



PRISONS ASYLUMS WORKHOUSES

INSTITUTIONS IN IRISH HISTORY

A 2-day conference at PRONI, Belfast 13th to 14th June 2019

Residential institutions in Ireland have a long history stretching back at least to the friaries, monasteries and abbeys of the medieval period. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, following enlightenment reformist movements, workhouses, asylums, prisons and other institutions were built in ever-greater numbers. As the numbers and types of residential institutions for the care, confinement and/or reform of various marginal groups proliferated, critics questioned their effectiveness, the living conditions prevailing within and their very humanity, questions that still loom large in Ireland today.

This conference seeks to bring together researchers at every level (postgraduate, early career and established) to assess the 'state of the discipline' in relation to research on the history of institutions in Ireland. The organisers (Dr Gillian Allmond and Max Meulendijks, QUB; Triona Waters, University of Limerick) would be particularly interested to receive papers on the following subject areas (papers to be 15 to 20 minutes in length), but all topics relating to institutions will be considered. Panel suggestions are also welcome:

- Sources, archives and oral histories: challenges and opportunities presented by the nature and extent of primary source material
- Materiality of institutions: from the buildings themselves to the shackles and straitjackets that are emblematic of certain institutions
- Spatiality of institutions: how can we understand the internal spaces and external landscapes of Irish institutions?
- Treatments and therapies: what practices, medical and otherwise, were intended to heal and/or reform?
- Institutions as heritage: how are the buildings still remaining in our landscape presented as heritage? How do we deal with the problems that dark heritage presents?
- Patient/inmate voices: how do we get at the experiences and responses of patients and inmates, given the nature of institutional records?
- Emotional history of institutions: how do we write the emotional history of institutions, from the perspective of inmates/patients and as a society?
- Institutions and engagement: how do we engage groups outside academia with the history of institutions.

Researchers of Irish institutions seek to answer questions about the nature of institutionalisation here, particularly the experiences of patients and inmates. Recent work on Irish institutions has included a major Wellcome-funded project led by **Associate Professor Catherine Cox*** (UCD) and Professor Hilary Marland (University of Warwick) which examines health provision for prisoners in Britain and Ireland, while the Dept of Health (NI) has commissioned a history of mother and baby homes and Magdalene laundries in Northern Ireland (Professor Sean O'Connell, QUB). The Prisons Memory Archive is a collection of 175 filmed walk-and-talk recordings with those who had a connection with Armagh Gaol and the Maze/Long Kesh (**Professor Cahal McLaughlin*** QUB). **Dr Olwen Purdue*** (QUB) has led a project on welfare and public health in Belfast and the north of Ireland 1800-1973. ***Confirmed conference speakers to date.**

Palgrave Macmillan have expressed an interest in publishing an edited volume comprising a selection of papers from the conference.

The call for papers closes on **31st March 2019**. Abstracts not exceeding 250 words in length, together with a short biography should be sent to Dr Gillian Allmond at irishinstitutions@gmail.com

The conference will take place over two days, 13th to 14 June 2019 at the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI), which is located in the Titanic Quarter of Belfast. Conference events will include a wine reception and tour of Clifton House, the former poorhouse for Belfast; a conference dinner at Crumlin Road Gaol (including a tour of the former prison) and a walking tour of West Belfast led by former republican and loyalist prisoners. PRONI staff will lead tours of the building during the conference and present selected archive records.

A conference website will be launched shortly.

The conference is supported by the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) and there is no charge to attend. Separate charges will be made for meals and events.