

**WELLCOME TRUST PROGRAMME AWARD**

**DISABILITY AND INDUSTRIAL  
SOCIETY: A COMPARATIVE  
CULTURAL HISTORY OF BRITISH  
COALFIELDS, 1780-1948**

**FOURTH ANNUAL REPORT  
1 October 2014 – 30 September 2015**

## **1. Introduction**

*Disability and Industrial Society: A Comparative Cultural History of British Coalfields, 1780-1948* is funded over five years by a Wellcome Trust Programme Award of £972,501. In the application for the project, we promised to provide the Advisory Board with an Annual Report. As the project moves into its fifth and final year, we present the Fourth Annual Report for the period 1 October 2014 to 30 September 2015.

## **2. Staffing**

### Project Management

Following the death of Anne Borsay in August 2014, Professor David Turner took on the role of project Principal Investigator and Director with the approval of the Wellcome Trust. Dr Steven Thompson (CI Aberystwyth University) has taken over Anne's responsibility for overseeing the production of the monograph covering the 1880-1948 period, and is co-authoring the volume alongside Mike Mantin, Kirsti Bohata and Alexandra Jones. As Swansea University had previously granted Anne a period of sabbatical leave in 2014-15 to advance work on the book, David approached the Wellcome Trust to ask whether unspent funds in the Aberystwyth budget could be used to fund sabbatical leave for Steven in the autumn term 2015-16. This request was granted and we are grateful to the Wellcome Trust for allowing this use of funds in these exceptional circumstances.

David would particularly like to thank advisory board member Professor Angela John for providing support and advice as he took over project leadership on a permanent basis this year.

### Co-Investigators

Dr Vicky Long (CI Glasgow Caledonian University) went on maternity leave in February 2015.

### Research Staff

The project employs two Research Fellows and a PhD student at Swansea University who were appointed for three years from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2012:

- Dr Daniel Blackie is working on the period 1780-1880 under the mentorship of Professor David Turner in the Department of History and Classics, College of Arts and Humanities;

- Dr Mike Mantin is working on the period 1880-1948, originally under the mentorship of Professor Anne Borsay in the Department of Inter-professional Studies, College of Human and Health Sciences. David Turner has mentored Mike since the onset of Anne's illness and now jointly mentors Mike with Steven Thompson; and
- Alexandra Jones (formerly Rees) is working on a thesis examining disability in coalfield literature under the supervision of Dr Kirsti Bohata, Department of English, College of Arts and Humanities.

Unspent funds in the staffing budget has allowed Mike and Dan to have their contracts extended into the 2015-16 academic year and they are working to complete the project publications and assist with planning future funding applications.

Dan, Mike and Alex have been working alongside the three research associates appointed for three years from 1 October 2011:

- Dr Ben Curtis for the South Wales Coalfield under the mentorship of Dr Steve Thompson at Aberystwyth University;
- Dr Angie Turner for the Scottish Coalfield under the mentorship of Professor Arthur McIvor, University of Strathclyde; and
- Dr Victoria Brown for the North East Coalfield under the mentorship of Dr Vicky Long of Glasgow Caledonian University.

The research associates' contracts were due to end on 30 September 2014. Due to underspend in the partner institutions' budgets we were able to offer extensions to the contracts of Angie and Victoria. From 1<sup>st</sup> October 2014, Angie was employed on a 0.4 basis, supplemented by a teaching post at Strathclyde, for 10 months until June 2015 and Victoria's contract was extended on a full-time basis until 31 December 2015. An extension had been offered to Ben, but he moved instead to a lecturing post at Cardiff University. We are very grateful to the research associates and their mentors for all their hard work on the project.

### Visiting Staff

Between May and July 2015 Dr Mercedes Del Cura Gonzalez, University of Castilla La Mancha, held a visiting post at Swansea University to learn about the work of the project. Mercedes attended project team meetings and contributed to the project symposium.

### **3. Training**

The following training courses have been taken at Swansea University:

#### David Turner

Media Training, June 2015

Daniel Blackie

‘Turbocharge Your Writing’ – writing workshop led by Hugh Kearns (Flinders University), 27 January 2015

Mike Mantin

Media training, June 2015

Alexandra Jones

Swansea University teaching course for postgraduates: ‘General Teaching Skills’; ‘Small Group Teaching’, October 2014

#### **4. Work Programmes**

The task of producing a comparative cultural history of the British coal industry is a big intellectual challenge. Our research question – How important was industrialization in shaping conceptions and experiences of disability? – requires us to address at least four key themes:

- The effects of economic development and technological change;
- The role of medical and welfare services;
- The influence of politics, trade unionism and social relations; and
- The implications of these historical factors for the literary genre of coalfield narrative.

To tackle these themes effectively, we expanded the milestones listed in the original application to include start as well as finish dates, and developed systematic work programmes for the research associates and the research fellows to cover academic outputs and public engagement as well as source collection.

Having spent their first year researching national sources, the research fellows turned their attention in their second and third years to writing. They drafted their first individually authored articles, began work on their second article, and produced drafts for their respective co-authored monographs on welfare, economy, medicine and politics. The scale of the primary source material necessitated a re-examination of the timetable and revision of the original targets. As things stand, the research fellows are expected to finish their articles by the time of the end of their tenure in 2015-16 and to have completed most of their work on the monographs. The Research Fellows have been unable to complete work on the monographs within 3 years owing to the scale of the task

and complexity of primary source materials. However, as these are co-authored books any slippage is covered by the involvement of other authors. David Turner had a term's sabbatical leave in Spring 2015 funded by Swansea University to begin revising and rewriting drafts of the 1780-1880 book's economy and medicine chapters. Steven Thompson's leave period in autumn 2015 will allow further progress on the 1880-1948 volume. Book proposals have been drafted for Manchester University Press and will be submitted once supporting chapter drafts have been revised. We are confident that the books will be submitted for publication by the end date of the project in September 2016.

Additional time in 2014-15 granted to Research Associates was used to do further work on remaining articles and, in the case of the team focussing on the North East, hold a Professional Workshop (detailed under Public Engagement below).

The PhD student, Alex Jones, has made excellent progress in researching the literature of the three coalfields for texts which feature disability. Her work is supervised according to the University's policy for research degrees. A full draft of her thesis has been completed, with submission expected in the autumn of 2015.

## **5. Website and Publicity**

The operation of the project website was part of the research fellows' job description. Therefore, after their appointment, work began on design and development, with the assistance of Waters Creative in Swansea and Simon Proffitt of Green Land Design who produced the logo and banner which have become our hallmark. We are grateful to them for their help.

The website was launched early in 2013 and continues to grow ([www.dis-ind-soc.org.uk](http://www.dis-ind-soc.org.uk)). As well as showcasing the activities of the project, it is becoming a resource for the relationship between disability and industrialization, and indeed for disability history as a whole. The website has Twitter and Facebook pages which are updated regularly.

The success of the series of blogs to commemorate Disability History Month in 2013 prompted a follow up series to mark the event in 2014. Between 22 November and 22 December 2014, 5 blog posts were published from project team members and a number of guest contributors comprising academics and research students from Britain and the USA. The series helped raise the public profile of the project and increase traffic to the website. For example, during November 2014 there were 2167 page views and a further 962 in December, compared to 590 in January 2015.

The most popular blogpost overall was Greta Williams Schultz's contribution to the Disability History Month blogs, 'Shell-Shock, Lunacy and Hysteria: How the First World War Changed Experiences of Mental Illness in Britain', with 207 page views.

The project blog was also used to support the work of the exhibition, *From Pithead to Sickbed and Beyond: the Buried History of Disability in the Coal Industry before the NHS* (National Waterfront Museum, Swansea, 20 June to 4 October 2015 – for further information see below under Public Engagement). These included posts about exhibits and an innovative series of interviews and podcasts with disabled visitors and the former miner, George Brinley Evans. These explored reactions to the exhibition and how its themes related to disabled people today and provided an additional resource for visitors to the exhibition. David Turner also wrote a blog post reflecting on the process of putting on the exhibition as a guide to historians on making exhibitions accessible.

The exhibition blogs also helped increase visitor numbers to the website. There were 2167 page views in June 2015 and 1747 in July when we ran the exhibition blogs, compared to 1047 in May and 857 in August.

The project has a You Tube channel where videos and audio from project presentations and public engagement activities (including the exhibition podcasts) have been made available:

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCrBmtX7dYLZuLZCJP6hG\\_QQ](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCrBmtX7dYLZuLZCJP6hG_QQ)

The exhibition led to a good deal of media interest and publicity, including articles in the *Western Mail*, *Swansea Evening Post* and the BBC website. Project team members were interviewed about the exhibition and the project as a whole:

Daniel Blackie:

Interviewed for HistoryExtra podcast on 'India at war and mining accidents' (36 minutes in), <http://www.historyextra.com/podcast/international-history/india-war-and-mining-accidents> (2 July 2015).

Interviewed by BBC History Magazine for an article entitled 'Revealing the hidden stories of Britain's disabled miners' (July 2015 issue).

Interviewed (with Mike Mantin) by BBC Wales News for a piece entitled 'What role did disabled people play during industrial revolution?' (14 June 2015). <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-33107078>

Mike Mantin:

Interviewed on Good Morning Wales, BBC Radio Wales, 20 June 2015

Further information about publicity for the exhibition can be found on the project website: <http://dis-ind-soc.org.uk/en/press-and-media.htm>

### **3. Conferences, seminars and workshops**

Team members have been active in presenting at conferences, seminars and workshops – internationally, nationally and regionally.

#### International

- (a) Western Conference on British Studies (Calgary, Canada, October 2014)

Daniel Blackie, ‘Disability and Industrial Conflict in Nineteenth-Century Britain’

- (b) Celtic Puzzles: Social Politics of Wales (Szczecin University, Szczecin, Poland, November 2014)

Alex Jones, “‘When he speaks English, he will pronounce the words with pain and using crutches’”: Disability and Nationhood in Welsh Coalfields Fictions’

- (c) Nordic Network for Disability Studies (Bergen, Norway, May 2015)

Daniel Blackie, ‘Disability and Industrial Politics in Britain 1780-1880’

- (d) European Association for the History of Medicine and Health (University of Cologne, Germany, September 2015)

Mike Mantin, “‘Neither a Sick Man nor a Whole Man.’” Disability and Employment in British Coal mines, 1880-1948’

#### National

- (a) The Self and Other: The Swansea University Research Institute for Arts and Humanities Postgraduate Conference 2014 (Swansea University, October 2014)

Alex Jones, “A bitter, brackish humour that caused no laughter’”: Disability, humour and identity in British Coalfields Literature 1930-1948

- (b) Life Cycles seminar series (Institute of Historical Research, London, February 2015)

Mike Mantin, 'After the Accident: Disability and Work in British Coalmines, 1880-1948'

(c) Rural & Urban Wales, Association of Welsh Writing in English conference (Gregynog Hall, Newtown, March 2015).

Alex Jones, 'Deformed Landscape, Disabled Industry: Disability in South Wales Coalfields Literature'

(d) Rethinking Disability on Screen (University of York, May 2015)

Mike Mantin, "'They Live Again.'" Representations of Disability and Coalmining in 1940s Documentary Films'

(e) Richard Burton Centre Postgraduate Conference (Swansea University, June 2015)

Alex Jones, 'Injured men with black dust covering their broken bodies': Literature, history and disability in 1930s British coalfields literature.

(f) Disability and Disciplines: International Conference on Disability, Culture, and Education (Liverpool Hope University, July 2015)

Alex Jones, 'Injured men with black dust covering their broken bodies': Literature, history and disability in 1930s British coalfields literature.

### Regional

(a) University of the Third Age (Swansea, November 2014)

Mike Mantin, 'Rehabilitation, Disability and Coalmining'

(b) Historical Association, Swansea Branch (Swansea, February 2015)

Daniel Blackie, 'The Buried History of British Coalfields, 1780-1880'

### Symposium: 'Disability, Work and Representation in Historical Perspective'

The project held an international symposium in Swansea from 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> July 2015 at which team members discussed the themes of the research with an invited audience of 20 postgraduates, early career researchers and established academics from disability history, labour history, literary and cultural disability studies and the history of medicine.

The symposium was held at the National Waterfront Museum and was timed to coincide with the project exhibition and annual public lecture. It featured 3 keynote addresses:

Professor Kim Nielsen (University of Toledo): ‘Crafting History: Disability Analysis and the Transformation of Labor History’

Professor Stuart Murray (University of Leeds): ‘Theorising Cultural Disabilities’

Dr Lars Bluma (Deutsches Bergbau Museum, Bochum), ‘Biopolitics in German Coal Mining 1890-1980’

The primary aim of the symposium was to generate discussion around several key themes, which were introduced by members of the project team. Participants gave 5 minute ‘flash presentations’ which were used to spark discussion about the current state of the field and to explore where research may go in the future. The themes discussed were:

1. Disability, Work and the Industrial Revolution
2. Disability and Medicine in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries
3. Cultural Connections: History, Literature and Representation
4. State, Community and Familial Responses to Disability
5. Integrating Disability into the History of Work and Labour Relations

The conference was a success with many delegates commenting on how they had enjoyed the format with its emphasis on discussion.

We hope to publish a series of articles from participants and a proposal for a special edition of *Disability Studies Quarterly* was submitted in October 2015.

## **6. Publications**

The following articles and book chapters were published in 2014-15:

Ben Curtis and Steven Thompson, “‘A Plentiful Crop of Cripples Made By All This Progress’”: Disability, Artificial Limbs and Working-Class Mutualism in the South Wales Coalfield, 1890-1948’, *Social History of Medicine*, online; print version appeared in vol. 27:4 (November 2014), 708-27.

Ben Curtis, ‘The South Wales Miners’ Federation and the Perception and Representation of Risk and Danger in the Coal Industry, 1898–1947’, *Morgannwg: Journal of Glamorgan History*, Vol.LVIII (2014), 71–88

Arthur McIvor, ‘Miners, silica and disability: the bi-national interplay between South Africa and the United Kingdom, c1900-1930s’, *American Journal of*

*Occupational Medicine*, vol 58, S1 (Nov 2015), pp. 23-30. Available via open access at: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/ajim.v58.s1/issuetoc>

Arthur McIvor, ‘Quand les corps parlent: faire de l’histoire orale pour étudier la santé et l’invalidité au travail dans les houillères britanniques au vingtième siècle’ (Body talk: Oral history methodology in the study of occupational health and disability in twentieth century British coalmining), in Judith Rainhorn (ed.), *Santé et Travail à la Mine XIXe-XXIe Siècle* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 2014), pp. 238-61.

Angela Turner, ‘Damaged Bodies: Gender in the Scottish Coalfields in the Mid-Nineteenth Century’, in Judith Rainhorn (ed.), *Santé et Travail à la Mine XIXe-XXIe Siècle* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, April 2014)

In addition, the following book chapters and articles were submitted in 2014-15 or are under review:

Ben Curtis and Steven Thompson, “‘This is the country of premature old men’”: Ageing and Aged Miners in the South Wales Coalfield, c.1880–1947’ (forthcoming, *Cultural and Social History*, Vol.12 No.4, December 2015)

Ben Curtis and Steven Thompson, ‘Disability and the Family in South Wales Coalfield Society, c.1920–1939’ (forthcoming, provisionally accepted for publication in *Family and Community History*)

Victoria Brown and Vicky Long, ‘Disabled by Medico-Industrial Politics? Miners’ Nystagmus c.1913-c.1939’ (under consideration: *Medical History*)

Angela Turner and Arthur McIvor, “Bottom dog men”: Disability, Social Welfare and Advocacy in the Scottish coalfields, 1897- 1939 (currently under revision for *Scottish Historical Review*)

Arthur McIvor and Angela Turner, ‘The Body, Disability and Gender in the Scottish Coalfields, c.1820-1870’ (under consideration: *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies*)

Alex Jones, ‘Disability and Embodied Masculinity in British Coalfields Literature 1870-1900’ (under consideration for proposed book on *The Victorian Male Body and Masculinity*)

Mike Mantin, ‘Coalmining and the National Scheme for Disabled ex-Servicemen after World War 1’ (under consideration: *Social History*)

## 7. Grant Applications

The following grant applications were made in 2014-15:

David Turner, AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Partnership scheme (with the Science Museum, London): ‘Correcting Vision in Nineteenth-Century Britain’ – successful.

David Turner, Leverhulme Research Centres scheme, ‘Leverhulme Centre for Embodied Frailties’ – unsuccessful

Mike Mantin, outline application, British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowship, ‘Disability, Work and Training: Queen Elizabeth’s Foundation for Disabled People, 1934-2000’ – unsuccessful.

Angela Turner and Arthur McIvor continue to work on a draft research funding application for ‘An Oral History of Coalfield Disability since 1950’ for the AHRC. Although progress has been slower than anticipated, not least because of their success in winning a grant from the Hudson Trust for a project on ‘War and Disability in Scotland, 1939-1950: a Pilot Oral History Study’, they hope to submit the bid in 2015-16.

## 8. Public Engagement

The public engagement activities of the project are overseen by a Panel comprising the South Wales team plus three members of the Advisory Board: Steph Mastoris (National Waterfront Museum), Jacqui Roach (National Waterfront Museum), Elisabeth Bennett (Richard Burton Archives, Swansea University) and Sian Williams (South Wales Miners’ Library, Swansea University). The panel met eight times in 2015-16. We are grateful for their valuable contributions.

### Professional Workshops

In addition to the roadshows held in previous years, the project team are committed to holding **professional workshops** that engage with health care professionals, policy makers, miners’ welfare organisations and disabled service users. Workshops in South Wales and Scotland took place in 2013-14 and are detailed in the previous annual report. In 2014-15 the final workshop was held in the North East.

Following **focus group sessions with disabled service users**, Disability North, that had been held in Newcastle upon Tyne, 18-19<sup>th</sup> March 2014, the

Practitioners Workshop took place on Monday 12 January at Northumbria University Health School. The Workshop took place from 11am – 2.30pm with around 20 attendees. Due to the time of year we had to hold the event not all of the students had returned from the Christmas break, however a number of staff and postgraduate students did attend. There was an introductory presentation including the film *They Live Again* (1944). The attendees were then asked for feedback on what they had seen in terms of research and sources and then shown the corresponding comments from the Disability North focus groups, which had been shown the same material. After a break for lunch, an informal discussion took place as to where they felt the project should go next and indeed how it could potentially speak to current policy. One recurrent comment was that we needed to think more about what the translational messages and relevance of the project is in terms of today, something that maybe needs to be brought forward in the books. The attendees work within healthcare and policy and found crossover between their own work in areas such as PTSD. On the whole the event was very well received and positive feedback was supplied. They were particularly impressed with the work that we did with Disability North and working with outside groups to promote the project and what we were trying to do.

### Public Lectures

The fourth public lecture was delivered on 6 July 2015 by **Jocelyn Dodd** (Research Centre for Museums and Galleries, University of Leicester) at the National Waterfront Museum, Swansea: *Cabinet of Curiosities: Museums and the Re-presentation of Disability*. The lecture marked the official opening of the exhibition and was attended by around 70 people.

The project's final public lecture will be David Turner's professorial inaugural lecture, *Locating Disability in the British Industrial Revolution*, to be held at Swansea University on 5 May 2016.

### Exhibition

The project's exhibition, *From Pithead to Sick Bed and Beyond: The Buried History of Disability in the Coal Industry before the NHS*, opened on 20 June 2015 at the National Waterfront Museum, Swansea, and ran to 4 October. The Public Engagement Panel has provided an interface between the project and the National Waterfront Museum and provided a forum for discussions about the content and presentation of the exhibition. The exhibition comprised panels

showing how injured miners were treated, a film showing rehabilitation at Talygarn, together with artefacts and a listening post with extracts from literary texts. Among the artefacts exhibited were a ‘trambulance’ – a wheeled stretcher loaned from Big Pit Museum – and a crochet of a battleship made by George Preece, a disabled miner. The exhibition was supported by a series of blogposts and podcasts, and film screenings, including the 1936 film of *The Crucible*, which was introduced by Alex Jones.

There were almost 40,000 visitors to the exhibition. Fengtian Li, a student intern at the Museum, assisted in conducting face to face interviews with a sample of 50 visitors to the exhibition. The headline results were:

- 78% thought that the information panels were the most interesting medium within the exhibition, with 14% preferring the historic film
- 88% felt they had learned something new about coalmining and disability
- 74% wanted to find out more about the history of disability and coalmining
- 32% had either worked in the mining industry themselves or had a family member work in the industry
- 34% had experienced disability either themselves or through a family member
- The geographical origins of those questioned were: 22% Swansea, 58% rest of the UK, 20% overseas
- The age groups of those questioned were:
  - 4% under 18
  - 12% 18-25
  - 22% 26-50
  - 36% 51-65
  - 26% over 65

Visitor book comments were also very positive.

Leisa Bryant at the National Waterfront Museum is developing a teaching resource for KS2 learners to accompany the travelling version of the exhibition which will tour from 2016.

The exhibition panels are moving to the National Library Wales, where the exhibition will run from 20 December 2015 to 2 April 2016. Nia Dafydd at the

National Library has taken over the organisation of the exhibition and met with the project team in August to discuss plans. The project team have arranged 2 public talks to accompany the exhibition in Aberystwyth to be delivered by Alex Jones and Steven Thompson.

### Disabled People's Panel

The Disabled People's Panel proved more difficult to set up than we had envisaged and attendance deteriorated during the second year. Nonetheless, members offered invaluable feedback on specific issues, in particular the website. Therefore, we decided to disband formal meetings of the Panel and seek the advice on an *ad hoc* basis.

In 2013-14, we made contact with SAFE (Swansea Access For Everyone) who have offered to provide some advice in making the exhibition accessible. In 2014-15 SAFE members attended the public lecture and contributed interviews to the exhibition podcasts. We are grateful to SAFE for its interest in the project and support of our activities.

A collaborative event with Disability Wales is planned for the 2015 Festival of Humanities in Swansea in November, debating disability and well-being, past, present and future.

### Expertise, Collaboration and Teaching Innovation

Project members have used their expertise to collaborate with other organisations. Arthur McIvor and Angie Turner are members of the Scottish Council on Deafness, History project Advisory Board and the ENABLE, History project Advisory Board. Angie Turner assisted with the Scottish Council on Deafness history project evaluation report and served as project trainer and co-ordinator on the ENABLE project.

In addition, Angie Turner developed the first disability history undergraduate module in Scotland, 'Disability in Modern Britain', at the University of Strathclyde taught in 2014-15 and 2015-16. Project team members contributed to the Swansea University module HIH266, 'Researching and Re-presenting the Past', sharing knowledge with year 2 undergraduate students on blogging about disability history and preparing an exhibition.

## **9. Programme Management**

Throughout the year, mentors met regularly with their research associates and research fellows, and the PhD student received regular supervision. A South

Wales Team meeting was also held each month, at which monthly reports from the research associates, research fellows and PhD student were received.

In addition, a Full Team meeting was convened in December 2014 in Swansea to coincide with the third Advisory Board. All team members, including former RAs were invited to the project symposium and presentations were given by Angie Turner and Ben Curtis. Victoria Brown also attended, but was unfortunately ill and unable to present.

## **10. Advisory Board**

We are grateful to all members of the Advisory Board for their inputs. The minutes of the third Board in December 2014 were considered by the South Wales Team and the Public Engagement Panel at their meetings in January 2015.

The Advisory Board has made many valuable suggestions for public engagement and for influencing public policy. Project members are still looking at ways of engaging more directly with policy makers and the team would welcome suggestions from the Advisory Board on how to develop this aspect of the work. Possible collaboration in 2015-16 on the DRILL Big Lottery scheme with Disability Wales offers one way forward.

## **11. Conclusion**

In 2014-15 the project team has had to adapt to life without Anne Borsay. This process has been difficult at times, especially for the project Director. As a tribute to Anne, we dedicated the exhibition to her memory and we were delighted that members of Anne's family were able to attend the public lecture and official exhibition opening. We can point to a number of successes in 2014-15, most notably the exhibition and symposium. Our attention in the final year of the project focuses on completing our publications, while continuing to consider the public policy implications of our research.

Professor David Turner, Principal Investigator and Director

30 November 2015