

Navigating the nineteenth-century institution

A one day conference at the University of Leicester on 20 June 2019

Ken Edwards Building, Lecture Theatre 2



The nineteenth-century might be conceived, for Britain at least, as the age of the institution. The two most potent symbols of this age – the workhouse and the asylum – were joined by voluntary hospitals, specialist institutions for the care and confinement of those with physical impairments and (increasingly) places for the containment or moral reform of children such as children’s homes. Against this backdrop, the central aim of our conference is to ask how these institutions were experienced and navigated by those notionally subject to their rules and regimes. A full programme can be found below. Attendance is free of charge but please do confirm your attendance (if only for planning of tea and coffee) to Professor Steve King by email: sak28@le.ac.uk,



Arts & Humanities
Research Council



Experiencing Nineteenth-Century Welfare Institutions; University of Leicester, 20 June 2019

9.00-9.30: Welcome and Tea

9.30-11.00: Session 1: Form and Function

‘Construction by Committee: Building the Hitchin Union Workhouse’, Karen Rothery, University of Hertfordshire

‘“A curious absence”: Tracing maternal deaths in Irish workhouses during the late-nineteenth century’, Judy Bolger, Trinity College Dublin

‘Casual Paupers and the Metropolitan Workhouse’, Alistair Robinson, UCL London

11.00-11.30: Tea

11.30-13.00: Session 2: Navigation

‘Navigating Work – Patients Responses to Employment Rules within the Nineteenth Century Asylum’, Dan Jewson, Exeter and Cardiff Universities

‘Navigating the Nineteenth-Century Institution as a Disabled Child: Kindness and the Waifs and Strays Society’, Steven Taylor, University of Leicester

‘Procedures, Rules and Regulations: navigating the New Poor Law workhouse’, Paul Carter, The National Archives

13.00-14.00: Lunch

14.00-15.30: Session 3: Learning, Knowing and Using Rules

‘Resistance to Moral Treatment: Pauper Deviance in the Nineteenth Century Lunatic Asylum’, Cara Dobbing, University of Leicester

‘Pity my distress’: Solicitations of aid from Barbadian paupers to the Inspector of Poor after the 1880 Poor Relief Act’, Ayshah Johnston, University of Newcastle

‘Scenes from the Life of a Sufferer’: Patient Writing in the Nineteenth-Century Asylum’, Laura Blair, Queen Mary, University of London

15.30-16.00 Tea

16.00-16.45: 'Where do institutions fit into the life-cycles of the poor over the long nineteenth-century?', Steven King, University of Leicester