

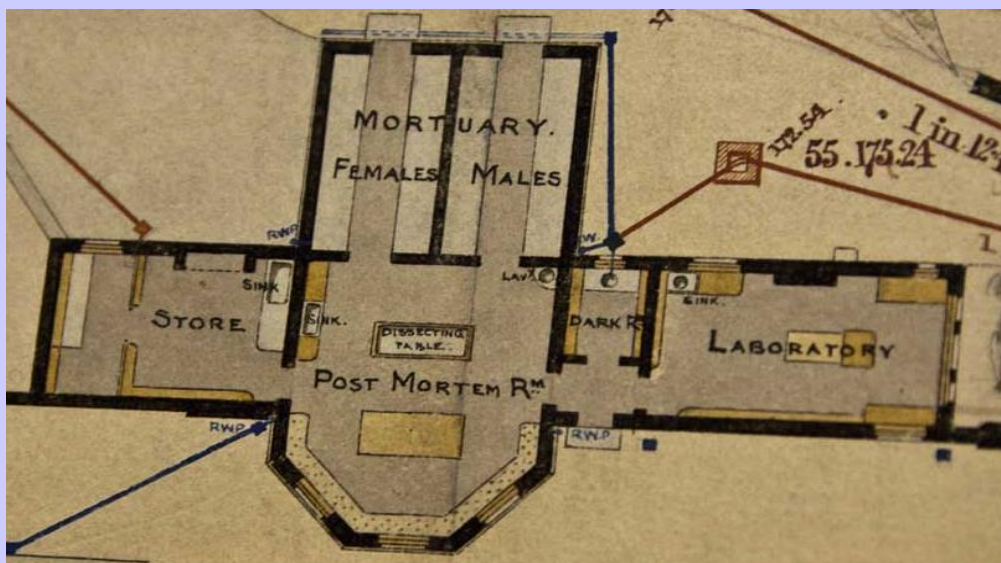
## “Understanding Death and Mortality in the Context of Mental Illness and Institutionalisation During the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries”

Thurs. 17 Sept. – Fri. 18 Sept. 2020, Newcastle University

A two-day Workshop funded by the School of History, Classics and Archaeology (HCA), Newcastle University, and by the History of Psychiatry Special Interest Group (HOPSIG), affiliated with the Royal College of Psychiatrists



November 1955. Outagamie County Asylum for the Chronic Insane, Appleton, Wisconsin, main corridor. Source: <https://eu.postcrescent.com/story/news/local/2014/08/14/insane-asylum-cemetery-forgotten-stories/14070183/>



Wakefield Asylum, mortuary plan, 1860: Source: <http://www.wakefieldasylum.co.uk/insight/243-2/>

This two-day workshop, organised under the thematic title: 'Understanding Death and Mortality in the Context of Mental Illness and Institutionalisation during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries', focuses on key themes and innovative research perspectives regarding mortality and mental illness in modern institutional settings. The workshop originates from the 'Life Cycles, Bodies, Health and Disease' (LCBHD) research strand in the School of History, Classics and Archaeology (HCA) at Newcastle University. The event is supported by a grant from HCA, within the Humanities and Social Science Faculty (HASS). It is additionally supported by the History of Psychiatry Special Interest Group (HOPSIG), affiliated with the Royal College of Psychiatrists, and will be featured and advertised in the latter's events programme <https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/members/special-interest-groups/history-of-psychiatry/events>. It involves speakers and invites participation from historians (especially of medicine, psychiatry and mental health), historical geographers, architectural historians and other scholars adopting historical, (medical) humanities and social science research perspectives, and also from practising and retired psychiatrists/clinicians/mental health workers and psychologists broadly interested in death and mental illness.

This workshop has three main goals:-

- 1) To bring together scholars within and beyond Newcastle interested in the changing meaning of mortality and institutionalisation in a range of mental health contexts. This is with a view to productive dialogue regarding the approaches and findings of recent research on this topic, and sharing experience and seeding ideas for collaborative research projects.
- 2) To provide a productive platform for progressing to published form new research on this theme, with a view to producing a special edition of the journal *History of Psychiatry*. Andrews has already edited two special issues, one with Philo (2017) on Scottish psychiatry, and one on death and psychiatry (2012), so this workshop seeks to build significantly on previous initiatives.
- 3) To dovetail with the Royal College of Psychiatrists (HOPSIG) events programme (<https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/members/special-interest-groups/history-of-psychiatry/>) encouraging cross-disciplinary dialogue between clinicians, and (medical) humanities and social sciences scholars.

The workshop seeks to foster dialogue about a wide range of urgent themes in the historiography of institutional dying, mortality and mental illness, including (but not limited to) the epidemiology of mortality, especially amongst the insane in institutions; changing understandings of causes of death; the evolving role and bench praxis of post-mortem dissection and pathological sciences, and the spatial design of asylum dead houses/mortuaries; the circumscribed epistemological and therapeutic contributions of post-mortem and pathological (mental) medicine; the impact of institutional environments, and psychiatric/penal care and treatment on inmates' health and mortality; chronicity and waiting for death in the asylum/mental hospital/prison; social, political, ethical and moral implications of the institutional death of the mentally ill; the meaning and anonymity of institutional death and its impact in historicising and evaluating the life stories of the mentally ill; memorialising and recovering lives in the context of death and burial in asylum and institutional settings; the mediation of death by a range of institutional staff, and inmates' own experience/testimonies regarding dying (insane).

The workshop will involve participants not only from within Newcastle's LCBHD and medical humanities research strands, but also from a range of other scholars working on aspects of death and dying in psychiatric and penal institutions, and also from psychiatrist members of HOPSIG. This workshop interfaces with the research interests of many of the LCBHD group: e.g., patterns and causes of mortality, pathological and psychiatric knowledge, and the mediation of death in asylums

(Nicol Ferrier); the experience and mediation of death and post-mortems in Victorian asylum contexts (Jonathan Andrews); the management of mental health and chronic psychiatric care in 20<sup>th</sup>C British mental hospitals (Vicky Long); mortality and workhouse experiences (Jeremy Boulton); death and disease in northern Indian colonial hospitals (Samiksha Sehrawat); surgery and mortalities amongst US Civil War troops (Susan-Mary Grant); environmental factors in disease and death (Claire Hickman); explaining mortality patterns in mental hospitals in early 20<sup>th</sup>C USSR (Robert Dale). It also offers an ideal opportunity to learn about the practical aspects around achieving funding and managing an ambitious Wellcome PI project, straddling several areas of research expertise, including integrating PG/post-doc recruitment.

The plenary speaker is Professor Hilary Marland (Warwick), who will be talking about her major research project (in collaboration with or Dr Catherine Cox, University College Dublin), exploring health in prison, funded by a Wellcome Trust Principal Investigator Award (2014-19), which has focused inter alia on the impact of prisons on mental wellbeing (<https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/history/chm/research/current/prisoners/>).

Other confirmed speakers/chairs include: Dr Jonathan Andrews, Dr Ian Nicol Ferrier, Dr Robert Dale and Dr Vicky Long (Newcastle); Dr Louise Hide (Birkbeck); Prof. Chris Philo (Glasgow); Dr Andy Owen, Consultant Psychiatrist (Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership Trust), and Dr Jennifer Wallis (Imperial).

Registration and attendance is free for Newcastle University staff, and for all students. There is a registration fee of £60 for others wishing to attend, to cover lunch, refreshments and workshop programme packs. Registration is limited to 50 participants max. on a first come first served basis.

To register and for further information, please email the workshop organisers: Dr Jonathan Andrews (Reader in the History of Psychiatry, Newcastle University) [jonathan.andrews@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:jonathan.andrews@ncl.ac.uk) and Prof. Ian Nicol Ferrier (Emeritus Professor, Wolfson Research Centre, Institute of Neuroscience, and PhD candidate, Newcastle University) [nicol.ferrier@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:nicol.ferrier@ncl.ac.uk); [i.n.ferrier@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:i.n.ferrier@newcastle.ac.uk)].



From blog by Lisa Herbert, who describes herself as "a cemetery wanderer, journalist and author of *The Bottom Drawer Book: an after death action plan*; <https://thebottomdrawerbook.blog/2018/02/13/mental-asylum-mass-exhumations-and-missing-remains-the-tale-of-wolston-parks-lost-and-forgotten-patients/>





# "Understanding Death and Mortality in the Context of Mental Illness and Institutionalisation During the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries"

Thurs. 17 Sept. – Fri. 18 Sept. 2020, Barbara Strang Teaching Centre (BTSC),  
Newcastle University

## Draft Programme



Somerset and Bath Lunatic Asylum Cemetery, Wells. Peter Bolton's wood sculpture depicts mental health anguish alongside iron discs to mark the anonymous graves of patients (2020)

13.30-14.15 Registration and Tea/Coffee (BSTC B.30)

14.15-14.30 Welcome (Dr Jonathan Andrews & Prof. Nicol Ferrier) (BSTC B.32)

**Session 1:** 14.30-16.00 Chair: Dr Jonathan Andrews (BSTC B.32)

14.30-15.15 Prof. Nicol Ferrier (Newcastle University): "Exhaustion, death and the post-mortem in Victorian asylums"

15.15-16.00 Dr Jennifer Wallis (Imperial College, University of London): "'There is no possibility of removing my emotions which are natural': The functions and effects of illustration in asylum post-mortem records"

16.00-16.30 Tea/coffee (BSTC B30)

**Session 2:** 16.30-18.45 Chair: Prof Jeremy Boulton

16.30-17.15 Dr Robert Dale (Newcastle University): "Understanding death in institutions providing psychiatric care for veterans of the Great Patriotic War in the Soviet Union between 1945 and 1965"

17.15-18.45 Plenary: Prof Hilary Marland (University of Warwick) " 'The living death of convict life': madness, mortality and the Victorian prison"

19.30 Workshop Dinner – Blackfriars Restaurant (speakers and chairs only)



Willard Asylum Cemetery, Willard, Seneca County, New York;  
<https://www.findagrave.com/cemetery/2244984/willard-asylum-cemetery>

## Friday 18 Sept. 2020

9.00-9.30 Tea/coffee (BSTC B.30)

**Session 3:** 9.30-11.30 Chair: Prof. Hilary Marland (BSTC B.32)

9.30-10.15 Dr Jonathan Andrews (Newcastle University): "Patient writings on death and loss in the Royal Edinburgh Asylum during the Victorian era"

10.15-11.00 Prof. Chris Philo (University of Glasgow): "Considering Agamben's 'homo sacer' and 'spaces of exception' for historicising death in the long-stay asylum pre-1950s"

11.00-11.30 Tea/coffee (BSTC B.30)

**Session 4:** 11.30-13.00 Chair: Prof. Nicol Ferrier

11.30-12.15 Dr Vicky Long (Newcastle University): " 'Death alone would eliminate these patients in about twenty-five years': Analysing mortality patterns amongst long-stay psychiatric patients in the era of deinstitutionalisation"

12.15-13.00 Dr Andy Owen (Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership Trust): "Standardised mortality rates among residents of Hatton Asylum in the mid-nineteenth century"

13.00-14.00 Lunch (BTSC B.29)

**Session 5:** 14.00-15.30 Chair: Dr Vicky Long

14.00-14.45 Dr Claire Hilton (Queen Mary College & Royal College of Psychiatrists): " 'A standing disgrace': tubercular mortality in British asylums during the First World War"

14.45-15.30 Dr Louise Hide (Birkbeck College, University of London): " 'Waiting for death' in British psycho-geriatric wards in the 1960s-70s: attitudes to old age, dementia, temporality and dying"

15.30-15.45 Workshop down tools, closing remarks and epitaph



Norfolk County Asylum Male Annexe, with Cemetery and Mortuary Chapel, from 1905 OS map  
<http://www.geograph.org.uk/article/The-Norfolk-Lunatic-Asylum---St-Andrews-Hospital/2>



Steinhof asylum mortuary, shortly after completion; from Leslie Topp, "Complexity and Coherence: The Challenge of the Asylum Mortuary in Central Europe, 1898–1908." *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 71, no. 1 (2012): 8-41 <https://jsah.ucpress.edu/content/71/1/8.figures-only>