

# Bedrock

During 2015 I undertook a residency at the Arthritis Research UK Centre for Epidemiology at the University of Manchester. Dr. Will Dixon, Director, invited me to make new work in response to the Centre's historic collection of x-rays.

Whilst making my way through several decades of research studies, a tip off from a member of staff led to the discovery of a perfectly preserved collection of x-rays that were taken by the Centre's founding director, Dr. John Lawrence. Made between 1950-1952, these precious documents had been presumed lost and were a hugely exciting find for both the Centre and myself.

The National Coal Board and the Ministry for Health had commissioned Dr. Lawrence to study the effects of coal mining on bone health. He collected x-rays from local miners (largely from the Walkden Miners Clinic, where he worked as a Rheumatologist) and found that miners had more degenerative spinal disease.

Dr. Lawrence's x-rays underpinned the "Kellgren & Lawrence" classification system for osteoarthritis, still in worldwide use today. They represent the bedrock of the Centre's work since the 1950s and although the Centre has progressed from coal mining to data mining, its core mission – research for the benefit of patients - remains the same.

**Bedrock** encompasses sculpture, collage and photography. It is primarily concerned with the idea of illumination: from the lightbox needed to read x-rays and the flickering of the miner's lamp, to the lightbulb moments that inspire scientists and artists alike. This new body of work also poses several questions: What does pain look like? Can cold data be bought back to life? How do the miners' experiences stain the present? Where does the research process end?...

Several pieces are directly inspired by the memories of three ex-miners: Alex Channon, David Mort and David Read, who agreed to lengthy interviews. I am very grateful to them for teaching me so much about what life was like down the mines and in the related community.

I am delighted to have collaborated with Dr. Carsten Timmermann (History of Science, Technology & Medicine, University of Manchester) to produce a workshop for patients, specialists and doctoral students in November 2015. It was also a pleasure to work with MA students Allyson McAbee and Anna Pozzali (Granada Centre for Visual Anthropology, University of Manchester) who documented parts of the project and whose films can be viewed during the exhibition.

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