



2 May 2025

The Symposium Hall at Surgeons' Hall, Hill Square, Edinburgh
EH8 9DW

Programme at a glance

Time	Session	Presenter
09:30	Registration & coffee/tea	
10:00	Welcome	Matthew Jarron Chair, Scotland & Medicine Curator, University of Dundee Museums
10:05	KEYNOTE Plural Practices: Global/Local Perspectives on Decolonising and Rehumanising Collections	Jeremiah Garsha Assistant Professor in Modern Global History, University College Dublin
Traces of Us: Uncovering the human stories in medical collections		
10:45	Conversations with the Dead	Cat Irving Human Remains Conservator, Surgeons' Hall Museums

11:00	A Fruitful Marriage: Objects and the personal story	Dr Marek Bukowski MD PhD Supervisor, Museum of the Medical University of Gdansk
11:15	The Art Extraordinary Collection – Joyce Laing and Art Therapy in Scotland c. 1967 – 2000	Dr Anthony Lewis PhD Curator of Scottish History, Glasgow Life Museums
11:30	BREAK – coffee/tea	
Beyond Objects: Rehumanising pathology collections		
11:50	Refleshing the Bones	Carla Valentine Technical Curator and Public Engagement Officer, Barts Pathology Museum, London
12:05	Researching Patient Stories from the Pathology Museum at City St George’s	Dr Carol Sheils Head of Pathology, Pathology Museum at City St George’s, University of London
Nothing About Us Without Us: Engaging disabled people’s voices		
12:20	Phenomenal Bodies: Exploring disability in Scottish academic collections	Emily Hanson Associate Lecturer, School of Art History, University of St Andrews Mathilda Gatsby Student, School of Art History, University of St Andrews
12:35	Conserving a Hearing Cornet? Exploring a method of stakeholder involvement in the co-conservation of disability aids	Robyn Timmins Recent MSc graduate (Conservation Practice), Cardiff University
12:50	LUNCH	
Confronting the Past: Addressing colonial legacies and racism in collections		
13:50	Unwrapping Colonial Legacies: Navigating the ethical challenges of displaying mummified Egyptians	Dr Abeer Eladany Curatorial Assistant, University of Aberdeen
14:05	Panel	Claire McDade

	Overlooked and Underrepresented: Challenging a history of stereotypes and racist attitudes through the archives of the Royal College of Physicians of Glasgow	Heritage Lead, Royal College of Physicians of Glasgow Clare Harrison, Library and Heritage Manager, Royal College of Physicians of Glasgow Monique Lerpinière PhD Researcher, University of Strathclyde
14:50	BREAK – coffee/tea	
Refining engagement: Connecting medical collections with communities and audiences		
15:10	Bringing the Old Op on Tour <i>(possible pre-recorded presentation)</i>	Jenni Hunt Community Engagement Officer, Old Operating Theatre Museum & Herb Garret
15:25	Individual and Embodied Encounters: Visitor engagement with medical museum objects	Cornelia Thompson PhD Researcher, Institute of Archaeology, UCL
Scotland & Medicine: Members' stories		
15:40	Scotland & Medicine members share their recent projects and programmes	Running order tbc
16:15	Closing comments	Matthew Jarron Chair, Scotland & Medicine Curator, University of Dundee Museums
16:20	Close	
16:20-17:00	Opportunity to visit the Surgeons' Hall Museums	



2 May 2025

**The Symposium Hall at Surgeons' Hall, Hill Square, Edinburgh
EH8 9DW**

Full programme

09:30

Registration & coffee/tea

10:00

Welcome

Matthew Jarron

Chair, Scotland & Medicine

Curator, University of Dundee Museums

10:05

KEYNOTE

Plural Practices: Global/Local Perspectives on Decolonising and Rehumanising Collections

Dr Jeremiah Garsha, Assistant Professor in Modern Global History

University College Dublin

What would an inclusive and accessible medical museum space look like? How can artefacts and people within these collections be shown dignity and agency? Whose stories are being told, by whom, and for what? This talk seeks to decentre our understanding by offering global examples of localised practices from an array of viewpoints. It seeks to bring plurality into best practice by elucidating local examples found across Europe, Native America, Aotearoa, Turtle Island, Sápmi, and communities across Eastern and Southern Africa. Whilst this is but a fraction of viewpoints, it is hoped that we can listen and learn and apply these lessons into our own work.

This talk aims to explore evolving relationships between ‘people’ and ‘things’ and untangle issues of ‘people as things’. The spectre of coloniality lingers in many of these examples and thus this talk speaks to decolonising steps and setbacks from across the world. In framing this as a global conversation, we focus our attention on emerging ways of rehumanising the people and their parts housed in medical collections. By thinking local, we activate ‘the global’ through plurality.

Traces of Us: Uncovering the human stories in medical collections

10:45

Conversations with the Dead: research with human remains in medical collections

*Cat Irving, Human Remains Conservator
Surgeons’ Hall Museums*

Behind each piece of preserved tissue in our medical collections is a very human story. This paper will look at the ways research can elucidate some of these stories and what that can tell us about the lives of the people who contributed to our medical knowledge. By considering the way collections like this were acquired, we can see that these were often some of the poorest members of society, whose stories tend not to be told, and this can give us an insight into understanding their lives. By thinking about the lives of the people whose remains are in our collection we can give them agency, transforming them from just a didactic teaching object and restoring humanity. We have to acknowledge that this is not a complete process, and however well-intentioned, we are still only getting a partial picture of their lives which will itself be coloured by our own experiences. Nonetheless, the dead continue to talk to us, and, as new technologies develop, they can tell us stories which might also change our future.

11:00

A Fruitful Marriage: Objects and the personal story

*Dr Marek Bukowski MD PhD, Supervisor
Museum of Medical University of Gdansk*

The Museum of Medical University collects various diagnostic and therapeutic instruments and/or devices. Alongside precise technical information connected with each of them, almost each has a story concerning the individual experience of its users. Presenting objects supported by a background history of its former users creates a unique opportunity to engage students and other spectators with a strong intellectual and emotional message.

Teaching medical students means presenting them with utterly new knowledge and firmly pressing them to increase their understanding of the problem, self-consciousness, and understanding of the patient's status.

In this presentation, I will discuss my personal experience teaching the history of medicine with objects from the Museum of the Medical University of Gdansk collection. Can they respond with a shared sense of teaching with objects? How can I use artifacts in teaching? How can the best education be combined with tangible and intangible elements of history, tradition, and heritage shown at the Museum?

11:15

The Art Extraordinary Collection – Joyce Laing and Art Therapy in Scotland c. 1967-2000

*Dr Anthony Lewis PhD, Curator of Scottish History
Glasgow Life Museums*

This paper will introduce the working life of Joyce Laing as a pioneering art therapist in Scotland and the Art Extraordinary collection she assembled throughout her career working in hospitals and prisons. It will present examples of artwork in the collection as well as narratives based on Laing's interpretations of her clients' work with those given by relatives of her clients. It will also explore how Glasgow Life Museums is making the collection and Laing's archive accessible through displays and catalogues.

11:30

BREAK – coffee/tea

Beyond Objects: Rehumanising pathology collections

11:50

Refleshing the Bones

*Carla Valentine, Technical Curator and Public Engagement Officer
Barts Pathology Museum, London*

Refleshing the Bones is an illustrated presentation featuring some of the work carried out to 'flesh out' the stories behind the specimens in the collection at Barts Pathology Museum. In order to engage audiences with both dry and wet anatomical specimens, the team use a medical humanities approach to tell the extraordinary tales of 'the people inside the pots'. Notably, a digital facial reconstruction of the skull of John Bellingham - assassin of Prime Minister Spencer Perceval, in 1812 - was generated by Scottish artist Hew Morrison in 2018 and featured in national press.

The collection holds examples of unique pathologies associated with poor working conditions in the 19th century, including phosphorous necrosis of the jaw and chimney sweep's cancer of the scrotum, as well as injuries sustained by children working in horrendous factory environments even into the 20th century. There are also specimens of frontal lobotomy, pioneering early surgery, leprosy, plague, and Chinese foot binding. Lectures, workshops, videos, podcasts, and even anatomical cake events have been employed to make these pathologies and the narratives behind them more accessible to various audiences.

By telling their stories and humanising the remains, this once little-known collection (which had fallen into disrepair in the 1990s) has received worldwide attention, featured in many documentaries, and become involved in several research projects over the last decade.

12:05

Researching Patient Stories from the Pathology Museum at City St George's

*Dr Carol Shiels, Head of Pathology
Pathology Museum at City St George's, University of London*

The Pathology Museum was established at St George's Hospital in 1843. Ongoing research aims to understand more about the individuals whose human remains were retained in the Museum following on from postmortem in the hospital during the 19th and 20th century. This research draws upon a wide range of primary sources, including links to patients in the postmortem case books at St George's, medical journals, and medical records. Through this research new patient stories have been uncovered and curated into a series of public museum tours in 2024, giving a new perspective on the experiences of patients, with insight into their lives and the diseases they suffered from.

Nothing About Us Without Us: Engaging disabled people's voices

12:20

Phenomenal Bodies: Exploring disability in Scottish academic collections

*Emily Hanson, Associate Lecturer & Mathilda Gatsby, Student
School of Art History, University of St Andrews*

Phenomenal Bodies is the organising theme for a coordinated network of object displays in Scotland, hosted exclusively by public-facing Scottish academic institutions with historical collections, whose remit is to engage with the public through exhibitions. We explore the subjective lived experience of having a body, in all its physical diversity, and our attempts to understand it through scientific study and art. More specifically, we are highlighting an inclusive and positive attitude toward disability, countering what has typically been a more ableist and objective medical gaze. We engage with four Scottish medical collections, connecting them with disability charities and advocacy groups relevant to the objects chosen for their display. In the development of this multi-year multi-site exhibition, we have engaged undergraduate and graduate students in its research and design, giving further nuance to the developing intersection of art history and disability studies. We are approaching the objects from the realm of personal, human experience. A prosthetic leg from the University of Dundee's collection, for example, was the inspiration for a moving personal response to the object from one of our students, Mathilda Gatsby, who will join me at this conference. Despite the challenges of working with such materials, their interpretation within teaching collections allows for an alternative approach to display. Through highlighting personal stories, we aim to expand beyond the objective and prescriptive display of medical, and broadly historical, objects into interpretation that accounts for a greater range of the experience of being human. We are striving to make both the materials of the exhibition and its display as accessible as possible.

12:35

Conserving a Hearing Cornet? Exploring a method of stakeholder involvement in the co-conservation of disability aids

*Robyn Timmins, recent MSc graduate (Conservation Practice)
Cardiff University*

An object can hold different tangible and intangible meanings and significance for different people, and consulting with a variety of stakeholders can be beneficial when exploring the value of an object, particularly when it is linked to a community. Many museums are seeking to not only improve accessibility and representation of their disabled visitors and employees, but consider the representation of disabled people *within* their collections. While efforts have been made in the co-curation of disability exhibitions, co-conservation is not so widespread, and conservators may have a limited understanding of an object's significance. This can particularly be the case if it is a disability aid, which is inherently linked to a distinct experience. Thus, the topic this paper looks to explore is how productive stakeholder consultation can be used to expose the conservator to alternative viewpoints and inform the conservation of disability aids. Specifically, it will consider how consultation with those who identify as D/deaf or hard of hearing can inform the conservation of hearing aids. The research considers how in-depth interviews and thematic, narrative analysis can offer a route to collaborative community conservation, or co-conservation, by being used to inform significance analysis which can then be used to inform object treatment. It addresses the concern in literature of ineffective stakeholder consultation, offers recommendations for further research in this area, and looks at

how co-conservation could be used by conservators to allow institutions to achieve their wider goals of the representation of disabled people.

12:50

Lunch

Confronting the Past: Addressing colonial legacies and racism in collections

13:50

Unwrapping Colonial Legacies: Navigating the ethical challenges of displaying mummified Egyptians

*Dr Abeer Eladany, Curatorial Assistant
University of Aberdeen Collections*

This paper aims to unpack some of the ongoing ethical debates regarding the display of mummified Egyptians. Many historical museums are displaying at least one mummified person citing teaching the younger generation about Ancient Egypt and about death as the main reason for the display.

These debates range from the use of the term “mummy” to the display, scientific research, and repatriation.

Many questions were raised recently about the ethics of some research projects conducted on these mummified persons, particularly facial reconstruction and using AI to produce lifelike video clips. These products would then be associated with the exhibited people.

This paper will explore how museums in Scotland can present Egyptian culture both ancient and modern. It will also discuss how we as museum professionals can challenge ourselves to form connections with a diverse audience including Egyptian diaspora in Scotland.

14:05

(PANEL) Overlooked and Underrepresented: Challenging a history of stereotypes and racist attitudes through the archives of the Royal College of Physicians of Glasgow

*Claire McDade, Heritage Lead, Royal College of Physicians of Glasgow
Claire Harrison, Library and Heritage Manager, Royal College of Physicians of Glasgow
Monique Lerpinière, PhD Researcher, University of Strathclyde*

This session will be a discussion about our recent work looking into the “hidden histories” of under-represented and marginalised people in our College archives and wider heritage collections. Since 2021 we have been running a programme – “Reframed: Conversations about heritage and inclusion”. Through this we have explored the untold, or less well-known, stories of women in medicine and started to explore the histories of medics from South Asia who, under the British colonial government’s system of Westernisation of education, began migrating to the UK for medical degrees, from the mid 1800s. These medics are present in our archival registers, but their stories, legacies, and impact are largely un-researched. This session will also consider the stereotypical and racist attitudes that led to these stories being considered of less value than the dominant patriarchal white narratives we have focused on in the past. Not so much “hidden”, as ignored.

14:50

Break – coffee/tea

Refining Engagement: Connecting medical collections with communities and audiences

15:10

Bringing the Old Op on Tour

Jenni Hunt, Community Engagement Officer

The Old Operating Theatre Museum and Herb Garret

Over the summer of 2024, the Old Operating Theatre Museum delivered the Old Op on Tour – an outreach project aiming to bring objects and stories linking the history of medicine to local communities, and to discuss the role of medicine in their lives today. This presentation examines what went well and what we learned from these sessions, along with our future plans.

The tour aimed to widen access, reaching people who might not consider a medical museum as relevant to their lives. In total, the tour involved eleven locations across fifteen sessions, alongside five days of festivals, and spoke to more than 2500 people over the summer.

By taking our objects to local libraries, medical museums, and other historic sites for drop-in handling sessions and multisensory children's crafts, we aimed to captivate people, raising awareness of the museum, opening up access (providing discount vouchers for participants), and arranging future collaboration with the sites we were working with.

Using our collection, we were able to spark discussions about medicine and personal experience – tailored based on the sites that we were in and the audiences that attended. Our attendees ranged from babies in arms (who enjoyed the smells of dried herbs) to grandparents and retired surgeons.

As a small team with limited budget, this was a real opportunity for us to engage in new ways with local communities, increasing our social value and forming meaningful connections. We got people talking about how medicine had changed – the benefits of modern medicine, where medicine may grow in the future and how it can learn from the past. The sensory aspects – the chance to touch objects, smell and grind dried herbs - appealed to old and young, and got people aware of the museum and discussing medical history.

15:25

Individual and Embodied Encounters: Visitor engagement with medical museum objects

Cornelia Thompson, PhD Researcher

Institute of Archaeology, UCL

This paper will examine the ways in which museum audiences find meaning in medical objects. Based in my PhD research with UK medical museums, I will discuss how object theory from museum studies and archaeology can help us better understand the shape and significance of these encounters. I argue that medical objects, such as medical tools, form a category of sensitive material in two ways: the deeply embodied and emotional reactions they engender; and the individual and unpredictable nature of these reactions. The intended use of these objects in non-museum contexts (to be used on human bodies) means that visitors can feel them in distinct way. Each visitor brings meaning from their own life to their encounters with these objects, including their own personal experiences of health and illness. Medical museums are, therefore, spaces of deep personal reflection. Considering this aspect of medical

museums reveals potential benefits for individual and societal wellbeing, as well as associated risks in displaying such emotive objects.

What, then, are the moral, cultural and societal implications of visitor encounters with medical museum objects? How can medical museums embrace these unpredictable intangibles to inform their practice? This paper will examine this challenge through considering museum theory on audience co-creation of meaning and approaches to emotive objects in other museum contexts. I will also incorporate research findings from two London medical museums: The Old Operating Theatre Museum and Herb Garret and the Anaesthesia Heritage Centre. By combining medical museum objects and histories with broader theory, and bringing in audience-based research, I will highlight work that is already being undertaken in medical museums and what such work may look like in future.

Scotland & Medicine: Members' stories

15:40

Scotland & Medicine members share their recent projects and programmes

Running order tbc

16:15

Closing comments

Matthew Jarron

Chair, Scotland & Medicine

Curator, University of Dundee Museums

16:20

Close

16:20 – 17:00

Opportunity to visit the Surgeons' Hall Museums



2 May 2025

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Speaker biographies

KEYNOTE: Dr Jeremiah Garsha

Jeremiah Garsha is an Assistant Professor in Modern Global History at University College Dublin (UCD). He is a cultural historian of violence and memory, researching the performance of colonial violence through global-microhistories. He is a specialist of Southern and Eastern Africa in the nineteenth to twenty-first centuries, and of German, British, and American colonialism. His main research centres on the collection of human remains taken as trophies, their transition into scientific specimens and museum pieces, and the historical narratives created by material cultures and physical structures. His monograph *The Skull in the Versailles Treaty: Chief Mkwawa, Human Remains, and the Legacies of Empire* will be published later this year.

Cat Irving

Cat Irving is Human Remains Conservator at Surgeons' Hall Museums. She has been caring for anatomical and pathological museum collections for over twenty years and has worked extensively on the collections of the Hunterian Museum at the University of Glasgow, which include the eighteenth century preparations of William Hunter. In 2022 she worked with the skeleton of William Burke at the University of Edinburgh. Cat is a licensed anatomist and gives regular talks on anatomy and medical history. Her publications include a chapter in the Routledge Handbook of Museums, Heritage and Death entitled 'Conserving the humanity of human remains'.

Dr Marek Bukowski

Dr Marek Bukowski (MD, PhD) is Supervisor of the Museum of Medical University of Gdansk and a paediatric surgeon. His main fields of interest are history of medicine and the philosophy of science.

Dr Anthony Lewis

Dr Anthony Lewis (PhD) is the curator of Scottish History for Glasgow Life Museums. He has worked with mental health collections in museum education and curation for over twenty years and has also researched and published on medical architecture and facilities in Edinburgh in the 1700s, such as the Royal College of Physicians Hall. That, though, is another story.

Carla Valentine

Carla Valentine is the Technical Curator and Public Engagement Officer at Barts Pathology Museum in London. Prior to this she worked as a Senior Anatomical Pathology Technologist, assisting pathologists with autopsies for over a decade, and is therefore familiar with the delicate, contentious nature of human remains both recent and historical. Since she began her role at Barts in 2011, her aim has been to engage students, staff, and the public with the 5000-strong anatomical specimen collection in all forms: as objects of material culture, teaching aids, and examples of discrete human narratives.

Dr Carol Shiels

Dr Carol Shiels is the Head of the Pathology Museum at City St George's, University of London. She is a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy with a research interest in the patient experience in the 19th century and the ethics of researching and displaying human remains.

Emily Hanson

Emily Hanson is an Associate Lecturer in the School of Art History at the University of St Andrews. She is collaborating on this project with her colleague, Billy Rough, Lecturer in the School of Art History. Together they are working with the Glasgow School of Art, Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow, University of Dundee, University of Edinburgh, and the University of Glasgow. The multi-site exhibition, Phenomenal Bodies, will run for about two years, beginning in Summer 2025. Hanson is a specialist in Italian Renaissance art history, with a PhD from Washington University in St Louis.

Robyn Timmins

Based in South Wales and the Forest of Dean, Robyn recently completed her MSc in Conservation Practice at Cardiff University. When training as an object conservator, she treated various medical objects from local museums, while also researching inclusivity and disability within collections and conservation decision-making. In her current role as a Collections Officer at a small museum, she continues to work towards increasing and broadening accessibility to collections.

Dr Abeer Eladany

Abeer is a Curatorial Assistant at the University of Aberdeen Collections. She is an Egyptologist, a museum professional, and an archaeologist. Abeer has worked in the Egyptian Museum at the start of her career in Egypt and has over 30 years of experience working in the museum sector both in Egypt and in the UK. She studied at Cairo, Helwan, Manchester and Aberdeen

universities. Her main research interests are related to mummified Ancient Egyptians, History of Egyptology, and Museology, particularly Ethics and Repatriation.

Claire McDade

Claire McDade is Heritage Lead at RCPSG, with nearly 30 years in the heritage sector across a range of UK institutions. She is committed to exploring and sharing the often untold stories represented in heritage collections and widening access to them.

Clare Harrison

Clare Harrison is the Library and Heritage Manager at RCPSG and has worked in libraries and archives since 2007.

Monique Lerpinière

Monique Lerpinière is a PhD researcher from the University of Strathclyde whose SGSAAH funded project 'A Hidden Migration' intends to elucidate the history of South Asian doctors in Scotland since the mid-1800s. Monique also has a background working in disability management and local EDI initiatives which directs much of her historical work to uncovering the lives of people whose stories are so often lost to history.

Jenni Hunt

Jenni Hunt has worked as the Community Engagement Officer at the Old Operating Theatre for the past three years, bringing stories from the museum out into local communities. Her PhD is looking at representations of disabled lives within British museums, and she has worked with RCMG and the National Trust to find stories of disability in their collections.

Cornelia Thompson

Cornelia is a PhD candidate in the UCL Institute of Archaeology researching medical museums as distinct heritage spaces. Through engaging directly with visitors and museums staff, Cornelia considers the histories and approaches of medical museums, what draws visitors to these places, and the wellbeing potential of their collections. Cornelia also holds an MA in American History and has a longstanding research interest in how humans respond to difficult situations (individually and as a collective), is originally from Boston, USA, and now lives and works in London.

Matthew Jarron

Matthew is Curator of the University of Dundee Museums, including the Tayside Medical History Museum, the D'Arcy Thompson Zoology Museum and the exhibition programme in the Tower Foyer & Lamb Galleries. He is Chair of Scotland & Medicine and is also actively involved in several other organisations locally and nationally, including the University's Culture & Arts Committee, the Abertay Historical Society, University Museums in Scotland (UMIS), and the Scottish Society for Art History.