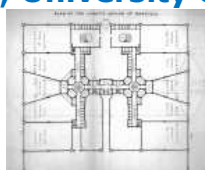


## CENTRE FOR THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE SEMINAR SERIES 2011-2012 SUMMER TERM

Tuesday, 15 May 2012 (Week 4)  
5.00 pm – Ramphal Building Room R.014

**Dr Claire Jones**  
**(Director of the Museum of the History of Science, Technology and  
Medicine, University of Leeds)**



### ***Bodily Concerns: Disease and Public Health in Wakefield Asylum, 1832 – 1930***

In studying the history of public asylums, historians have understandably focused their attention on various medical attempts to treat mental illness. However, asylum medical superintendents and their staff were just as concerned with the bodily health of their patients as their mental state. In fact, improving the bodily health of patients appeared to have become an asylum priority by the late nineteenth century, once asylum superintendents became increasingly aware of the ineffectiveness of 'moral treatment.' Asylums were communities of their own meaning infectious diseases were easily and quickly spread among their transient populations. Sanitary conditions were therefore of the utmost importance to restrict illnesses from becoming epidemic.

As an asylum with permanently one of the largest populations and some of the least sanitary infrastructure, West Riding Lunatic Asylum in Wakefield was the perfect breeding ground for all manner of illnesses. Moreover, its scientifically progressive medical superintendents were always keen to adopt any public health measures that appeared to promise limiting the impact of these illnesses on the patient population. This paper thus seeks to analyse how diseases of the body, as opposed to the mind, were diagnosed, treated and monitored in the West Riding Asylum between 1832 and 1930. By providing this broad overview, this paper therefore aims to provide an untypical emphasis on the medicalisation of the asylum.



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