

Life Histories in Mind: Mental Ill Health and Learning Disabilities in Context

Tuesday 21st July and Wednesday 22nd July 2026

Conference Location:

Manchester Metropolitan University
Dalton Building
Chester Street
Manchester
M1 5GD

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The organisers gratefully acknowledge the support of the Social History Society, History UK, and MMU's Histories of Race, Gender, Sexuality, and Identity (RGSi) Research Group.

We would also like to thank the Manchester Centre for Public Histories and Heritage, and Cultures of Disability Past and Present for their support.

Dr Jane Stockdale's keynote is supported by the AHRC-funded, *Asylum: Refugees and Mental Health* project. (AH/X011372/2)



Room Allocations

The welcome and keynotes will take place in **Lecture Theatre G.37**, located on the ground floor.

Strand A will take place in **1.07**

Strand B will be held in **1.08**.

A cloak room will be available in **1.10**.

A quiet room will also be available in **1.05**.

Day One: Tuesday 21st July

09.15 - 9.45: Registration, Tea/Coffee

09.45 - 10.00: Welcome

10.00 - 11.00: Keynote One

Chair: Rebecca Ball

Professor Catharine Coleborne – Aftercare Lives in the Twentieth Century

11.00 - 11.30: Tea/Coffee and pastries

11.30 - 13.00, Panel A1: Narrating Minds: Lived Experience, Institutions and Deinstitutionalisation

Chair: Effie Karageorgos

Rebecca Ball – ‘It was during this period that I suffered a fit of black depression, something that I had not experienced before nor since, and I hope I never will again’: Narratives of mental health in English working-class autobiographical accounts in the first half of the twentieth century.

Irene Geerts – On the wrong side of progress. Long-term psychiatric patients paying the price for reform in Dutch mental health care, 1950-2000

Amy Hall – The parliamentary Ombudsman and lived experience: how first-person narratives shaped mental health research in the late 20th century

11.30 - 1.00, Panel B1: Embodied Suffering, Institutional Power: Authority, Narrative, and Lived Experience in Nineteenth Century.

Chair: Laura Ugolini

Alessandro Bianchi – Hell is Empty: Sorrow and Demonic Perceptions of Mental Treatment in Early Nineteenth-Century France

Matthew Bayly – Biteing Another Pauper with whom she slept: Lunatics, Idiots and Imbeciles under the New Poor Law, c.1836-1852

Janka Kovács – Advocacy, Mediation, and Narrative Constraint in Late Nineteenth-Century Hungarian Psychiatric Care

1.00 - 2.00 Lunch

2.00 - 3.30, Panel A2: Interpreting Distress: War and Wellbeing

Chair: Rebecca Wynter

Jozefien De Bock and Ute Oswald – Crossing borders and boundaries: Belgian refugees and the asylum

Laura Ugolini – Talking about mental illness: mental health, masculinity and the Middlesex Military Service Appeal Tribunal, 1916-1918

Effie Karageorgos – ‘Life outside is sometimes very sad’: Australian ex-soldier self-advocacy in Rockingham, 1961-1975

2.00 - 3.30, Panel B2, Revolutionary Life Stories in Mind: Case Studies of Political Activism and Dissent, 19th- 21st centuries (Panel Presentation/discussion)

Julie V. Gottlieb – “Mrs Evelyn Fuller: The Political Meaning(s) and Diagnosis of her Mental Illness and Suicide

Gábor Csikós – Psychiatrisation of Mind and Society: Patient Self-Interpretations of Mental Distress in Hungary, 1919

David Stack – The competing politics of depression: mental crisis and mental breakdown in the autobiographies of John Stuart Mill and Francis Galton

Dina Rezk – The Egyptian ‘Arab Spring’ and Revolutionary Trauma: the creative arts and mental health in 21st Century Egypt

3.30 - 3.50 Tea/Coffee

3.50 - 4.50 Panel A3: Making and Unmaking Madness in Art, Heritage, and Literature

Chair: Dina Rezk

Stefanie Gil Franco – Making memory in the contemporary asylum: art practices and marginalised heritage

Jan Connett – In Stitching and in Health

3.50- 4.50 Panel B3: Gendered Minds, Gendered Records: Women's Experiences and Representations of Mental Distress

Chair: Rebecca Ball

Rebecca Wynter and Len Smith – Private Asylum Stories: Women Patients and Proprietors in England, c.1700-1900

Alex Hill – 'Mass Observation, Life Writing, and the End of Nerves'

6.00: Evening Social Event at Rain Bar Manchester

Event Location

Rain Bar
80 Great Bridgewater Street
Manchester
M1 5JG

Day Two: Wednesday 22nd July

9.30 - 10.00: Welcome Tea/Coffee

10.00 - 11.00: Keynote Two

Chair: Rob Ellis

Dr Jane Stockdale – ‘It is Ours’: Life Histories in the Museum

11.00 - 11.30: Tea/Coffee

11.30 - 1.00, Panel A4: Love and loss in the life histories of people with learning disabilities (Panel Discussion)

Chair: Rob Ellis

Owen Barden, Nathaniel Lawford, Noelle McCormack, Liz Tilley

11.30 – 1.00, Panel B4: Beyond the Archive: Digital Representation, Visibility, and the Reimagining of Mental Health Histories

Chair: Leonie Chesworth

Carolyn Donohue – York’s Mental Health: The Past, Present and Future of The Retreat

Cecilia Rodéhn – Patients’ histories and a post-asylum landscape – teaching social sustainability

Helen Atherton - Finding Ivy: A life worthy of life

1.00 - 2.00 Lunch

2.00 - 3.30, Panel A5: Insights into Patient Lives: The professional and the personal

Chair: Len Smith

Tuhina Ganguly – Insightful Lives: Lived Experiences and Mental Healthcare in a Rehabilitation Centre, India

Lisa Edwards – 'Beyond the Lunatic Asylum of the Nineteenth Century – Its Legacy, My Family, and the Madness Within'

Sarah Bergman – Patient Lives from the Words of Doctors: A Poststructuralist Reading of Case Files from the Ontario Hospital, Woodstock, 1919-1968

2.00 - 3.30, Panel B5: Life Histories and Learning Disabilities

Chair: Helen Atherton

Hannelore Braeken – Affective citizenship: Emotional lives and social networks of people with mild intellectual disabilities in the Netherlands, 1970–2015

Dawn Cavanagh – From hospital to Home: 'Jack's story' *TRIGGER WARNING*

Andrew McTominey – Learning disabilities and creative histories of Calderdale

3.30 - 3.50 Tea/Coffee

3.50 - 4.50, Panel A6: Defining and Diagnosing Mental (In) Capacity

Chair: Bonnie Evans

Amberlea Jones – Developing Diagnostic Systems in Psychiatry: The Newcastle Scale

Sonu Shamdasani – C. G. Jung, Forensic Psychiatrist

5.00 - 5.30 Closing Remarks and Closing Drinks Social