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Centre for Health, Medicine and  
Society: Past and Present at

**OXFORD**  
**BROOKES**  
**UNIVERSITY**

Report on a workshop for postgraduate and early career researchers on  
**MEDICINE AND CHARITY IN HISTORY**



Oxford Brookes University  
21 February 2009

The Voluntary Action History Society was established in 1991 to advance the historical understanding of charitable organisations amongst both academics and those working in the sector. Today its main activities are its seminar series held at the Institute of Historical Research in London and a biannual conference.

In order to build upon an impressive number of postgraduate participants at the 2008 VAHS conference, a postgraduate sub-committee was established in late 2008. Members to date have included:

Dr Elma Brenner, University of Cambridge  
Dr Georgina Brewis, University of East London  
George Campbell Gosling, Oxford Brookes University  
Elizabeth Harvey, UCL  
Lucy Hewitt, University of Edinburgh  
Christopher Moores, University of Birmingham  
Stephen Soanes, University of Warwick

The sub-committee held its first event on 21 February 2009 at Oxford Brookes University. This was a workshop on the theme of 'Medicine and Charity in History' featuring papers from ten postgraduate and early career researchers on problems and issues they have come across in their work. The problems and issues raised in the morning's papers formed the basis of a roundtable discussion led by two senior historians in the field, Professor Anne Digby and Professor Steven King. During the day there was also a talk from a mid-career researcher and a practical talk on the art of giving a conference paper from Professor King.

This distinctive format offered new researchers a chance to give papers on their work at a formative stage, discussing the research process rather than presenting research findings, and to discuss them with their peers and leading scholars in their field.

### **Senior academics involved with the workshop**



Professor Steve King



Dr Viviane Quirke



Professor Anne Digby

**SESSION ONE**  
**10.30am-12.00pm**

**BG10**

**Bruna Gushurst-Moore, University of Plymouth**

'Leavening from the still room. Distilling Health: Domestic Medicine of the Manor House. 1600 – 1800'

**Dr Kim Price, Oxford Brookes University**

'He was not an idiot': disability, care in the community and the late-nineteenth century poor law

**Lynsey Cullen, Oxford Brookes University**

The Patients Case Records at the Royal Free Hospital

**BG11**

**Stephen Soanes, University of Warwick**

'Bridging a Gap': Assessing the Local Significance of the Mental After-Care Association in Shaping Approaches to Convalescence in England, 1900-39

**Dr Emma Jones, University of Manchester**

Abortion in the Archives: Interpreting Silence, Concealment and Revelation

**George Campbell Gosling, Oxford Brookes University**

Locating Charity in the Mixed Economy: Rethinking Medical Voluntarism in Britain before 1948

**SESSION TWO**  
**1.00-2.00pm**

**BG10**

**Gudrun Loehrer, University of East London**

Cinematic Governmentality? Governing the conduct of the population in historical tuberculosis and malaria health films in the 1930s and 1940s

**Yonina Murciano-Goroff, University of Oxford**

Charitable Donations and Cellular Deviations: The Impact of Philanthropists on Post-World War II Cancer Research

**BG11**

**Dr Elma Brenner, University of Cambridge**

Finding and interpreting evidence about the medical care of lepers in medieval Rouen, France

**Dr Elena Taddia**

Medicine and charity at Pammatone Hospital in Genoa: A place little known by historians of late medieval and early modern Italy

**SESSION THREE**  
**2.15-3.15pm**

**BG01**

**Dr Viviane Quirke**, On Researching the History of Cancer

**Professor Steven King**, Training session: Giving a conference paper

The following are representative extracts from participants' anonymous feedback:

General feedback was that the day was "*very useful, well-organized and friendly*" and that participants found it "*great for both networking and presenting my work*".

Regarding the focus on problems and issues in research it was said: "*I welcomed the opportunity to think about methodological problems rather than 'findings'*".

Although we had to split the papers into parallel sessions it was commented that "*speakers were grouped together well to cover similar ground*" and that "*helped focus the discussion*".

Professor King's talk on 'how to give a conference paper' was described simply as "*outstanding advice*" and it was suggested that in future there could be "*practice based workshops on giving the paper*" and other skills topics addressed such as writing grant proposals.

Amongst positive general comments, it appears to be the focus on methodological issues and the roundtable that worked through these issues that people found most valuable. This element was said to be "*thought-provoking*" and that in future there should be more methodological discussions. One participant said "*I found the whole experience extremely useful. The roundtable discussion raised quite a few ideas I'm now going to consider*".

When asked for suggestions for future workshops, ideas for a number of minor refinements were put forward. One participant simply requested "*the same format*".



Following the success of this event, a proposal was submitted to the Economic History Society for a grant of £1,830 to fund a series of workshops based on this model, but on new topics, over the 2009/2010 academic year. This application was successful. Future topics are set to include:

*Campaigning in Contemporary Society*  
*The History of Domestic Space and Voluntary Action*  
*Voluntary Action across Imperial Cultures*  
*Civil Society and the City: Medieval to Modern*