and the EC was pleased to announce the arrival of Isabel Allen. Her address was: Department of History, University of Nottingham, University Park, Nottingham NG7 2RD. Tel: 0115 951 5954. Fax: 0115 951 5948. E-mail: MNZDJW@am1.arts.nottingham.ac.uk.

Members were invited to refer their requests for information to Isabel.

The chair concluded her Annual Report by thanking all other members of the EC: Harriet Deacon as membership secretary, Cornelia Osborne as overseas membership secretary, Molly Sutphen, Hera Cook and Jacqueline Jenkinson.

5. Report of the Journal Editors. Hilary Marland delivered the Journal Report. She stated that in 1996 the balance between short and longer pieces had remained much the same. Following the Research Assessment Exercise, the number of articles submitted dipped to 37; 48 had been received in the previous year. Seven were by non-British authors. The editors remained committed to the internationalisation of the Journal and were also keen to receive more pre-1800 papers, discussion points and contributions to the documents and sources section. The Journal was pleased to publish the SSHM Prize Essay in Volume 9 and the winning entry for 1997 was being sent out to referees.

Elizabeth Fee of the National Library of Medicine, Bethesda had joined the team in October 1996. The editorial arrangements were now more complex, but working well. Greta Jones, who had completed her term as Reviews

Editor, was thanked for maintaining so efficiently a stimulating section. Mark Jackson was welcomed as her successor.

The editorial office had moved from Oxford to Warwick, and Ruth Livesey had replaced Daniella Freeden as editorial assistant. Elizabeth Fee was assisted by Roxanne Beatty on a voluntary basis. All were thanked for their excellent work. Running costs had increased as a result of the move to Warwick and the appointment of a third editor. Authors were now urged to submit six copies of their articles to reduce office expenses. The support offered by the Centre for Social History at Warwick, the Wellcome Unit at Oxford, the University of Ulster, the Wellcome Unit at Manchester, and the National Library of Medicine was acknowledged.

The editor of the Gazette was thanked for providing a lively forum for the exchange of information and ideas.

The editorial board met on 4 October 1996, 25 January 1997 and 5 September 1997. Thanks largely to the efforts of the SSHM treasurer, David Wright, a new and favourable contract had been negotiated with Oxford University covering the next five years. Retiring board members were thanked for their contributions: David Arnold, Anders Brandstrom, Elizabeth Fee, David Gentilcore, Bernard Harris, Mark Jenner, Gabor Klaniczay, Alfons Labisch, Nelli-Elena Vandzan Marchini, Margaret Pelling, Barry Smith, and Mathew Thomson. Special thanks were due to Margaret Pelling for acting as chair. New members of the board were welcomed: Peter Biller (York), Philip van derEijk (Newcastle), Helen Power (Liverpool), Adrian Wilson (Leeds), and overseas Allan Brandt (Harvard), Wolfgang Eckhart (Heidelberg), Susan Lederer (Yale), Lenore Manderson (University of Queensland), Philippa Mein Smith (University of Canterbury), Marie Nelson (Linköping), John Harley Warner (Yale), and Patrick Zylberman (CERMES, Paris). The editors also thanked referees for their prompt and constructive reports.

Subscriptions currently stood at 830 (compared with 857 for 1996 as a whole). Of these, 281 were UK based, 74 Europe, 106 North America, and 48 the rest of the world. There were 309 institutional subscriptions. It was important to build on the growth that had been sustained, paying particular attention to international and student subscriptions. In 1996 the Journal made a profit of £9,323, of which half was paid to the SSHM to support the development of the Journal and the Society. In the light of growing costs, however, continuing financial vigilance was essential.

Finally, appreciation was expressed for the support of members as contributors and subscribers.

6. Treasurer's Report. David Wright presented the accounts for the calendar year 1996 which showed that the SSHM had £257.67 in its Treasurer's Account and £15,413.79 in its High Interest Account. Income was in surplus over expenditure, and the financial position would be strengthened as a result of the new Journal contract with Oxford University Press under which the Society will receive 15% of all gross income. This new income would be directed towards a variety of projects including, but not restricted to, increased editorial support, conference subsidies, student bursaries and special interest groups. It was agreed to make this clear in the Gazette.

The Executive Committee had been anxious about the gap between subscription income (£1,400) and membership costs (£3,000). After negotiations for the 1998 subscription fees were concluded with OUP, the decision was taken to raise dues to £3.50. The EC was currently discussing how best to invest the Society's accumulating assets.

In discussion, Elizabeth Fee reported that the Sigerist Circle would welcome the opportunity to co-sponsor meetings with the SSHM. It was noted that the latest List of Members and Their Research Interests would be circulated with the next issue of the Journal.

7. Series Editor's Report. In presenting his report, Bernard Harris drew attention to six new titles in the Routledge series: D. Wright and A. Digby (eds), *From Idiocy to Mental Deficiency*; D. Smith (ed.), *Nutrition in Britain*; O.P. Grell and A. Cunningham (eds), *Health Care and Poor Relief in Protestant Europe 1500-1700*; L. Marks and M. Worboys (eds), *Migrants, Minorities and Health: Historical and Contemporary Studies*; M. Gijswijt-Hofstra, H. Marland and H. De Waardt (eds), *Illness and Healing Alternatives in Western Europe*; and H. Marland and Anne Marie Rafferty (eds), *Midwives, Society and Childbirth*. Several projects were under way: P. Horden and R. Smith (eds), *The Locus of Care*; B. Harris and W. Ernst (eds), *Race, Science and Medicine*; J. Melling and B. Forsythe (eds), *Institutions and Insanity*; M. Sutphen and H. Deacon (eds), *Identities and Empire*; and Rob Perks (et al), *From Cradle to Grave*. Although Routledge had been persuaded to issue *Reassessing Foucault* edited by Colin Jones and Roy Porter in paperback, the Executive Committee remained concerned that the rest of the series was not available in this format. However, SSHM members were now able to purchase volumes at 70% of the list price. Thanks were expressed to the past editor, Jonathan Barry, to the Society's anonymous referees for their help in the assessment and preparation of proposals and manuscripts, and to the editors and contributors. Members were encouraged to bring forward potential titles.

8. Services for Members. Cornelia Osborne reported the following details of full and student overseas members for 1997: Europe 70; Japan 7, North America 104 and rest of the world 39. This represented little significant change. The call for contact persons had produced names for most countries except France. More enquiries were emanating

from Eastern Europe. Contact persons were being encouraged to organise meetings and to prepare reports on the social history of medicine in their countries.

9. Elections to the Executive Committee. Anne Borsay reported that five nominations had been received for three vacancies on the Executive Committee for 1997-2000. Edward Higgs (Exeter), Joseph Melling (Exeter) and Oonagh Walsh (Aberdeen) were elected. Since the turnout was low, however, the Executive Committee had decided to co-opt the two other candidates, Stuart Anderson and David Cantor. Methods of increasing participation were considered. It was agreed that a loose leaf ballot paper was preferable. Addressed envelopes and an adhesive all-in-one form were also mentioned as possibilities.

10. Prize Essay Competition. Anne Marie Rafferty congratulated Lauren Kassell on her subtle and sophisticated winning essay on 'How to read Simon Forman's Casebooks: Medicine, Astrology and Gender in Elizabethan London'. She urged all members to encourage entries. The timetable was likely to change to allow a smoother articulation between the date of submission and the annual conference.

11. AOB. Bernard Harris proposed a vote of thanks to Anne Marie Rafferty for her hard work as chair of the Society.

N.B. A copy of the papers circulated at the Annual General Meeting are available on request from the Honorary Secretary, Anne Borsay, University of Wales, Lampeter, Ceredigion, SA48 7ED.

Tel: (01570) 422351, Fax: (01570) 423885.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

(The information given below is accurate as far as we know. However, we accept no responsibility for errors. Please contact the organiser to confirm details.)

SSHM CONFERENCES

Spring 1998: Workshop on use of archive medical films in teaching history of medicine. (Joint conference with Forum for Medical Films & History)

Annual Conference: Summer 1998, 17-19 July, Edinburgh.

Medicine and the Public Sphere.

Speakers include: Logie Barrow, David Cantor, Debbie Brunton. The history of medicine provides a useful lens through which to view the shifting boundary between the public and private spheres, and the changing constitution of the public sphere. This conference will examine such issues by looking at the development of medical care and medical administration in Britain from the late 18th century to the present day. Topics will include the growth of public health, development of the hospital services, organisation and status of medical research and the recent privatisation of the NHS.

Further details: Steve Sturdy, Science Studies Unit, University of Edinburgh, 21 Buccleuch Place, Edinburgh EH8 9JT, tel: 0131 650 4014, fax: 0131 650 6886, email: S.Sturdy@ed.ac.uk.

Autumn 1998: London: CALL FOR PAPERS

Innovation: diffusion and resistance in C20 medicine.

Does your work look at new technologies or techniques, for diagnosis (e.g. CAT scanners), treatment or caring for patients, new ways of organising space or dividing tasks, or old ways revived as 're-innovations' (e.g. leeches)? Proposals for papers are invited, for a two-day conference in autumn 1998. Building on previous work on the history and sociology of innovations, we want to explore the complexities of diffusion further, looking for instance at effects of changing health service organisation, or links between industry and public sector science, technology and medicine. We also want to consider resistance both in terms of professional rivalries, and as a 'consumer' phenomenon which may lead to counter-innovations - as in the natural childbirth movement or the rise of alternative medicine. Cross-cultural comparisons, and work on innovations in colonial or Third World countries, will be especially welcome. So will papers that illustrate public perceptions of science and technology in medicine, through analysis of visual and written representations. Abstracts (to be submitted by April 1998), enquiries and further details: Dr Jenny Stanton, History Group, HPSU/PHP, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Keppel Street, London WC1E 7HT, tel: 0171-927-2317/2434, Fax: 0171-637-3238, email: J.Stanton@lshtm.ac.uk.

Spring 1999: Aberdeen.

Food, Science and Medicine in the 19th and 20th centuries.

For further details contact David Smith, Dept Economic & Social History, University of Aberdeen, Taylor Building, Old Aberdeen, Aberdeen AB9 2UB, tel: 01224 273676, email: d.f.smith@abdn.ac.uk.

NON-SSHM MEETINGS

'Family' and 'Household' - Revisiting Concepts and Experience

2-4 January 1998, Nottingham.

The annual conference of the Social History Society of the UK.

All enquiries to Mrs Linda Persson, Admin Secretary, Social History Society of the UK, Centre for Social History, Lancaster University, Lancaster LA1 4YG. Tel: 44 (0)1524 59605. Email: L.Persson@lancaster.ac.uk.

National Library of Medicine/History of Medicine Division Seminar Series

2:00-3:15 in the National Library of Medicine or the Natcher Bld. on the campus of the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland.

Jan. 14: Joseph Marchese, "Reorganization of Air Force Medical Services after WWII"

Feb. 3: Jill Jonnes, "Problems of Illicit Drugs in 20th Century America"

Mar. 4: William H. Helfand, "Medical Themes in Popular Music, 1850-1990"

Apr. 15: Karen Reeds, "Medieval Herbal Plants in Medical Usage"

For more information, contact James H. Cassidy, tel: (+)301-496-5405, email:

james_cassedy@ocshost.nlm.nih.gov

Section of historical medicine: New York Academy of Medicine: Public Lectures 1997-98.

All lectures will be held at the Academy, [1216 Fifth Avenue (at 103rd St), NY, NY10029] at 6.00pm, all are invited but we ask that you notify us in advance if you plan to attend. CME credits are available for physicians.

4/12/97: Medical History & the internet, Russell Maulitz.

22/1/98: Medicine & Movies I: "Men in white: censoring screen surgery in 1930s Hollywood", Susan Lederer

18/2/98: Medicine & Movies II: "Syphilis at the cinema: the US public health services VD films of the 1930s & 40s", John Parascandola.

16/3/98: Medicine & Movies III: "The black stork: motion pictures and eugenic euthanasia in early 20th century America", Martin Pernick

20/5/98: The Galdston Lecture: "On the boundary of transgression: F.C. Hollick & his best selling counsel on marriage", Charles Rosenberg.

For further information contact the office of the Associate Librarian for Historical Collections & Programmes: +212-822-7311 or 7314; email: emorman@nyam.org OR history@nyam.org.

CALLS for PAPERS

50 Years of Clinical Trials: Past, Present and Future, October 29-30, 1998, London.

The British Medical Association and British Medical Journal are sponsoring a conference on the history, present and future of clinical trials and therapeutic evaluation. The conference aims to bring together historians, clinical researchers and statisticians to exchange knowledge and perspectives about therapeutic evaluation. Papers on the history of therapeutic evaluation over the last 150 years are especially wanted. Deadline for abstracts 2 February 1998. For information about how to submit an abstract, contact Ms. Jane Lewis, BMA/BJM Conference Unit, BMA House, Tavistock Square, London, WC1H 9JP, UK, Jane.Lewis@bma.org.uk

OTHER NEWS

Graduate Training Fellowship: History of Health, Disease, and Medicine in Africa

The Department of History seeks applications for a graduate fellowship to support doctoral training in the history of health, medicine, and disease in Africa. The fellowship is for four years and will cover the cost of tuition plus a stipend of \$10,600 per year. Applicants should have completed a BA in History and be eligible for admission to the Graduate History Program at Emory. The fellowship will begin in the Fall semester of the 1998-1999 academic year. The deadline for formal application for the fellowship is January 1, 1998.

With strengths in history, medical anthropology, African studies, medicine and public health, Emory University possesses a strong combination of academic resources to support the training of students interested in the social history of health, disease and medicine in Africa. In addition, the Centre for the Study of Health, Culture, and Society (CSHCS) and Institute for African Studies administer a Program for Advanced Research and Training on Health and Society in Africa. This program provides students with an institutional base for pursuing interdisciplinary training and research, linking the social and health sciences at Emory.

For further information on the History of Health, Medicine, and Disease in Africa graduate training fellowship and the Emory History Department please contact: Dr. Randall Packard, Department of History, Emory University, Atlanta, GA 30322; or via email at rpackar@emory.edu.

Centre for the history and culture of medicine at SOAS

A Centre for the history and culture of medicine is being established at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London. It seeks to promote the study of disease, medicine and related fields of science and technology in the context of Africa, Asia and other parts of the extra-European world through workshops, seminars, publications and as a base for relevant research projects. The SOAS History Department has a long-standing interest in the history of disease and healing and has been the recipient of a number of Wellcome Award in recent years. Although based in the History Department, the Centre will also draw upon the area expertise of scholars in other SOAS fields, notably anthropology, religious studies, development studies, geography and languages. The Centre will be chaired by Professor David Arnold & Professor Shula Marks, with Dr Christopher Cullen as Director of Research. Among others currently engaged on medical history research at SOAS are Dr Frank Dikotter, Dr Bridie Andrews & Dr Vijaya Deshpande.

If you would like more information about the Centre or would like to be included on its mailing list, please contact Christopher Cullen on cc3@soas.ac.uk, or by post at SOAS, Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square, London, WC1H 0XG, tel: +44(0)171-637-2388, fax: +44(0)171-436-3844 or see <http://www.soas.ac.uk/home/cc3/>

CONFERENCE REPORTS

Exeter Conference on Insanity and Institutions

The Society organised a conference at the University of Exeter in April and by common consent it was agreed that it had been one of the most successful of the Society's specialist gatherings in the recent past. The aim of the conference was to focus attention on the new research in the social history of madness since the seminal work of Digby, Porter, Scull and many others in the past two decades.

The sessions were organised in a single-audience format which gave speakers a little less time than they could have enjoyed in parallel workshops but had the great benefit of enabling everyone at the conference to share the scholarly exchanges which emerged during the three days of discussion. The participants were also provided with substantial summaries of the papers in a pre-circulated booklet which ensured that most of the audience could at least consult their documentation for further guidance! The arrangement of commentators on each session also allowed for a much wider participation of conference attenders and directed the discussion to key issues in each of the presentations.

Amongst the many themes to emerge from the discussions was a recognition of the importance of relatives, dependants and friends in the world of the lunatic and the sophisticated techniques and comparative methodologies now available to those scholars who have taken part in the recent generation of projects funded largely by the Wellcome Trust. To relieve the pressure of paper-giving and commentaries, the conference could experience life in the asylum at first hand by attending the highly enjoyable 'asylums charabanc' steered by Bill Forsythe, which carried the conference participants around the sites of the institutions at Exminster, Digbys Field, and Wonford House.

One of the satisfying aspects of the conference was the extent to which health professionals and activists joined in the event and a number of local health workers turned up to sample social history in the round. The chairman of the Community Health Trust in Exeter, Sylvia Russell, provided the hospitality for conference-goers on one evening. Amongst the serious issues addressed in the session on the protection of health records (addressed by Eddy Higgs, Lesley Hall, Jo Melling and Wendy Walker) was the need for a raised awareness of the fate of current mental health records which were often in imminent danger of destruction following the transfer of care from large institutions to 'the community'.

Finally, the conference could call on the ever-reliable Michael Clarke to provide us with the visual aids and videos which provided the stalwarts with evening viewing once the formal sessions and entertainments ended. As one of the postgraduates who helped out during the event, I found it a highly rewarding and friendly experience that compensated for the hard work in preparing for the conference.

Mary Hilson, Department of Economic & Social History, University of Exeter

Wellcome Trust Specialist Seminar on the History of the Asylum. St Patrick's Hospital, Dublin, 30 June - 1 July 1997

This is the third such annual occasion on which a small specialist group has met to discuss current work on the history of the asylum. Meeting in 'Swift's Hospital' (which owes its foundation to Jonathan Swift's will bequeathing his fortune to found an establishment for idiots and lunatics), and with a reconstructed 'lunatic's cell' leading off the conference room, certainly added historical resonance to our discussions. Locating the seminar in Ireland, and within a historical 'asylum' re-centred both our geographical, and specialist, focus in discussion.

Not only did we learn from Brian Donnelly that archival sources on Irish asylums very rich but there are fresh and compelling questions and issues to be addressed. Why there should be a five-fold increase in Irish asylum patients at a time when the population actually declined by a third, led to Elizabeth Malcolm's interpretation that the asylum was being employed to bolster the authority of family, farm and church. Oonagh Walsh discussed how a quasi-colonial situation led the Protestant elite to use the institution to marginalise the Roman Catholic Church's influence. The ways in which varied structural legacies influenced lengths of stay both in ordinary Irish asylums and in the criminal asylum at Dundrum were examined in two papers by David Healy and by Pauline Prior. Markus Reuber analysed the way in which ideology informed Irish asylum architecture, and showed how a decline in therapeutic optimism resulted in a larger and more complex set of buildings for a longer-stay population. This architectural theme was the second focus of the seminar, and in a paper on Bethlem Christine Stevenson discussed ambiguities of appearance, hierarchies of esteem in terms of whose viewing was privileged, as well as ways in which articulation of function was in tension with aesthetic vision in design. Richard Suggett and Pam Michael looked empathetically at the patient's interaction with buildings, this time taking the Welsh asylum of Denbigh, and provided an insight into the pathways and partial vision of inmates. A consideration of the buildings of early English county asylums by Len Smith took us further into this central topic of tensions between custody and cure. We reflected on whether asylum buildings were 'deceitful' or merely 'ambiguous.'

Other papers on England, Scotland, and Canada took us into wider discussions both on cultural influences on institutions, and on asylums' own developing cultures. Papers by David Wright, Jonathan Andrews and Peter Bartlett directed our attention to: the containment of suicidal patients in the asylum; criminal insanity in Scotland and the greater importance assumed by medical testimony; and on the ways in which mixed administrative cultures affected an institution.

It was a fascinating colloquium and the participants owe a large debt of gratitude to Elizabeth Malcolm for her meticulous organisation; to Anthony Clare for his stimulating introduction to Swift's Hospital, as well as for the generous hospitality offered to us in St Patrick's Hospital; and to the Wellcome Trust whose munificence has enabled research and discussion to develop in such fruitful ways. (Next year Jonathan Andrews will be organising a seminar at Oxford Brookes on criminal lunacy.)

Anne Digby, Oxford Brookes University

Music and Healing August 20-21, London

A small group of scholars gathered this summer in London to discuss the subject of musical healing from an interdisciplinary and comparative perspective. Over two days participants discussed nine presentations based on pre-circulated papers and a set of questions addressing the relationship between the theory and practice of musical healing in different cultural settings. The first day's formal programme was a 3.5-hour study session at the International Musicological Society's conference on 'Musicology and Sister Disciplines: Past, Present and Future'. In a very hot lecture room at Imperial College five ten-minute talks were followed by a general discussion and summary. This intensive encounter was counterbalanced by a leisurely lunch and evening meal which provided a more relaxed setting for the animated conversation that characterised the whole meeting. With only four presentations the 'Study day' at the Warburg Institute provided a welcome opportunity for more in-depth debate.

The papers covered a surprisingly large amount of ground, ranging over around a thousand years and touching on three continents. Two papers were devoted to practices in contemporary African culture: John Janzen's was a study of 'ngoma' in Central and Southern Africa where music is an integral part of therapy, while Lyn Schumaker focused on 'Western and African Idioms of Healing in the 'Kalela' dance', which although not specifically medical nevertheless has a curative function within Zambian society. These complemented Henry Stobart's account of a community in the Bolivian Andes where there is no explicit use of music therapeutically, but clear evidence for its role in embodying and re-balancing social and cosmic relationships. This world view seemed remote from the concerns of the Western music therapy profession, whose problems in theorising their practice were eloquently expressed by Gary Ansdell, the only therapist who presented a paper (although others made a lively contribution to the proceedings). In fact George Rousseau had already raised the dilemma faced by disciplinary approaches to musical healing, which appear to neglect the power of the inflected melodious voice despite their emphasis on 'discourse'. There were two historical papers which looked at cases of Western practice: Cheryce Kramer talked about the use of music in the asylum in nineteenth-century Hienau, while Linda Austern demonstrated how the musical and cultural conventions in melancholic love songs from Monteverdi to the Smashing Pumpkins have remained surprisingly constant. Charles Burnett's paper, which introduced the key Arabic texts on music's curative powers (9th-10th centuries), and my own, which contextualised the first edited volume on 'Music and Medicine' (1948), effectively marked the boundaries for discussion about the literary tradition celebrating music's powers. The meeting closed with a lively discussion about publication, and I am pleased to say that we now have a contract with Ashgate for a book on Musical Healing in Cultural Contexts. [I would also like to thank the Wellcome for a generous grant towards the costs of the meeting.]

Penelope Gouk, University of Manchester

Annual Conference of the Society for the Social History of Medicine: Atlantic Tower Hotel, Liverpool, 4-7 September 1997

The north-west maritime port of Liverpool was the setting for the 1997 annual conference of Society for the Social History of Medicine and the second meeting of the International Network for the History of Public Health. Liverpool was more than an appropriate setting for this conference attended by more than 150 delegates. The organisers, Helen Power and Sally Sheard from the University of Liverpool, took the 150th anniversary of the appointment of William Henry Duncan as the city's first Medical Health Officer to build a successful conference around the theme, Health in the city: a history of public health. Intentionally broad, this theme allowed the conference to canvas diversity, while also using Liverpool's past to good effect. And it's fair to say this conference had something for everyone: vigorous and robust debate, activities linked to Liverpool's own history of public health, an unscheduled pause for the funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales, papers which clearly advanced the field of the social history of medicine as a significant field of historical enquiry and its own health incident that denied several participants, including this correspondent, from attending some sessions.

In three and a half days, the conference heard more than fifty papers in seventeen sessions, six of which were parallel sessions. The sessions covered a broad range of themes including, economics of public health, patterns of mortality and public health interventions - London, 1860-1920, public health professionals, urban pollution, plague, comprehending the masses - ordering the public for the public health, tuberculosis, new directions in public health, and accounts of dirt and disease. This was not a conference which fetishised Liverpool, the good Dr Duncan and its rich public health history - only one session - three papers - covered Liverpool and apart from several references in Professor Walter Holland's entertaining after dinner address and a closing toast to Dr Duncan, his life and times were addressed in only one paper.

Several broad conclusions can be clearly drawn from the conference. First, for historians of medicine and health, method and to a lesser extent, theory, continue to be issues of concern and debate. The papers by Bill Luckin, Graham Mooney/Andrea Tanner and John Mohan in the London patterns of mortality session and the paper by Peter Atkins on bovine TB all provoked considerable and profitable discussions about method which went beyond the intellectual banter usually associated with conferences. Second, for this conference, there were few papers on public health and medical matters after 1950. Third, apart from an excellent archival video screened by Lara Marks on birth control, there was little attempt to use film or photographs as evidence. Fourth, the presentation of papers about issues in England, Germany, Russia, South Africa, Sweden, Australia, Brazil and the United States (not an exhaustive list) simply restated the importance of the field and the potential range of important, comparative and collaborative projects ahead. I see audio-visual presentations - film, video, photographs and multimedia - as making substantial contributions in future conferences.

And there were less obvious successes. First, the SSHM conference was followed by an ESTER conference at the University of Liverpool and this timetable allowed many doctoral students to also attend the conference. Financial support from the British Academy and the Wellcome Trust for "younger researchers" was also significant. The Society, historical scholarship and post-graduate research will all benefit from a diverse constituency. Second, there is much to be said for the working into the fabric of a conference, events and activities which refine and extend conference themes. So the visit to and the reception at the Museum of Liverpool Life with its wonderful presentation of a history of public health on Merseyside took the conference to another level. And of course, the Museum also provided other benefits - Alfons Labisch singing various songs by the Beatles at the juke box will long live in the memory.

A report on all sessions is not possible. But with Mary Lewis' creative examination of skeletal remains, Evelyn Lord's graphic accounts of sanitation in medieval times, Peregrine Horden's eloquent examinations and metaphors, Virginia Berridge's highly perceptive and thorough examination of contemporary health policies, Lesley Hall's wonderful treatment of the utopian left and Mark Jenner's rigorous essay on London's early politics of water, the future is very bright.

Dr Glenn Mitchell, University of Wollongong, Australia.

Ester Summer School: Health, medicine & society: Liverpool, 7 - 11 September 1997

A summer school on Health, Medicine and Society was associated with this conference. The summer school was organised by ESTER (European graduate School for Training in Economic and social historical Research) and Professor W.R. Lee was the chairman. The main purpose of ESTER is to offer high-level research training for advanced Ph.D. students on a European scale. The aim of each seminar is to bring together about 15 Ph.D. students from different countries in Europe who are working on comparable themes to discuss their respective research projects. Leading senior experts in the field were also invited and co-ordinated the discussion and commented on the papers presented by the students.

At the summer school in Liverpool students from all parts of Europe participated and several disciplines were represented, e.g. demography, economic history, ethnology, geography, history and medical history. Each paper was presented and discussed during one hour both by the students and senior experts. There are several reasons for a Ph.D. student to participate in a summer school. First, deadlines are always good for your work. Second, you have to present your work to an audience who is not necessarily familiar with your approach which puts pressure on you to present your work in an extremely distinct and easily understood way. Third, you get in contact with Ph.D. students from outside your county who perhaps have a different educational

history and can develop your way of analysing your project. Fourth, it is fun and you meet people who you remember for the rest of your life.

Interdisciplinary conferences as these two is a positive injection for research concerning the issues of how to understand what contributes to peoples' health. There are however some pitfalls about interdisciplinary work that have to be avoided. First of all, we can learn from each other, but every researcher can not cover everything by himself. I also think that it is a strength to keep the separate disciplines where every discipline has to pinpoint the factors and develop theories most important for each discipline. It is therefore essential to everyone to focus on the question asked. Productive research can only be attained with well defined and well demarcated questions and these conferences are proof of that this goal can be achieved with an interdisciplinary approach.

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