



WORKSHOP REPORT

PUBLIC HEALTH AND VOLUNTARY ACTION

A Workshop for Postgraduates and Early Career Researchers

London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

20 November 2010

FEBRUARY 2011



PUBLIC HEALTH AND VOLUNTARY ACTION

A Workshop for Postgraduates and Early Career Researchers

20 November 2010, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine



This one-day workshop offers postgraduates and early career researchers an opportunity to reflect on how historians might research and write histories relating to public health and voluntary action.

We welcome papers that emphasise the methodological, thematic or evidential problems, issues, or challenges speakers have encountered in their research into public health and voluntary action. Submissions are invited from all periods and locations. Papers might address, but are not limited to, issues relating to how charity and voluntary action have targeted public health, such as through:

- Philanthropic sector movements or public health campaigns
- The running of voluntary institutions, such as hospitals.
- Influence over sanitary reform and government legislation.

Papers presented in the first part of the workshop will provide the basis for a roundtable discussion led by Prof. Virginia Berridge and Dr. Alex Mold in the second part of the day.

Proposals of up to 300 words should be e-mailed to workshops@vahs.org.uk by 24 September 2010. Informal enquiries and requests to attend the workshop but not present a paper should also be sent to this address.

PUBLIC HEALTH AND VOLUNTARY ACTION

London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
November 20th 2010

PROGRAMME	
9.30 – 10.00am	REGISTRATION
10.00-11.15am	SESSION ONE
	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Ann Daly (Recent graduate of the National University of Ireland, Maynooth) <i>'The Shrieking Sisterhood': Philanthropy, the Contagious Diseases Acts and the <i>Dublin Medical Press</i> 1860-1890.</i>2. Charlotte Jones (University College London) – ABSENT <i>Researching David Urquhart's Turkish bath Movement as a Public Health Movement.</i>3. Ruth Davidson (Royal Holloway) Maternity and Child-Welfare Services in Croydon and Reigate, 1918-39.
11.15-11.45am	BREAK
11.45-1.00 pm	SESSION TWO
	<ol style="list-style-type: none">4. Emily Baughan (University of Bristol) <i>'Feeding Russian Children Today Guarantees a Cheap Breakfast Tomorrow;'</i> The Save and Children Fund, International Public Health and the Russian Famine, 1921-22.5. Julia Neville (University of Exeter) <i>'A body of lay men had been plunging into matters about which they know nothing': 'lay epidemiology' as a tool for the better understanding of the obstacles to practical co-operation between statutory and voluntary agencies.</i>6. Julian Simpson (University of Manchester) Exploring the impact of voluntary action by South Asian doctors on ethnic minority health (c.1948-c.1983)
1.00-2.00pm	LUNCH
2.00-3.15pm	SESSION THREE
	<ol style="list-style-type: none">7. Micky Willmott (London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine) Voluntary Organisations' perceptions of participating in local health policy and planning in England: Emerging findings from recent fieldwork.8. Hannah Waterson (University of Manchester) HIV Prevention in Japan – The role of non-governmental and volunteer groups.9. William McDougall (Glasgow Caledonian University) Challenging Narratives of the Past: SPAID and the Asbestos Public Health Disaster.

3.15-3.30 BREAK

3.30-5.00pm SESSION FOUR

Roundtable discussion with Prof. Virginia Berridge and Dr. Alex Mold of the Centre for History in Public Health at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

This session will address the problems and issues in researching public health and voluntary action raised by the speakers in the first three sessions of the day.

Event summary

In conjunction with the Centre for History in Public Health at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), the Voluntary Action History Society (VAHS) organised a day-long workshop for post-graduate students and early-career researchers on the subject of voluntary action and public health. Speakers were invited to give fifteen minute papers on their work and the methodological and thematic problems which they had encountered, followed by a brief, five-minute question and answer session. To round off the day, Virginia Berridge and Alex Mould led an hour-long round table discussion on themes and issues surrounding the study of the history of public health.

The day was well-attended, with eight speakers and over twenty participants in the round table discussions. Papers covered a wide range of themes from the nineteenth-century Contagious Diseases Act in Ireland to twenty-first century studies of local health care provision in England via twentieth-century AIDS prevention in Japan. Not all of the speakers were attached to history departments, which added to the variety.

The round table ended the workshop by drawing together the themes and problems which had been brought up during the course of the day. It was an opportunity for students to discuss issues with two of the Centre's academics. This has been a format followed by past workshops and was well-received. Participants submitted broad questions before the session started, but the discussion soon generated organically as issues were debated.

Feedback was generally positive. Those who attended enjoyed the breadth of topics but were encouraged by the fact that a number of different students were working in similar fields to their own. Often it can be difficult for students (particularly those in departments such as history of medicine or geography) to meet regularly with other historians of public health. It was a good opportunity to exchange ideas and to stimulate debate. Similarly, the academic participants were pleased with the way that the discussions had developed in the round table session.

The workshop was organised by Lynsey Cullen, a third-year PhD student from Oxford Brookes and Gareth Millward, a second-year PhD student at LSHTM. It was the first of a series of workshops planned for the academic year 2010/11 on the history of voluntary action.

Delegates

Gareth Millward – Co-organiser (LSHTM)

Lynsey Cullen – Co-organiser (Oxford Brookes University)

Virginia Berridge – Academic Chair (LSHTM)

Alex Mold – Academic Chair (LSHTM)

Emily Baughan – (University of Bristol)

Ann Daly – (National University of Ireland, Maynooth)

Ruth Davidson – (Royal Holloway)

Mike Esbester – (Oxford Brookes University)

Madeline Fowler – (Wellcome Unit Oxford)

George Gosling – (Oxford Brookes University)

Angela Grainger – (LSHTM)

Charlotte Jones – (University College London)

William McDougall – (Glasgow Caledonian University)

Julia Neville – (University of Exeter)

Julian Simpson – (University of Manchester)

Hannah Waterson – (University of Manchester)

Leah Wiener – (Kings College London)

Michaela Willmott – (LSHTM)

Organisers' Evaluation

The event was well attended, with slightly more participants than the March 2010 'Charity Begins at Home' workshop at Warwick. The subject matter of the Warwick event is probably closest to that of the LSHTM workshop, and perhaps works best as a means of comparison.

Speakers were chosen through a general call for papers. We received eleven responses, of which nine were chosen. The range of papers was broad, although all were of good quality. The two that were rejected were excluded because the organiser's felt that the subject matter was inappropriate to the brief of "voluntary action in public health". The workshop was advertised through the same means. We utilised the mailing list and contacts of the Centre for History in Public Health as well as the VAHS's own website. Direct soliciting of speakers was not considered the best way to approach this workshop, although the organisers were helped by the fact that the broad subject matter of the event allowed them to attract a satisfactory number of applications.

As Stephen Soanes stated in his report, around twenty delegates seems to be an ideal number. All who wanted to participate in the round table discussions were able to do so, and it also provided ample audience for the speakers. We scheduled nine speakers, although one dropped out. While disappointing, it did allow us to give more time to the papers in that session. Nine would appear to be the absolute maximum that one could fit comfortably into a one-room workshop such as this. To accommodate more would probably require a split between two lecture rooms, but that would also divide the audience. It would be inappropriate for workshops of this size, and would also mean that different delegates would have different experiences of the event to bring to the concluding round table discussion.

We did not have to turn anyone away from the event, but access did become an issue. The new London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine building at Tavistock Place is not well-signposted, and this caused some confusion for delegates. Further steps should be taken to both advertise the location of the venue as well as provide detailed directions for potential attendees.

We received good feedback on the range of papers. Many felt that within their departments there were few people working in the field of public health *and* voluntary action. Although few of us were working in the same time frame or the same geographical area, the commonalities were clear to see. It was a unique opportunity to meet like-minded historians at similar stages in their careers, and offered something different to general history of medicine or post graduate conferences on broader themes.

A major concern was the catering for the event. Despite the best efforts of the Centre for History in Public Health administrator, Ingrid James, there were issues with the price and ordering of food for the event. Some of the food quantities were well above what we asked for, and "hidden" costs pushed our budget somewhat. At LSHTM we were locked in to using a catering company with a monopoly. Poor communication also led to confusion with invoice payments. It would be worth in future making sure what options were available and what the full costs are expected to be.

Stephen Soanes recommended giving delegates five minutes to write down potential questions for the round table discussion. This was very successful. We chaired the session by asking questions from the written submissions and allowing the conversation to flow from there. As the discussion developed, we were able to highlight questions that had been asked, as well as redirect the flow in order to make sure all the subjects were covered. This avoided a "stilted" question/answer format and also gave us the freedom to explore themes that people seemed genuinely interested in.