

## News from Swansea

### Medical students explore a reflective approach to learning and practice and Swansea continues to flourish as a centre for research in disability history

The Research Group for Health, History and Culture got off to a flying start with its first seminar of the academic year on 14 November. Dr Clive Weston, Dr John Rees and Professor Frances Rapport from the University's College of Medicine spoke on 'Medical Students Writing'. Swansea Graduate Entry Medicine students are required to write short (c.500 word) pieces about their experiences during each of nine five-week long clinical apprenticeships. For each they receive a response from a member of academic staff.

The original intention was to provide opportunities for, and evidence of, a reflective approach to learning and future practice, and some basic prompts were provided to guide students in 'writing reflectively'. The speakers explained that the written pieces varied significantly in form, choice of subject, literary style, and overt depth of reflection. Some were straightforward evaluations of the placement, others combined interesting observations with explicit reflections, still others were skilfully-worked, emotionally-charged narratives.

During the seminar, dramatist, David Britton, with permission, read some examples of the students' work and the speakers reported on three workshops at which participants (academics, clinicians, students and creative writers) considered one particular piece. A lively discussion followed in which the educational value of the writing activity, and its place in the development of *Tomorrow's Doctors*, was thoroughly explored from the perspectives of arts and humanities as well as health care.

#### Disability history

Disability and Industrial Society, a Programme Award funded by the Wellcome Trust, has entered its second year. The project is comparing conceptions and experiences of industrial injuries and diseases between 1780 and 1948 across three British coalfields: south Wales, the north east and central Scotland. In October, the three research associates working in the case study areas were joined by two research fellows and a PhD student in Swansea. The first Public Lecture took place in Aberystwyth in May when Professor Steve King of Leicester University spoke on the experiences of the disabled poor in the industrial districts of England and Wales from the 1790s to the 1920s. A project webpage will be launched in the New Year and we are planning the first of three Roadshows to be held at the National Waterfront Museum in Swansea on 23 March 2013.

Swansea continues to flourish as a centre for research in disability history. In addition to Anne Borsay and David Turner (who co-directs Disability and Industrial Society), and the staff associated with this project, there are now two fellows funded by the Wellcome Trust: Dr Trish Skinner who is working on medieval facial disfigurement and Dr Irina Metzler who is investigating mental impairment in the middle ages.

#### Anne Borsay

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