

Institution: Swansea University		
Unit of Assessment: 28		
Title of case study: Disability and Industrial Society: Enriching public understanding of disability in Britain's industrial past		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2003-2016		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
David Turner	Professor of History	2005-present
Anne Borsay	Professor of Medical Humanities	2002-2014
Mike Mantin	Research Fellow	2012-2016
Daniel Blackie	Research Fellow	2012-2015
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014-2018		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact <p>Research at Swansea University (SU) has provided pioneering insights into the neglected experience of disablement among coal workers between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries. Its presentation in a leading national museum exhibition, and through popular history publications, has had an effect on the awareness and understanding of disability history by museum audiences, people living with disabilities today, the general public and public sector organisations. The research has had an effect on the behaviour of disabled people to produce their own community history projects. It has influenced the policies of archives to give more prominence to disability history in their collections and bid for funding to catalogue and conserve these holdings. It has also had an effect on the activities of a local health board to reconsider its present-day health and disability policies.</p>		
2. Underpinning research <p>The underpinning research arose from a 5 year Wellcome Trust Programme Award, 'Disability and Industrial Society: A Comparative Cultural History of British Coalfields 1780-1948' (GBP972,500; 2011-16), led by SU in collaboration with academics at Aberystwyth, Glasgow Caledonian and Strathclyde Universities. Originally led by Borsay (SU), building on her prior research on rehabilitation in the South Wales (SW) Coalfield, Turner took over the reins following her death in 2014. The project is the first to analyse the impact of industrialization on attitudes towards and experiences of disability, focusing on coal – an industry crucial to Britain's industrial development and that had high accident and disease levels. Responses to disability were compared in three distinctive geographical areas: SW, North East England and Scotland. Alongside archival research, researchers in each region have undertaken a programme of public engagement (PE) coordinated by SU project leaders. These included roadshows at Woodhorn Museum and Scotland's National Mining Museum to deepen public understanding (PU) of the disabling legacy of coalmining, workshops with disability groups, medical practitioners and coal industry survivors, and the creation of school resources. These activities ran concurrently with the research, thereby enabling the sharing of findings as well as shaping the research outputs through constructive engagement and consultation with potential users. While the project has a national focus, the engagement activities centred on raising local awareness of the 'hidden histories' of disability in an industry that had a profound influence, not just on the economic development of these regions, but also on their cultural identity and social relations. This case study draws on research examining the relationship between the national and local dimensions of disability in coalmining in the period 1780-1948 undertaken by Turner and Borsay, with Blackie and Mantin (project research fellows, SU); PhD research on the literary and cultural representations of disability in novels and other</p>		

fictional works set in the SW coalfield 1900-1948, undertaken by Jones and supervised by Dr Kirsti Bohata (Dept of English, SU), and additional research on disability in the SW coal industry funded by the project undertaken by Dr Steven Thompson and Dr Ben Curtis (Aberystwyth University).

Several key themes and findings of SU research underpin the impact claimed in this case study:

1. Although the coal industry was known for its high level of fatalities, there were many more people injured or left with permanent disabilities whose experiences have not received historical attention before. [R1, R3, R4]
2. The research has challenged the notion that disability inevitably led to the end of a person's working life by showing that the occupationally diverse nature of the coal industry allowed opportunities for those left impaired by accidents to return to work. [R1, R3, R4]
3. The coal industry and its workers, via Friendly Societies, Trade Unions and Mutual Aid societies, were innovative in responding to disability via sickness benefits, provision of medical care and assistive technologies. [R1, R2, R3, R4]
4. The research has explored the moral underpinnings of healthcare and welfare, showing that modern debates about eligibility for assistance were not new. [R1]
5. The research has uncovered an innovative range of source materials, demonstrating the archival richness of resources for understanding disability in Wales' industrial past. [R1, R2, R3, R4]

3. References to the research

The underpinning research is based on peer-reviewed funding, two peer-reviewed co-authored monographs, and substantial book chapters.

(a) Research Grants

Grantees	Title	Sponsor	Duration (dates)	Value
Anne Borsay (PI 2011-14); David Turner (CI 2011-14; PI 2014-16); Kirsti Bohata (CI); Steven Thompson (CI); Arthur McIvor (CI); Vicky Long (CI)	Disability and Industrial Society: A Comparative Cultural History of British Coalfields 1780-1948' [Ref: 095948/Z/11/Z]	Wellcome Trust	2011-16	GBP972,500

(b) Publications:

R 1. David Turner and Daniel Blackie, *Disability in the Industrial Revolution: Physical Impairment in British Coalmining, 1780-1880* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), 92,000 word print and open access book [ISBN 9781526118158]

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK513198/>

R 2. Anne Borsay, "Fit to work": Representing Rehabilitation in the South Wales Coalfield during the Second World War', in Anne Borsay (ed.), *Medicine in Wales, c.1800-2000: Public Service or Private Commodity?* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), 128-53.

R 3. Daniel Blackie, 'Disability and Work in the Industrial Revolution in Britain', in Michael Rembis et al. eds, *The Oxford Handbook of Disability History* (Oxford University Press, 2018) [8000 word peer reviewed book chapter]

<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190234959.013.11>

R 4. Kirsti Bohata, Alexandra Jones, Mike Mantin and Steven Thompson, *Disability in Industrial Britain: A Cultural History of Illness, Injury and Impairment in the Coal Industry 1880-1948* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), 100,000 word print and open access book [ISBN 9781526124319] <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/32040279>

4. Details of the impact

The public history of coalmining has excluded the story of disability and the experiences of impaired coalminers who continued to work in the industry, thus reinforcing negative stereotypes of disabled people's economic inactivity. Museums, archives and diverse audiences, from health professionals to disabled people's organisations, have benefited from media engagement, workshops, training and a new exhibition based on our research.

(a) Museums: SU's research enhanced PU through the **creation and response to an exhibition**, 'From Pithead to Sickbed and Beyond: the Buried History of Disability in the Coal Industry before the NHS', produced in collaboration with the National Waterfront Museum (NWM), Swansea, the lead national museum for interpreting industry and society in Wales, visited by a wide local, national and international public.

The NWM exhibition ran in June to October 2015, and at the National Library of Wales (NLW) December 2015 to April 2016). A travelling version visited the Rhondda Heritage Centre, Glamorgan Archives and Gwent Archives. The exhibition challenged the preconception that disability was necessarily the end of a miner's working life and incorporated artefacts and illustrations, literary texts for a listening post, and guided interpretation. Supporting materials were posted on the project's blog (4771 visits, June to August 2015, from the UK, USA, Brazil, China, Germany, Japan, France, Canada and the Netherlands). [C1] The exhibition led to the NWM **introducing disability as a permanent theme in its industrial history interpretation**, with a new panel created in collaboration with SU, thus **enhancing the inclusivity** of the Museum's displays and of its educational activities, with new material on disability added to its KS2 Coal resource.

(b) PU: National and International reach was exemplified through media articles in BBC Ouch! Disability blog (160,000 views), *BBC History Magazine* (readership 348,000) and *Who Do You Think You Are?* (readership 51,000) [C2], The exhibition was visited by approximately 48,000 people at the NWM and NLW [C3]. This **new cultural product enriched and expanded the lives, imaginations and sensibilities of groups, including members of the public and families of former miners**. In highlighting an aspect of the Welsh industrial past previously ignored in museum interpretations, the **exhibition extended the range and improved the quality of evidence for an important aspect of the region's history and identity**. The NWM Director said the exhibition had enabled visitors '*to understand in greater depth an important aspect of the human history of Welsh industrialisation, which is the main purpose of this museum*' [C4]. Of 50 face-to-face NWM visitor interviewees, 22% were from Swansea, 58% from elsewhere in the UK, and 20% from overseas, including Australia, New Zealand, Germany and the Czech Republic. 88% of respondents said they learned something new about coalmining and disability, and 74% said the exhibition had made them want to find out more about the history of disability or coalmining. About a third had family links with coalmining and their comments revealed the importance of the exhibition in connecting with familial experiences of work in the industry. 34% had experience of disability, higher than the UK average (21%), indicating that the exhibition was successful in **reaching audiences wishing to see their experiences represented in museums** [C5].

(c) Archival Practice: Hosting the travelling exhibition at Glamorgan and Gwent Archives in 2016 raised awareness of the importance disability history, **leading archivists to re-examine their collections to more clearly delineate sources relating to disability within larger medical collections**. Our research formed the basis of supporting letters for successful WT bids by Glamorgan and Gwent Archives to catalogue medical records. According to the Senior Archivist, Glamorgan Archives, the exhibition and related events such as public talks '*have attracted existing and new visitors to the Archives*', enabling collections to be seen '*in a new and different light*'. [C6]

(d) Citizen Research: Our research **enabled disabled people and groups to discover and present their own past.** The CEO Disability Wales, said the exhibition made a '*significant and lasting contribution to raising awareness and increasing the understanding of disabled people's history*' [C7]. Disabled volunteers from Swansea Access for Everyone (SAFE) recorded podcasts discussing the exhibition's benefits in contextualising contemporary issues such as access to welfare benefits, fitness for work and under-representation of disabled people in public life.[C8] *Shoddy Exhibition* (Leeds 2016) drew on the research as a model for connecting disability history with disabled people's lives today [C9]. Inspired by our exhibition to create their own, Caerphilly charity Disability Can Do volunteers trained by Turner subsequently displayed the touring version of the Pithead to Sickbed exhibition alongside their own at Blackwood Miners' institute, the Winding House, New Tredegar, and Gwent Archives in October-November 2018, incorporating our key findings.

(e) Healthcare Professionals: A **practitioner workshop with ABMU Health Board and Disability Wales** (April 2014) used our research as a means of facilitating dialogue and reflection on current practices. 22 of the 28 participants, who included the Health Board Chair, noted that it had raised awareness and understanding of disability and coalmining. Feedback reported that the research had reinforced '*the importance of patient stories and keeping patients central to what we do*' and that it had been '*helpful to get people from different disciplines together to share knowledge and experience*' [C10]

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

C1. Disability and Industrial Society project blog, including podcasts: <http://www.dis-ind-soc.org.uk/en/blog.htm>; visitor figures from Google Analytics reported in 2014-15 annual report; <http://www.dis-ind-soc.org.uk/en/annual-reports.htm>

C2. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/blogs-ouch-27975766>. Data on views provided by BBC, (email, 27 June 2014); Matt Elton, 'Revealing the Hidden Stories of Britain's Disabled Coalminers', *BBC History Magazine*, July 2015; David Turner, 'Was Life Better for Disabled People in the Past?', *BBC History Magazine*, June 2016; circulation figures supplied by *BBC History Magazine*, (email, 21 April 2016); Mike Martin, 'Out of Work, Out of Pocket', *Who Do you Think You Are?* August 2016; Readership figures: <http://www.immediate.co.uk/brands/who-do-you-think-you-are/>.

C3. Visitor numbers provided by NWM (email, 7 October 2015); and National Library of Wales (email 20 September 2016).

C4. Director of NWM testimony (email 21 September 2016).

C5. Summary of interviews with 50 visitors to the 'From Pithead to Sickbed' exhibition, conducted for NWM, August to September 2015.

C6. Richard Burton Archives: <http://www.dis-ind-soc.org.uk/en/blog.htm?id=43>; Glamorgan Archives: <https://glamarchives.gov.uk/2016/07/27/glamorgan-archives-secures-funding-to-catalogue-and-preserve-national-coal-board-records/>; Gwent Archives: <https://archives.wales/2018/06/05/welcome-trust-project-at-gwent-archives/>; Testimony from Senior Archivist Glamorgan Archives (letter 18 November 2019).

C7. Testimony from CEO Disability Wales (email, 21 September 2016).

C8. Exhibition podcasts with members of SAFE and RNIB: <https://player.fm/series/1175384>

C9. <https://shoddyexhibition.wordpress.com/2016/03/06/disabled-mill-workers-shoddy-fever-harsh-times-positive-contributions/>

C10. Summary of attendee feedback questionnaires and selected feedback from health board participants.