**Clare Anderson, Leicester Institute for Advanced Studies (09.06.22)**

My name is Clare Anderson and I’m Professor of History and Director of the Leicester Institute for Advanced Studies.

I’m just coming to the end of a big project funded by the ESRC’s Global Challenges Research Fund, which has a team of fourteen from the Universities of Leicester and Guyana, looking at the history of incarceration in British Guyana in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the impact of that in Guyana today, since independence in 1966. We are particularly interested in prisoners’ and prison officers’ mental health and patterns of addiction, and as such we’re working together as criminologists, historians, public health and political scientists to put the puzzle together from a multi-disciplinary perspective. I really don’t think that we can properly engage with mental health and addiction challenges in Guyana’s jails from a single disciplinary perspective, so it was really that that drove the grant application initially, this desire to understand what’s going on in prisons today, to connect it to the past, and it’s that which is underpinning the project.

When we designed the project, we designed it so that every team member would be exposed to other research methods, and it was really important for us that we understood the kinds of work that we were each doing. So our criminologist has spent time in the National Library of Guyana collecting newspaper reports, and our historian postdoc has interviewed prisoners and conducted focus groups, as have I, as PI of the project. It's really important that researchers at every career stage have development opportunities, and actually for me it’s been such a privilege to work with experienced colleagues and to learn how to do interviews with vulnerable populations in really challenging circumstances, and I can’t imagine that’s not going to feed into research projects in the future.

One point of pride for me is the professional development of the postgraduate students and early career researchers that I’ve worked with on various projects, and I am delighted when I see them secure their own independent projects or move on to lectureships and other positions – I find that enormously satisfying and feel really proud to have played a part in their journey into academic life.

I’m very lucky that my commute to my office is up New Walk, so I am able to look at the oldest provincial museum in the country, Leicester Museum and Art Gallery, and then cut across by the statue of Robert Hall, the great anti-slavery campaigner, and through Princess Road East and up onto University Road, it’s tree-lined and it’s beautiful at all times of the year.