Julie Anderson (University of Kent, UK)

A Spectacle of Cure: royalty, hospitals and disabled servicemen in Britain in the First World War

The paper juxtaposes the hospital’s role in managing the private medical treatment of male bodies within the intimate space of the hospital and the spectacle of cure that was necessary to assuage the public’s interest in disabled servicemen. The British royal family, as patron and supporter of disabled ex-servicemen, maintained a public and an intimate relationship with these men. Many members of the royal family demonstrated their attitude by visiting disabled men in various hospitals. The public followed suit, as the royal family led the way in demonstrating to the nation the ways that the men should be viewed, constructed and understood. However, the lure of glimpsing members of the royal family ensured that these visits were popular public events. Many people looked to royalty to provide an example of proper modes of behaviour. Whilst the royal family were certainly performing their allotted task in publicly caring for disabled servicemen, the complex interplay between the identity of the wounded and disabled men, was also about notions of masculinity and femininity in relation to royalty. While the disabled veterans from the First World War required sympathy and understanding, they also occupied a space in the nation’s consciousness as heroes, and the royal family responded to them in a way that up until that point they had not dealt with any other deserving group. Overall, the paper will show that during and after the First World War, the royal family influenced the nation in understanding the war disabled through a shared interest in their reconstruction, provided an example in a range of responses from the stoic to the emotional, and participated in a reconfiguration of their identity.
The causalities of the First World War were unprecedented in every way. In addition to an extraordinary death toll, approximately 21 million people returned home permanently disabled. People were afflicted by the most terrible injuries ever seen and novel changes in weaponry accounted for injuries to the eye: the use of artillery, hand grenades, gas attacks and small-arms fire. The use of poison gas left ten thousands of victims blinded. After the cessation of the atrocities governments were left with the enormous task of the rehabilitation of veterans. This task posed a particular challenge because due to the improvement of sanitary conditions, veterans returning home survived for much longer and in much larger numbers than ever before. German authorities recognized the crucial role of employment in the restoration of veterans’ dignity and sense of usefulness; it turned them into self-respecting tax-paying citizens. It was therefore a crucial objective to enable the return of even the most seriously disabled people to work. But the provision of the necessary jobs was not yet, in itself, sufficient. Disabled veterans required mobility aids to reach their workplace and prostheses were made available to replace lost limbs. But the mobility problems of those who had lost their eyesight remained unresolved until the idea of training dogs for guiding veterans emerged. The introduction of guide dog training would have hardly been impossible without the manifold experiences which the German police and army had amassed with the use of dogs, alone in the war Germany and its allies employed approximately 4000 dogs in the work as messenger-, rescue- and sanitary dogs. Equally crucial was the appreciation of the companionship that dogs provided for combatants at the front. In the absence of their families, homesick soldiers developed a special bond with the animals in their surroundings, frequently even taking them home after the war. It is unlikely that the guide dog training could have been launched without the generous support system of the Weimar Republic, which embraced the cost of training and keeping of dogs into the ‘welfare package’ that it made available to veterans. 1916 saw the opening of the first guide dog training school in the world in the German city of Oldenburg, where the headquarters of the German Ambulance for Ambulance Dogs had been established. Initially, guide dogs, mostly German Shepherds, were provided exclusively for war veterans, and accordingly, they were called ‘war guide dogs’ (Kriegsblindenführhund). The experience of possessing guide dogs was so bonding that it led to the development of a distinct identity on the part of veterans. A vibrant platform for the expression of this identity was provided by the short-lived journal Blindenführhund, which was exclusively intended for guide dog owners and the journal Kriegsblinde which also included a generous coverage. Great care was given to the matching of the blind person and the dog. Insecure people were matched with confident dogs, nervous people with calm dogs and placid people with dynamic dogs. The scheme was an overwhelming success and it was generally acknowledged that the dogs also had a therapeutic effect. Guide dogs became familiar figures on the streets of Germany and in 1918 even a prize contest was organized in which veterans were asked to answer the question: ‘what do I value most in my dog’? The essays and poems submitted for the competition were published in a separate volume and they provide a very good source for the assessment of the guide dogs’ role in the formation of German war veterans’ identity.
“Disorientated in time, space and identity:” Understanding the experience of institutionalisation as told by the mentally disabled war veterans in post-war Yorkshire, 1924-1931.

On admission to The Ministry of Pensions Hospital, Kirkburton in 1924, Cyrus A was described in the case notes as being “dull, listless and apathetic, disorientated in time, space and identity.” He was just one of over 300 ex-servicemen who were suffering from mental breakdown exacerbated by ‘war strain’ and institutionalised within the hospital. The hospital, which was situated in the West Riding of Yorkshire, was created and run by the Ministry of Pensions in the years 1924-1931. The intention behind the creation of the hospital was to separate mentally afflicted servicemen from the double stigmas of pauperisation and lunacy by removing them from the Pauper Lunatic Asylums where they had been institutionalised, in some instances since the end of the war. By providing a case study of a little-known hospital, which was created after the excitement and enthusiasm of war had passed away, this paper will add to the as yet limited historiography of the experiences of mental health care for mentally distressed war servicemen in Britain after the armistice and into the interwar years.

My paper seeks to uncover the stories of the men who were incarcerated within this hospital, and attempts to identify their diverse responses to their mental disabilities and hospitalisation. The casebook files of these men are saturated with letters, notes, and appeals written by the patients, which offer a fascinating, and rare insight into the minds of the mentally-ill ex-servicemen who found themselves confined within the Ministry of Pensions Hospital in the mid-1920s. By utilising these letters alongside the casebook records, I will show how regardless of the patients’ illnesses, the historian can attempt to make sense of these ex-servicemen’s experiences and thus evaluate them as valid and legitimate perceptions of history. In the words of Fiona Reid, “It is not easy to find the words of ordinary shell-shocked men, and once found they are not always easy to understand.” Despite these difficulties however, once found these words and perceptions of history should be prioritised in order to retell the tale of institutionalisation from the patients’ points of views and understand how these mentally disabled ex-servicemen responded to their illnesses and experiences. After all, it is only through understanding the lives and thoughts of these men that we can begin to properly remember them.
The Politics of Wounds: Military Patients and Medical Power in the First World War

This paper discusses the main threads in my book that will be published by Oxford University Press in time for this conference. The Politics of Wounds: Military Patients and Medical Power in the First World War asks what does it mean to be wounded in war - and how can history help us to assess the legacies of this significant outcome of conflict? It examines WW1 as an industrialised and medicalised war that created new systems to treat the mass wounding of British and Imperial soldiers. It investigates how these systems fundamentally shaped medical services and military policies regarding the disabled that have impacted on soldiers, civilians and practitioners of rehabilitation ever since. The research argues that there was a significant degree of political contestation about how the State would care for its wounded men. This involved political wrangling at the highest level, commissions of enquiry, media propaganda campaigns for civilian and troop morale, as well as behind-the-scenes conflicts between politicians, military personnel and medical practitioners (both regulars and civilian consultants). Veteran charities and welfare lobbyists also mobilised the wounded body with its own agendas, influencing social and economic values that shaped public attitudes to disabled men. The outcome of wounding for men was often varying degrees of physical and social disability, poverty and personal dislocation, and it was families that had to meet the financial and emotional gap between the state's provisions and welfare support. When families were not able to, disabled men experienced severe isolation. Resisting the myths of the wounded as either victims or heroes, I explore the complexity of individual experiences, including how pain was dealt with, alongside recovery and poverty, and how masculine embodied identity was reconstructed after wounding. Men’s reactions to pain – and the bio psychosocial framing of pain – are a key concern, as I delve into the complex social life of hospitals and the culture inside the wards. The paper brings to light untapped sources from the rank and file in conjunction with official documents; while the story of war is often told from a powerful institutional perspective, I examine social interactions between practitioners and patients, with a particular focus on the military patient as a social agent. While the focus is the First World War, this study has illuminated the ongoing social, economic and political value of the wounded body, noting WW1 as a turning point with a considerable legacy for the 21st century, especially in regard to government policies and wrangles over pensions, as well as charitable, media and public discourses. We will see how the First World War shaped the conditions of military medicine and the social meaning of wounds and disablement in the present day. The Politics of Wounds brings together the study of military and medical history with the social and cultural history of war, and draws upon both spatial theory as a way of understanding the principles of medical evacuation, as well as phenomenological analyses of the wounded body 'that matters' (Butler), as well as anthropological and sociological studies into social relations and institutional behaviour. I also use a form of Bakhtinian queer theory to think about intimate social relations in the intense carnivalesque atmosphere of the hospital, where gender and social relations were turned upside down momentarily. Disability studies is also critical in helping to question the embodied reality of war wounds and the political implications of disablement in war.

The blinded veteran of the First World War is the centre of attention in John Singer Sargent’s *Gassed* painting. Men walk in procession, each touching the other, feeling the ground beneath their feet. They cannot see the world around them as their eyes are covered with a blindfold. They are the victims of mustard gas poisoning and stumble towards a casualty clearing station on the Western Front, as around them men recover from the effects and a game of football continues in the background. This painting by Sargent is viewed as one of the most famous depictions of the ‘blinded’ soldier of the First World War in British Art. On further investigation however it is found that this work does not show permanently blinded soldiers as these men were probably back fighting on the front line within a few hours as the standard treatment for mustard gas poisoning was to place a wet bandage over the eyes. A comprehensive examination and comparison of visual and cultural depictions of the blinded British soldier of the First World War is one that has largely been neglected. This distinct disability caused by conflict is not alone in being overlooked in terms of historical research and this is somewhat surprising when one is confronted with the wealth of historical research and literature on the mental injuries of war typified by the work on shellshock and also by statistics. There were some 23,000 men who were discharged from the British Army during the First World War with seriously damaged eyesight. Of these nearly two thousand were blinded. This paper will therefore ask why this disability does not feature in art in this period in Britain, compared to, for example, Germany and Otto Dix’s work. An exception to this is the excellent publication by Joanne Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men’s Bodies, Britain and the Great War*. This research concentrates on those who lost limbs in war. This paper will also discuss why *Gassed* has been misinterpreted as showing permanently blinded men and have critical interpretations of this work been correct or do we still have more to discover?

The writers John Galsworthy and D. H. Lawrence and their involvement with the blinded soldier will also be discussed in this paper. Galsworthy, best known for the Forsyte Saga was a regular contributor to ‘Gift Books’ for blinded and disabled soldiers and D. H. Lawrence’s ‘The Blind Man’ is a story that looks at the life post war of the permanently blinded veteran. This story is told from the view point of Maurice Previn, a blinded veteran and his wife Isabel. It is in this story that ‘the cancelled man’ term is used to describe a blinded soldier. This is an intriguing term and one that when termed with Sargent’s depiction sheds new light on this topic. In 2012 it is very rare to see a blinded soldier on television and the wounded of war are barely discussed. The dead are remembered in memorials and tend to receive more newsprint then those wounded and living. The wounded are soon forgotten. It is hoped this paper will give a voice to those blinded in battle and question are own perceptions of the blinded soldier.
The mutilated Belgian: An analysis of the invalid Belgian soldier’s image in the newspaper ‘De Belgische verminkte’, 1917-1940

From 1917 onwards the invalid Belgian soldiers who had to be rehabilitated in the national re-educational institute at Port-Villez (North of France) published a journal which was entitled ‘De Belgische verminkte’. Up till today this journal aims at informing the Belgian disabled soldiers about a wide range of things. Our intention is to analyze the issues published in between the two worlds wars in order to get a better view on how the image of the Belgian disabled soldiers changed throughout this interwar period. As this journal was published by disabled soldiers themselves we will try to reconstruct more in particular how the Belgian mutilated soldiers constructed their own identity and what kind of obstacles were reported which prevented them from realizing this identity construction. It is precisely this tension between societal forces and personal admirations which we would like to map out. Given the enormous amount of source material we have decided not to analyze all of the volumes published in the interwar period. Besides the first three issues (published during the war) we have decided to examine each five years one volume: this makes that the source material we will make use of will consist of the following volumes: 1917, 1918, 1919 & 1920, 1925, 1930, 1935, 1938, 1940 & 1942. On the basis of this selection of volumes (each volume consists of approximately 25 issues) we in particular would like to see how the established cultures of care match or do not match with the envisioned identities of the disabled soldiers themselves. By focusing on the neglected Belgian case and zooming in on the way official discourses intersect with personal experiences we aim at making a meaningful contribution to the existing literature about the history of rehabilitation of disabled soldiers from the First World War.
Study of the First World War highlights two competing views of deafness: the medical/pathological model, which diagnoses deafness as an affliction to be remedied, and the cultural/linguistic model, which celebrates deafness as a minority identity to be cultivated and preserved. Accounts in Deaf periodicals reveal that Deaf people in Europe and the United States sought to enlist with their militaries but were barred on account of their perceived disability. The return of war-deafened soldiers further complicates this view of deafness as a handicap. Individuals deafened later in life generally were not members of cultural Deaf communities, for these individuals pursued rehabilitation to re-integrate with hearing society. In contrast, the culturally Deaf sought the preservation of their unique identities and sign languages. But with little knowledge of this distinction, mainstream hearing society could not distinguish between the two varieties of deafness. Thus, the culturally Deaf assumed the stereotypes associated with the late-deafened. To demonstrate, a study by the U.S. Veterans’ Bureau reported that deafened soldiers elicited less sympathy than other disabled veterans. Because their deafness was not physically evident, these men were often considered “dull and unsocial.” Culturally Deaf individuals, then, who did not identify with late-deafened persons or their goals of rehabilitation, were susceptible to these prejudices as well. Therefore, while the culturally Deaf sought to utilize the First World War to demonstrate that their deafness posed no obstacle to the successful completion of their civic responsibilities, the war simultaneously widened the gap between the cultural “Deaf” and the disabled “deaf.” Further complicating this distinction, the same culturally Deaf persons barred from military service in the United States and Europe were recruited by their respective militaries to train returning deafened soldiers in the practice of lip-reading. Drawing on wartime American (American Annals of the Deaf), French (La Gazette des sourds-muets), German (Schwerhörige und Spätertaubte), British (Ephphatha), and Italian (L’Educazione dei Sordomuti) Deaf periodicals and medical sources, this paper examines the interactions between deafened World War I veterans and the culturally Deaf whose lip-reading instruction and rehabilitation training blurred the lines between “deaf” and “hearing.” This phenomenon provokes dynamic questions about community identity, congenital versus acquired conditions, and social distinctions between worthy and worrisome disabilities.
This paper will focus on servicemen who were admitted to the West Riding Pauper Lunatic Asylum (WRPLA), at Wakefield, Yorkshire, during the Great War. As early as December 1914 the asylum committee had offered the immediate use of 100 beds to the ‘war authorities’, and sought to offer a further 200 once a new block was completed. All the men who found themselves incarcerated in the asylum had been enlisted in the Army. Yet, these patients were not an homogeneous group, for example, it is clear from their military records that some of the men had seen combat whilst others had not. Their length of service in the military ranged from one week to over a year.

How and why did these soldiers come to be there? Many of these men were committed from Military Hospitals throughout mainland Britain and they began their incarceration in the asylum as ‘Pauper Patients’, until they were eventually designated as ‘Service Patients’ during 1917. This latter designation gave them certain privileges not open to other classes of asylum patient, and this will be explored further. Wadsley Asylum, a sister asylum twenty miles away, had been converted to Wharncliffe Military Hospital during the conflict yet these servicemen were not housed there. Was there differences in the type of care provided at each institution? This empirical study has utilised a mix of Military, Civil and Asylum records as well as the medical discourse of the time. The care of these ex-soldiers, their treatment, the duration of their incarceration, the attitudes of staff, as well as the eventual ‘outcome’ for these men are addressed. Additionally, it is explored if any of these men were considered to have been ‘weak minded’ before their exposure to the battlefield, or had any previous experience of asylum treatment. Many were in receipt of a military pension while in the asylum, but it is unclear as to whether this pension was used to contribute towards their upkeep or paid to their families. The service patients within this asylum have not been investigated previously and their ‘voices’ and individual stories are being re-discovered for the first time in almost a century. Their personal circumstances, and what C. P. Myers termed their ‘Disorders of Sensibility’, are revealed within the rich mix of sources. These ‘insane’ servicemen have been largely left out of the record of WW1 and this research is making steps to redress this imbalance, allowing an insight into the effects of war on both the patients and the institution. What can be determined is that there was no single psychological experience that can be generalised - there was no collective understanding of the mental condition of these patients. The paper seeks to explore a wide range of encounters between military personnel and psychiatry than has been covered in existing literature – which has focussed almost exclusively upon shellshock.
Brains, habitus and narratives: The everyday life approach in the rehabilitation of the brain injured soldiers (WWI/WWII)

Taking into account the great number of German soldiers of WWI suffering from brain injuries (approximately 300,000 men were concerned, Frommelt 2003), who were placed in special military hospitals without military order (Sonderlazarette für Hirnverletzte) it is striking, that there is nearly no interest or research done on this special group of disabled veterans of the Great War and on the medical and social rehabilitation work and training in the German context. Except the early research work of Sophie Delaporte on the French “gueules cassées” (Delaporte 1996) and their mentor and “father figure” Colonel Picot the interest on those war victims in other participating countries of the Great War also seems to be minor. In addition there is a certain discrepancy between the high interest in the maimed men with wounded faces who had been hidden from the public (Ulrich 1993) and who were in need of psychologic care, and the neglect of those men, who were seemingly bodily unmaimed, but suffered from aphasias, ataxies, speech disorder, deafness, locked-in-syndrom etc. caused by war injuries (bullet or shrapnel wounds) and brain damages. As I have reconstructed yet there is still some interest in this subject as part of the history of neurology and neurorehabilitation and their protagonists as Walther Poppelreuter, who then was part of the NS-medical system, or the Jewish Kurt Goldstein, Adhèmar Gelb and Viktor von Weizsäcker, whose work was forgotten after WWII and is at the moment in the status of being rediscovered (Medved/Brockmeier 2008). For the conference I would like to concentrate my interest as a cultural anthropologist on new research perspectives on the brain injured soldiers of WWI as kind of “assemblages”, that means as an interaction of actors, science and technologies in the making. But as the work of Gabriele Lucius-Hoene on “Life with brain trauma” on soldiers of WWII shows there is not just the question of the contemporaries of how brains could be simply ‘restored’. Thus Lucius-Hoene (Lucius-Hoene 1997) developed her methodological approach on “narrative biographies” in the context of her research on the autobiographical narratives of war victims and their wives. So we also have to face the fact that brain injuries corresponded to the high interest of other professions than physicians, medical scientists and later also psychologists in exploring brain functions and capacities of remembering by reconstructing the men’s biographies through narratives and by examining body performances and habitualized everyday life competences. Commemorating the war is thus related to the techniques of reconstructing the competence and efficiency of physical and cognitive abilities of the men concerned. Depending on contemporary scientific medical literature and archival sources the paper will concentrate on analyzing the cultural aspects of the care and training strategies of brain injured men beginning in 1914/15 with the trench warfare before the design and development of the German “steel helmet” in 1916 until the interwar period.
“Citizens of honor” - The disabled veterans of the First World War and the national-socialism

Recent historical research has often emphasized the central role of the World War I front-line soldier in National Socialist ideology and propaganda. In the Third Reich soldiers were idealized; moreover, their heroic deeds were constantly recalled and commemorated in literature, film and architecture. Since 1933, in particular with the help of the pompous “cult of the fallen soldier” (G. L. Mosse), the regime intended to indoctrinate and prepare its people to take their places among the dead “heroes”. The National Socialists did not only celebrate the fallen soldiers for their sacrifice, but they also glorified the huge number of disabled veterans of the “Great War” as war heroes in manifold ways. Already during the election campaigns of the Weimar Republic the National Socialist German Workers’ Party put high places on invalids. They also presented itself in its election propaganda as a movement of deserving front-soldiers and disabled veterans. After the National Socialists’ takeover in 1933 their propaganda bolstered the veterans by investing tremendous financial and political effort in their role as „Citizens of honor“. The regime held countless mass rallies, it introduced special social rights for the war victims’ movement and established a mass-organization, which helped to enforce and consolidate the National Socialist dictatorship. Recent research has demonstrated that the instrumentalisation of war experience was an important factor for the rise and the success of the Hitler Movement. The National Socialist policies concerning veterans have only been scarcely investigated, although at their behest the war victims’ exclusion from the public sphere in the Weimar Republic came to an end. They also helped to give an answer to their demands for national honor of their sacrifices on the battlefields. But how exactly did the National Socialists deal with several millions of amputated, blind and deaf warriors? For which specific political aims did the regime utilize the disabled veterans? And which role did the invalids play within the National Socialist war remembrance? Furthermore, it needs to be explained how the National-Socialists could reconcile their ideological concept of the heroic, brave-hearted World-War-I- combatant with the social reality of millions of mutilated veterans. The paper deals with the role and the function of disabled veterans in National Socialist politics and propaganda and the cultural representation of war disability in the Third Reich. Therefore, it focuses on the symbolic forms of politics, the instrumental use of the disabled in public sphere and their presentation in the party propaganda. The National Socialist veteran politics represents a long-term-consequence of the often-cited “great seminal catastrophe of this century” that raises the question of the huge impact of the First World War on inter-war Europe.
Kate Macdonald (Ghent University, Belgium)

**Political war wounds in post-First World War popular fiction**

In 2011 I published a paper examining the uses of disability in John Buchan’s novel *Huntingtower* (1922), in which I showed that he valorised the disabled ex-serviceman, and used characters with congenital impairments as symbols of moral and political opposition. In this paper, I will be discussing the use of war-wounded ex-soldier characters in post-war popular fiction in the context of political propaganda. I will be returning to Buchan’s fiction and looking also at the novels of Dornford Yates and Valentine Williams, all of which used physical disability as a symbol for conservative political purposes. There are a number of tropes to be explored. The importance of popular fiction as a means of conveying authorial messages, and reflecting popular views, cannot be underestimated. Canonical works, often texts with an elitist or restricted readership, have been more often studied for their depiction of disability and impairment, but contemporary post-war popular culture has been largely neglected. Popular novels sold very highly, and serialised popular fiction in weekly and monthly periodicals had a vast readership, meaning that their messages were disseminated very widely indeed. The potential influence of such texts is significant in the context of post-war politics and the influence of the celebrity novelist. Within the fiction, I am interested in the wounded and/or disabled ex-officer as the automatic hero of fictions valorising war. The moral authority of a disabling war wound was used by these authors to convey messages of heroism, bravery, and political probity that was always predicated as conservative. In a post-war political environment that saw the rise of the British Communist Party, and economic and employment fluctuations, this is politicisation of the wound, in class as well as in political terms. The demonisation of the congenitally disabled can also be found in these writers. Valentine Williams’s first success was with his series of novels about ‘Club Foot’ (1918-1924), a German military police officer dedicated to foiling the espionage activities of brave British soldiers and diplomats in wartime and after. Yates too used characters with congenital deformation as an indicator of malice and negativity. By comparing these usages to that of Buchan in *Huntingtower*, we may be able to discern a pattern of routine discrimination that can be mapped onto the wider experience of the impaired civilian who could not serve. This paper is part of a larger research project on a new analysis of the war veteran and disability in popular British print culture, 1914-1940.
Fabio Montella e Francesco Paolella (Italy)

Bodies’ war: Degenerations and regenerations in the First World War Italy

The essay will be dedicated to the role of reflection and power that Italian medical doctors had during the First World War and in the postwar period. We will work on the soldier’s bodies and, more in general, Italian’s bodies in the war years. The volume will follow two guidelines: on one hand, the bodies swept away by the war, injured and mutilated. On the other hand, all the problems (health, economic, political, moral, eugenic) linked to the birth of new Italian (and new soldiers).

PART 1 – Bodies’ regeneration

For thousand men, trenches’ and fights’ experience meant also injuries, mutilations and devastating shocks (physical and psychic). This is one of the many First World War heritage, that had remarkable involvements both in the military events and in the Fascism coming ones. This part of the research is focused on an new study (mainly based upon the Central Archives of the State of Rome documents) that analyses soldiers’ bodies as a promoting vehicle, source of a debate between political coalitions, for medical-scientific researches. A never-seen theme that became the main topic of the debate in journals, factions, decision-making bodies, during and after the war. The body become the center of the debate and the vehicle for the national postwar veteran’s mobilization during the conflict.

PART 2 – New generations

The debates and sexual life rules had to take care of all the questions about paternity and maternity. We do not only refer to “sexual morality” (for example, the problem of how spurious’ sons were considered) but also to the all problems that the scientific world had to face with the war, with all the perturbations, shocks (physical and psychic) that it brought. We are going to discuss about eugenics. Many of the exponents of medical sciences (neurologists, psychiatrists, gynaecologists and so on) and of social sciences (demographers, statisticians, sociologist) discussed about the war’s effects on the population’s quality and quantity. Did the conflict have to bring degenerative effects, i.e. did it have to weaken the reproductive ability of Italians, as well as the biologic patrimony of the “race”? For how many generation would Italy have suffered through the heritage effects from years of deprivation, extreme poverty, irregularity of behavior (alcoholism, promiscuity, pox) and so on? And which would have been remedies to stop this degeneration? Or could the war be considered positive in the biologic patrimony’s nation’s selection? How would “war babies”, children borned (or that could have) from treasons, occasional affairs, rapes in the enemies occupation’s zones?
Disabled, disfigured or both? Exploring the post-war experiences of facially disfigured Great War soldiers.

The Great War affected the lives of thousands of soldiers through horrific facial wounds. The Queen’s Hospital at Sidcup, Kent in the United Kingdom was the centre of treatment for British and Dominion Great War soldiers suffering severe facial wounds. Begun primarily as a British endeavour, the hospital attracted surgeons and staff from Australia, Canada, New Zealand and America. The remarkable work carried out at the hospital involved specialist facial and dental surgeons, anaesthetists, skilled nursing staff, artists and sculptors. Between the hospital’s opening in 1917 and its closure in 1925, surgeons treated over 5,000 facial wound cases and carried out more than 11,000 major operations. While the medical innovations made at the hospital make fascinating research in their own right, no study has been done of the experiences of these men once they left the supportive environment of the Queen’s Hospital. “Other men were disabled. I wasn’t disabled, I just couldn’t eat, that’s all.” These simple words of British Private James Albert Payne reflect the sentiments of a significant number of soldiers who sustained facial wounds during the Great War. Many soldiers who were only disfigured (that is, who had not suffered other wounds during the war) did not consider themselves disabled as they were still able to physically function as they has prior to the war. This paper investigates the ways in which the return of facially wounded soldiers from the Great War altered the social and political landscape of post-war society. Representations of wounded soldiers in the press, and letters sent home from the soldiers themselves, did little to prepare the public for this particularly confronting group of veterans. While advances in medical techniques enabled the faces of these soldiers to be repaired, maxillofacial reconstructive surgery was still in its infancy. Consequently, the level of repair varied, and many veterans were left permanently disfigured. The paper also explores the obstacles confronted by these veterans on their return home - of regaining employment, reclaiming their sense of masculinity, and returning to their loved ones - within the context of the return of other groups of Great War veterans to post-war society. The final question then is how have disfigured soldiers been commemorated? Disfigured soldiers inhabit an unusual space in military, medical and disability history. The image of the war-wounded Great War veteran is often that of an amputee or a shell-shock sufferer. The plight of the disfigured veteran, though, is lost amongst the rhetoric of the ‘wounded hero.’ While there is a plethora of archival material illuminating these men and their stories, it is mainly through the work of novelists and playwrights rather than historians that the lived experience of disfigured veterans has been explored. While novels and films can convey something of the experiences of facially wounded veterans, no matter how grounded they are in archival material they are still, above all, works of fiction. The reality of the men’s situation was far more complex than these depictions communicate and require more scholarly attention. The aim of my research has been to investigate the experiences of these men who played such pivotal roles in the pioneering days of reconstructive facial surgery and in doing so give them place they rightly deserve in the history of the Great War.
The visual representation of the Scottish disabled ex-serviceman during the interwar period: Conflicts of identity.

Scottish soldiers in the Great War took on an established identity that was separate from their British counterparts. Traditionally Highland regiments were perceived as a martial race that had originated from the savage and ruthless highland clans but displayed all the desirable masculine virtues of a soldier. These associations were used to explain their military success throughout the colonies. The uniform of kilts and bagpipes, traditionally worn only by highlanders, spread to many different Scottish regiments cementing this identity in popular culture. Contrary to this secure visual identity that the soldiers entered the Great War with, their departure as Scottish physically disabled ex-servicemen was an image that had to be renegotiated both publically and privately. The 1921 Census of Population for Scotland showed that out of a total male population of 2,347,642 there were an estimated 167,600 Scottish soldiers that had returned from war with physical injuries. This seven per cent of Scottish men was a significant part of Scottish society that could not be hidden away from the wider public’s view. Disabled ex-servicemen were a visible living memory of the Great War whose identity was represented to the public in many different ways. This paper will explore the conflicts of identity that emerged through several mediums of visual representation of the Scottish disabled ex-serviceman. The root of this identity was formed in the representation of their disablement rather than their cultural and national identities. This shared experience was often associated with notions of Britishness that added further dimensions to the Scottish disabled ex-serviceman’s identity. Through a source driven analysis three conflicts of identity will be analysed: Firstly how censorship of postcards, photographs and films produced inconsistencies between the British identity of wounded soldiers and disabled ex-servicemen; Secondly the fragmentation of the identity of the disabled ex-servicemen in posters due to the competing aims of the voluntary sector; Thirdly the conflict between British and Scottish identities in the themes explored by cartoonists about disabled ex-servicemen. The sources that will be used fall into six different categories of visual mediums. They are photography, film, postcards, posters, pamphlets and cartoons. Whilst there are a vast amount of other visual mediums to which the Scottish public were exposed - including work by official war artists - these particular mediums were chosen because they all engaged directly with the theme of disabled ex-servicemen. Yet they were all subjected to different constraints and aims. For example postcards, official photography and film were all under the censorship laws, whilst charitable posters and pamphlets had clear objectives for attaining finance and support. Cartoons represented attitudes about disabled ex-servicemen, often in a satirical manner and sometimes penned by the men themselves. Therefore by analysing them together these sources show how layers of the identity of the disabled ex-serviceman were built and presented to the Scottish public. This paper will further add to the debate on key themes such as heroism, stoicism and the masculinity of the disabled ex-servicemen by using this different perspective and sources.
"Repulsive and disfigured": from medical discourses on face injured man to the Imperial Supply Act of 1920

The specific warfare and the fighting in trenches during the First World War lead to face injuries even doctors were shocked by. Thus, the military administration decided to reform the medical support in order to treat facial injuries more efficiently. Doctors assumed that in addition to pain, problems with food intake, the inability to speak and the disfigurement of the face were particularly demoralizing and traumatizing the soldiers. As a result, facial injuries lead to the implication of new treatment techniques and new forms of organizing medical service. Also, they encouraged maxillofacial doctors in finding solutions for patients to deal with their wounds. Interestingly, what was perceived as disfiguring was immediately put in contrast to ideals of masculinity. Hence, the difference in the aesthetic appeal of the wounded became a category of difference (Elsbeth Bösl, 2009). The facial injuries of the First World War resulted in a flood of related medical and surgical publications. In the first part of my presentation I will analyze these texts and the discourses on disfigurement both, during the war and in the postwar period. By contrasting these sources with popular discourses (newspaper articles, publications) I will argue that war maxillofacial surgeons dominated the way of talking about disfigured faces in society. They were in first instance medical experts but in addition they were asked to deal questions deriving from psychology, employment agencies and retirement business. As a result, these surgeons had a big influence on central topics of German postwar society. On this basis, the second part of my presentation deals with the impact of medical on legal discourses and on law and policy making. Using the example of the Imperial Supply Acts (Reichsversorgungsgesetze) of the Weimar republic. I am especially interested in the role of facial disfigurements. Why have they been part of the Imperial Supply Acts of 1920? The first version of this law was adopted in May 1920 and it was valid until the decree of the Federal Government Supply Act (Bundesversorgungsgesetz) of 1950. Besides other things, the law arranged a pension supplement for people with "repulsively appealing disfigurements of the face" ("abstoßend wirkende[n] Entstellungen des Gesichtes"). Starting from this proposition, raises the question of what impact these discourses had on individual life plans of the affected people? The discussion of questions of patient’s life plans will be part of the last part of my presentation. Main sources here are ego-documents, autobiographical notes and administration records. Finally, in combining concepts of disability studies with tools of historical discourse analysis I aim to open up new perspectives on the medical history of physical infirmity, masculinity and aesthetic appeal. Consequently, questions about the social perception and the handling of physical otherness associated with masculinity can be addressed from a different point of view.
Aurelio Nicolodi and the War Blinded in Florence

This paper will examine the experience of the Committee for War Blinded established in Florence in 1916 on a civil society’s initiative. In particular, it will focus on the figure of its undisputed leader and catalyst, Aurelio Nicolodi, who guided the group in the interwar period throughout the Fascist dictatorship. His enterprising spirit also brought about the foundation of the Italian Union of Blind People in 1920 and the transformation of the Institute for blind children in Florence into a modern centre for education and training open also to adults. According to Nicolodi, improvement for blind people would be achievable only through their cultural self-promotion and autonomy and therefore he strived greatly for their instruction and vocational tuition by promoting a series of national and local initiatives.

The records produced by the Florentine Committee for War Blinded and the private collection of Aurelio Nicolodi make available remarkable items for an account of the Committee’s story and the multiple activities meant for the rehabilitation of blinded servicemen. Moreover, the correspondence between the director of the Committee and the persons assisted by it offers interesting insights into the lives of both parts. Many of the soldiers who had been vocationally retrained at the workshops arranged by the Florentine Committee continued in fact to be emotionally attached by a special bond to Nicolodi, to whom they persistently sent letters for many years. Through a thorough reading of these exchanges it is thus possible to recount a variety of individual experiences of war disablement and return into civilian life, while also grasping Nicolodi’s diligence in his charity work. During Benito Mussolini’s rule he took office in several agencies and companies as a representative of disabled veterans and therefore enjoyed a respected status throughout the dictatorship. Thanks to an analysis of these primary sources I will open up the discourse to the wider concepts of self-advocacy, emancipation, collusion with power, and freedom of action. Specifically, I will intend to devote my attention to the multifaceted redefinition of identity as resulted from war blindness and to the events and personalities which revolved around the Committee in the period 1917-1940s.
Sonic Vision: Radio, Rehabilitation, and Disabled Veterans in Interwar France

This paper examines how radio broadcasting mediated the renegotiation of citizenship for disabled veterans of the First World War in interwar France. Against the backdrop of virulent parliamentary debates over the challenges of postwar recovery and the shape of France’s expanding postwar welfare state, the emerging medium of radio broadcasting appeared to many as an ideal solution for rehabilitating veterans. Two national charities, Radio for the Blind and Wireless for the Hospital, first politicized veterans’ access to the airwaves through their national campaigns to distribute free radios to the blind and “infirm,” as well as through their weekly radio variety shows, which became a programmatic staple of the state-run P.T.T. radio network. In their broadcasts and in their public statements in the press, charity spokesmen argued that radio listening could advance the reintegration of blind and disabled veterans by penetrating the private sphere of homes and sanatoria to grant veterans access to the emerging “radio nation” of the airwaves. Focusing on the capacity of “live” broadcast sound to generate the sensation of interpersonal communication, the charities defined radios as “prosthetic” technologies that could metaphorically replace the damaged eyes of the war blind and provide a “sonic vision” to eliminate the “dark worlds” created by physical pain or psychological depression. Listening, in this framework, literally became a form of rehabilitation. Blind radio amateurs and veterans’ organizations embraced the donation drives but criticized the charities’ vision of listening for promoting only a passive form of citizenship. Blind activists instead campaigned to have blind people exempted from the annual radio license fee implemented in 1933. They argued that access to radio constituted a social right of citizenship equivalent to a pension that should be protected by the state, since active listening would enable disabled men to participate in national life, provided they exploited radio technology on their own terms. Drawing on the specialized radio press and mainstream newspapers, this paper will also consider how the democratization of radio shaped postwar representations of blind veterans and the experience of blindness. Radio for the Blind constructed an image of the blind veteran as passive and psychologically isolated, a vision that contrasted sharply with the very active lives enjoyed by many blind veterans, including several high-profile figures such as the parliamentary deputy Georges Scapini. In conclusion, I will also consider the parallels between French representations of blindness through radio and similar constructions of blind radio listeners in the United Kingdom, asking what these transnational parallels reveal about common perceptions of disability and media across cultures.
Les invalides à l’écran : Mémoire et oubli de la Grande Guerre dans le cinéma russe et soviétique, 1914-1940

Rehabilitation of the Disabled Veterans of the Kurdish Conflict in Turkey: Social and Political Implications

Unlike the situation in Europe during the First World War, the Republic of Turkey, founded after the War, encountered the largest number of injured and dead soldiers much later, in relation to the Kurdish conflict and the armed struggle with the PKK (Kurdistan Workers’ Party), which started in 1984. This brought about a number of issues on the part of the nation state, ranging from regulating the visibility of the injured soldiers to tackling the grave medical and governmental crisis. The first military rehabilitation centre in Turkey was established as late as in 2000. The centre did not officially deal with the psychological impact of the injury and impairment due to the armed conflict on the soldiers until 2009. Despite this, PTSD has yet to be officially recognised as a consequence of war, and as a result, soldiers who have developed severe psychological problems are not given the “disabled veteran” status, which deprives them of state provisions. Considering that the conflict remains unresolved, establishment of the principles of organising and governing rehabilitation of disabled soldiers is still an ongoing process. Drawing on this context, this paper looks into the social and political implications of this much later emergence of military rehabilitation and aims to answer the question of what ‘military rehabilitation’ means in a country that is not officially in war, but rather, is involved in an internal ethnic conflict. In the construction of memory and identity of the disabled veterans and the ‘martyrs’ of the Kurdish conflict, the First World War has a significant role and a function. Strikingly, the Gallipoli Battle has been isolated from the rest of the Great War and has been considered an integral part of the Turkish War of Independence (1919-1923) in the official historiography as well as in the popular imagery. With this much importance attributed to the Gallipoli Battle, it was invoked by the nationalist discourse in the 1990s, when the conflict was at its height, to give some sense to the unprecedented loss of lives and damage to the body. As a result, Gallipoli War Memorial underwent major reconstruction starting in the mid-1990s and has since become a most important site for nationalistic rituals. A similar nationalist sentiment can be observed in the first and presently the only autobiographical account of the disabled veterans of the Kurdish conflict. *Biz Kınalı Bacaksızlar (We, the Hennaed Legless) (2005)* opens with a ‘real’ story taking place during the Gallipoli Battle which explains the reference to the word “henna” in the title. Henna, traditionally used to dye skin, hair and wool, is a marker of sacrificial surface in the religious as well as in the populist nationalist imagery, based on an analogy between the sacrificial lamb and the soldier body (particularly of lower-ranking and lower-class). The story serves to anachronically link the armed conflict against the PKK of the last thirty years to the First World War in order to create a sense of historical continuity and it also designates soldiering as part of the ‘authentic’ Turkish culture (i.e. the concept of nation-in-arms, which still has strong resonances in the official and popular nationalist discourses) through a traditional cultural practice – the use of henna. More importantly, as the story suggests, henna further signifies consent on the part of the soldier for self-sacrifice. A very recent anthropological study by Can Açıksöüz (2011) indicates that the issue is still considered in sacrificial terms both by the state and the veterans themselves. Based on interviews carried out with the disabled veterans, their partners and the medical personnel taking part in veterans’ rehabilitation, this paper is interested in finding out the way in which rehabilitation with its formal (through medical institutions) and informal (through family and community) aspects influences the politicisation of the veterans’ experiences as well as their everyday life experiences.
War-related psychiatric distress, as treated by the Belgian campaign army, 1914-1918

In this paper I would like to focus on the way in which Belgian doctors, alienists and neurologists considered mental and nervous troubles experienced by Belgian soldiers. All too often, and until very recently, vulgarisation books only presented one aspect of treatment applied in case of mental illness. They often only envisage treatment through brutal electroshocks. These authors insist upon the inhuman acts performed by doctors, who often saw their patients as simulators who needed to be punished and sent back to the front at all cost, with military duties taking over from therapeutic duties. However, the Belgian case, far from being an isolated example, counters this radical dualism. Even if they didn’t overlook the phenomenon of simulation the Belgian doctors very quickly understood that the war did indeed have an impact on the mental and nervous equilibrium of the fighters and they approached the matter accordingly. As early as December 1914, when the medical department redeployed after its retreat to Calais in October, a military neuropsychiatric unit was created. Dr. Leon Spaas, a specialist in mental illnesses and the director of the asylum in Munsterbilzen in Limburg before the war, was put in charge. The centre was reserved for neurologic and psychiatric cases and also performed the legal medical exams requested by the various martial courts. The patients needing treatment or sent out to convalesce were initially directed to French departmental asylums or French hospitals in the French 10th military region (Rennes). However, as of June 1915 the Belgian army preferred to treat its soldiers in its own institutions. A series of specialized institutions in that way settled in former convents or castles in Brittany, Normandy or the Somme. Although far away from home and loved-ones confirmedalienists treated patients in an environment as soothing as possible. The methods used were moral rather than coercive: rest, bathing, isolation, diet, occupational therapy, placement in families living in the neighbourhood. The Belgian doctors, far from being hostile or indifferent, were quite sympathetic when faced with mental anguish. This can be seen in reports by Dr. Spaas, as well as in the reports by his colleagues in charge of various institutions in France. Be it in the description of the symptoms and their causes, in the evaluation of the treatment to be applied or in the results on the patient: never ever does one find evidence of disapproval, condemnation or moral judgment. The medical staff refrained from moralising speeches about heroism, courage or cowardice. They saw and accepted the effects of the war (fatigue, bombings, violent emotions, mourning, etc.) on the mental and nervous health of the soldiers. Just as numerous doctors at that time the Belgian alienists insisted on predisposition in people already weakened by alcoholism, substance abuse or heredity. Nevertheless, they recognized that healthy soldiers could also be affected by mental and nervous breakdown. Because of difficulties in recruiting the Belgian army could not afford to lose too many men and military authorities therefore sometimes reproached doctors for reforming soldiers all too easily. However, drafted alienists never hesitated to exempt the more fragile cases from campaign service and they tried to employ these patients behind the front lines (for instance in armament factories controlled by the Belgian army). Military authorities usually followed the medical guidelines. The Belgian case shows doctors concerned with the mental and physical health of soldiers. They are both humane and sympathetic and act within the limits of knowledge such as available at that time.
Pieter Verstraete (KU Leuven, Belgium)

The bird of solidarity: Mutilated soldiers and the rise of a comprehensive care system for persons with disabilities in Belgium

The history of sport has already for quite a long time been associated to the history of disabled veterans. In this presentation we’d like to start from a neglected fragment at the crossroad of the history of sport and the history of veterans from the Great War, namely a remarkable story about blind veterans and a local Flemish sport called ‘Vinkensport’ or Finch sport. Especially in the West of Flanders this sport was commonly practiced before the outbreak of the war in 1914. Important for the story we will try to reconstruct – and link with the general question of the birth of solidarity in the Interwar period – is the fact that many of the owners of the finches used in Finch sport blinded their finches so they would sing more frequently. For the aim of the Finch sport is to let the finch sing as much as possible. During the game a mark is put with a white chalk on a wooden stick. The one who has the most marks at the end of the game is the winner. Owners of the birds had found out that their finches sang more frequently when their eyes were blinded, something which was effectuated with hot burning needles. If during the First World War these kind of practices already were prohibited by German law in occupied Belgium, one had to wait until the 20’s of the Twentieth century to have them banned by official Belgian Decree. The aim of this presentation is to reconstruct the role played by the blind veterans. In one local history of Finch sport it was mentioned that the blind veterans demonstrated in Brussels against the cruel treatment of the finches. On the basis of archival research of parliamentary debates and Interwar journals for the blind we will figure out to what extent the blind veterans can be considered the driving forces behind the prohibition to blind finches. That, however, is only part of the story. If the prohibition of blinding finches can be considered a feature of solidarity between humans and animals, we also will try to find out how the blind veterans themselves were treated during the Interwar period and how the invalid soldiers influenced the representation of congenitally disabled persons in between the two World Wars. By comparing existing laws for taking care of physically and sensorially disabled persons before and after the Great War as well as looking at how invalid soldiers were portrayed in journals for the congenitally disabled we will try to reconstruct a fragment of the history of solidarity in Belgium.