

Horton – Down the Years

Being Extracts from The Annual Reports Of The Visiting Commissioners.

(With grateful thanks to W Saunders, former Chief Electrician - Horton Hospital)

15th July 1902 - "This Asylum was opened for the general reception of patients from the County Of London on March 3rd last but previously the male patients who had occupied a ward of the neighbouring temporary Manor Asylum had been moved here. The Asylum is designed to accommodate, in all, 2000 patients."

"On the female side the General Bath room is furnished with spray bathing arrangements - on the male side the room is fitted with the ordinary baths. The spray bathing, we learn, is not objected to by the women."

13th May 1904 - "one patients has been restrained on one occasion for 5 hours."

29th July 1905 - "Not more than 41 per cent. of the men and 35 per cent. of the women are usefully employed."

"The ground floor of the steward's house is now used as accommodation for 5 female patients and the upper floor for the nurses."

"Several (patients) spoke strongly against the spray baths"

"One of the two exceptional deaths was that of a general paralytic who was accidentally choked by a piece of meat; and the other that of a female patient who was murdered by her husband during his visit to the ward. As regards this case care will no doubt be taken that all future visitors to patients in bed are kept under close continuous observation during their visit. In these last two cases alone inquests were held and the husband was subsequently tried and found guilty but insane."

"There have been only two instances of the use of mechanical restraint, and those for surgical reasons."

26 June 1906 - "One other serious incident has occurred during the last year. A female patient who has been resident in the Asylum since November 1904 and who escaped for few hours from the Asylum on December 17th 1905 is found to be pregnant."

"No male patient has been mechanically restrained since the last visit but two women have on two occasions been thus treated for surgical reasons for 387 hours in all."

"The average attendance at the various Sunday services is somewhat low being 30 per cent. as against a general average of 44 per cent."

"The returns of employment 42 per cent. of men and 39 per cent. of women are below the average and we observe that only one patient is employed in the workshops and that no patient does artizan work. It seems unfortunate that the opportunity of usefully employing many patients is thus lost."

7 July 1908 - "Dr. Lord has introduced several new industries for the men comprising mat-making, basket-making and cane-work and a printing shop. The work done in these shops has been economically a success; and the patients labour has also been largely used in the decoration and improvements of the wards."

"Two of the male infirmaries are now nursed by women with marked success."

20th Feb 1909 - "The staff of attendants and nurses is adequate, there being one attendant or nurse on day duty to every 10.2 patients. For night duty there are 13 attendants and 21 nurses."

13 Dec 1910 - " A very considerable amount of redecoration has been done since the last visit with excellent effect in brightening up the wards and corridors. Patients labour has been largely utilized in this work which is still in progress."

"Work has begun on the Male Acute Hospital plans which have been approved for the accommodation of 50 cases."

31 Oct 1911 - "The wards, dormitories, beds and bedding were without exception in capital order and even those where the most faulty in habits are warded were fresh and free from taint. "

"A very considerable amount of general decoration has been carried out and is still in progress and we are glad to hear that much of this class of work is done by patients labour. The shops and workroom which we were much interested in visiting and where numbers of patients were busily engaged were today in full working order."

24 May 1912 - "They (the dinners) were well served on warmed plates and this is in spite of the fact that the ward kitchens contain no special means for heating them."

"Wards 9 on the male side and K on the female side which each contained 80 patients appeared to us to be somewhat overcrowded."

"The principal alterations and improvements since the last visit have been the opening of the male admission hospital which is admirably suited for its purpose and is now fully occupied by 56 patients."

"A smoke chamber for curing bacon has been installed in one of the central courts."

"In female Villa 2 we saw several women at work under a tailoress making up a number of trousers and jackets for the men, which had been cut out in the Tailor's shop."

14 Feb 1913 - "A number of useful alterations have been carried out among which we would mention the improvement of the ventilation of some male corridors by removing one of the side walls in certain places."

"The proportion (of patients) employed on the female side is fair but we should like to see more workers at needlework and in the laundry."

"The staff of attendants and nurses is of adequate strength on the male side, but on the female side the proportion of one nurse to 11.3 patients appears somewhat weak."

4 Dec 1914 - "The percentage who go for walks outside the estate is also good whilst about an average number are daily engaged in some form of occupation, as many as 171 being at work on the farms and gardens."

"As many as 44 per cent. of the staff are engaged on active service ... two of them we regret to say have been returned on the casualty lists as killed."

"Amongst the causes of death the only points which perhaps call for remark here is the high percentage of General Paralytic in the males, viz, 34 per cent. which may be contrasted with 10 per cent. in the case of the females and the comparatively low proportion, viz, 10 per cent. of deaths due to tuberculosis."

23 Dec 1921 - "It is seven years since an annual inspection on behalf of our Board was made of this institution The Committee agreed to distribute the patients at Horton over their eight other mental hospitals and to lend this one with the whole of its staff and equipment to the Army Council. The evacuation of the whole hospital's 2,200 mental cases was commenced on the 12th March 1915 and was completed without mishap of any kind in just under a month - provision was ultimately made for some 2,500 soldier patients, the first convoy of whom was received on the 20th May 1915 it was ultimately selected as the main hospital for the treatment of Officers. The total number of soldiers treated here was rather more than 44,600 the last soldier patient left on the 31st October 1919 - reinstatement and renovation were rapidly put in hand and by the 18th February 1920 the transfer back of the patients formerly here was commenced."

"In the meantime it had been resolved to divert the contiguous Manor Hospital - the accommodation in which was entirely female, from the treatment of mental disorders to that of mental deficiency and it was further decided to re-arrange the accommodation at Horton so that instead of being about equal as respects the sexes it now provides beds for 1722 female patients but for only a sufficient number (189) of selected males for work in the shops on the farm we would urge the Committee to consider the appointment of a trained instructor in handicraft so as to augment the scope of patients' employment and to provide special industries for women."

"A good and sufficiently equipped room for dental surgery has been provided."

7 July 1922 - "All the name patients are accommodated outside the main building namely in the three villas and in the "Acute Male Hospital."

"No inquest was held since the last visit"

9 Nov 1923 - "The arrangements we saw in the mortuary for viewing deceased patients by their relatives and friends we thought most seemly and suitable."

"With our visit to Long Grove fresh in our minds and remindful of the close contiguity of the Manor, Ewell Colony and West Park Hospital (shortly to be opened) which together will contain between 7000 and 8000 beds the thought occurs to us that there exists in the Council's Epsom estate a magnificent, probably unique opportunity for locally organised study and research in mental disorders."

10 Oct 1924 - "In order to use the outlying villas for female patients wards 6, 7 and 13 in A or the old male division have now been transferred for the use of the working male patients and later on we understand Ward 14 will also be given over to them."

"On enquiring into the methods of reporting by the nurses in charge of the wards we were struck by the fact that there is no official report of any kind made by the charge nurse on duty in the morning."

"An occupations officer has recently been appointed but we hope before long that the handicrafts she is teaching will be carried on in the wards in her absence."

"Since the last visit a cinema apparatus has been installed."

"The X-Ray apparatus installed in this hospital is made full use of and since 1st January last some 175 examinations have been made of patients and staff from here and other Epsom mental hospitals."

19 Dec 1925 - "Another feature of considerable interest ... is the treatment of General Paralysis of the Insane under suitable precautions, supervised by Colonel James of the Ministry of Health and under the immediate direction of a colleague of his, Mr. Shute. We were glad to note that careful records are being kept with a view to the advancement of future knowledge as to the utility and as to the class of case most likely to benefit."

24 Nov 1926 - "Quite apart from the laundry where 70 female patients were working and the workroom where there were 66 patients employed we were pleased to see that a large number of patients were employed at some form of work or other in the day rooms on the female side such as darning, mending and fancy work. "

7 Oct 1927 - "At the beginning of the year about 13.5 acres of the hospital estate was alienated by way of sale to the Epsom Urban District Council for housing purposes and several houses have already been erected."

"We were much interested in the working of the system of 'Team-Work'. Each of the Medical Officers in addition to the general treatment of the patients in his ward devotes particular attention to one branch of medical investigation and treatment, one to surgical treatment, another to x-ray etc., another to the various forms of light treatment and so on. The whole medical staff in this way collaborates in the examination and treatment of recent and special cases with excellent results."

" but we have received every assistance from the Deputy Superintendent and his colleagues who number 6, one of whom is a lady."

7 Dec 1928 - "I also inspected the new nurses' home for 80 nurses which is now approaching completion. I was pleased to hear also that the proposed annexe to A. Hospital to include three side rooms, a room for Plombière Treatment, a 'light' room and a veranda is likely to be commenced shortly."

"As from November 1st of this year an important departure which is certain to prove of great value has been made at this hospital by Col. Lord with the approval of the L.C.C. whereby certain of the honorary visiting staff of the Royal Free Hospital act in a consultative capacity and pay routine visits as required."

12 Dec 1929 - ".... some sections of corridor walls are being removed." "A house and grounds has, by the efforts of some good friends of the hospital been acquired to which patients on parole can go where a free tea is provided. The rest house is in charge of a lady who also has undertaken the visitation of the male wards."

"We would like to see the shelves in the medicine cupboards set aside for poisons, themselves fitted with doors and keys so that poisons are always kept under double lock."

"The sick patients •.... are receiving careful and skilled nursing and when necessary the attention of a trained masseuse."

11 Dec 1930 - "The redecoration of the ground floor wards is nearly complete and it is hoped that the upper wards will soon be taken in hand works in progress include the removal of sections of the corridor walls."

30 Dec 1931 - "With the coming into operation on 1st of last January of the Mental Treatment Act two new categories of patients in public mental hospitals have been created, namely, Voluntary and Temporary patients. At the moment 1 man and 8 women are voluntary patients and 3 women are temporary patients. We look forward to a great extension of the use of these two methods of admission and to the time when possibly the majority of the direct admissions will be either voluntary or temporary patients."

15 Nov 1932 " When all these changes have taken place the night accommodation will be for males 556 and for females 1616 a total of 2172 as compared with 2062 at present."

"In A hospital before its occupation by male patients it is proposed to re-arrange the screens so as to enlarge the dormitory accommodation and to throw the dining room and day room into one compartment."

"At present 2 women nurses are employed on the male side, more will be so employed when the number of male wards is increased."

"The needleroom on the "A" side is to be converted very shortly into a mess room for the male nurses."

16 Nov 1933 - "About 28 men and 11 women have parole beyond the estate. At present four padded rooms are being converted to single rooms for patients. Alterations contemplated include the erection of a new nurses home."

25 Oct 1934 - "The new nurses home with accommodation for 86 nurses is nearly ready for occupation."

"Some of the patients are employed in the utility services of the hospital and very good work is being done in the sewing room. On the male side, however, a negligible number only are employed in the shops, 3 tailors and bookmakers, 11 upholsterers, 5 bookbinders and printers, 4 painters and carpenters. So far, however, little has been done to employ the 51% who are at present unoccupied or to vary the monotony and stimulate the activities of the large group engaged only in a little ward work."

"One of the improvements most urgently needed is of the sanitary facilities for male patients. None of the blocks occupied by these patients has urinals."

22 Nov 1935 - "A system of portable trollies with detachable canvas bags has recently been introduced into all wards for the collection of foul clothing. These bags are tied up, collected and removed to the foul laundry where they are emptied and sterilized by boiling. Dr. Nicol proposes to have these bags deposited outside the ward by means of shutters and also to make certain other modifications in the collection and checking of foul clothing which will no doubt be in operation when this hospital is again visited."

5 Dec 1936 - "Among other improvements made since the last visit by Commissioners are the installation of a draw plate oven at the main kitchen with some re-arrangements of the latter's appliances and of hatchways in dormitories to facilitate the removal of foul linen from the latter."

"Painting and redecoration of some of the wards has been in progress; and where this has been finished the effect is very pleasing. There is however an extensive amount of

arrears in this direction in need of being overtaken, the presence of which it is, we suggest, particularly desirable to avoid in a mental hospital."

"According to the returns furnished to our Board at the beginning of the year the proportion of patients occupied is not high, 46% of the men and 42% of the women; and of those so employed 40% of the men and 50% of the women are returned as assisting in the wards."

"The admissions units on both sides are staffed by women nurses and the Matron, Miss Lowman, supervises the nursing throughout the hospital."

"We gathered that it is proposed by the removal of the women from some of the wards in Division A. and the occupation then of these wards by men, gradually to restore the balance between the male and female accommodation, if not complete, at any rate sufficiently to enable the male accommodation to contain wards or detached units structurally adapted to permit of proper classification."

10 Oct 1937 - "In one ward we saw a new type of white drill uniform dress in use by the female nursing staff. We understand the change is an experimental one but we were greatly struck by the effect and the utility of these dresses. They resemble in design a well-tailored overall."

"Physical training classes for male patients continue to be held with the assistance of seven trained instructors all of whom are drawn from the nursing staff."

"We hope too that in the course of time a supply of warm water will be available in every washbowl used by a patient. At present a hot water can has to be employed in every ward in order to fill the basins".

"We also commend to the consideration of the Committee the enlargement of the present staff lavatories with the provision of washing accommodation and of a cloak room for their clothes when not in use."

"The X-Ray department serves for this and for other hospitals in locality. The number of successful plates registered during this year 1936 was 1191 and the total number of cases examined was 787; of these numbers 440 and 269 respectively related to this hospital."

"The issue of milk for ordinary diets amounted to 11/16ths pints per patient per day. In addition 403 pints are issued daily as sick and extra diets. The average caloric value of the ordinary diet issued is stated to be 3016 calories per patient per day."

9 Dec 1938 - "One of the most important developments at this hospital which is taking place at the present time is the extension of the male side this will result in the prescribed accommodation working out at 1490 beds on the female side and 681 on the male side."

"Over 18% of the patients enjoy some form of parole and one male ward, three female wards and 4 villas are administered on the open door principle."

12 Dec 1947 - "Since this hospital was last visited on behalf of the Board in December 1938 there have been great changes brought about by the war. During the war the hospital was entirely used as an E.M.S. hospital, the only patients with mental disorder accommodated here were the few sent from time to time for treatment in the malarial unit. Throughout the years no damage, beyond broken windows, was suffered as the result of enemy action."

"The total beds here amount to some 2000 approximately.

Those now in use are as follows:-

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| E.M.S. (Chest E.N.T. and orthopaedic beds) | 94 |
| Malarial Unit | 27 |
| Mental Hospital | <u>263</u> |
| | <u>384</u> |

2 Jun 1948 - So far it has not been practicable to receive direct admissions but it is hoped for all concerned that this practice can be re-started presently.

11 May 1949 - "On the 5th July 1948, this hospital which was formerly owned and administered by the London County Council passed to the Minister of Health and is now administered on his behalf by the South West Metropolitan Regional Hospital Board, through a Hospital Management Committee of its own."

"The Social Club for the patients is a new feature at this hospital, and is conducted by the patients as much as possible; they have a large club room, plenty of equipment and more is expected, including a radiogram; all kinds of activities form an interesting programme."

"The Malaria Unit at "C" hospital remains independent of the mental hospital, we were glad to have the opportunity to visit the laboratory where Mr. Shute gave us a interesting demonstration of the cycle of the parasite in the liver."

30 Mar 1950 - "Eight wards and villas, 6 on the female side and 2 on the male side, are administered on the open door principle and 108 patients (66m - 42f) enjoy full parole."

"It seems to us essential, especially as the number of resident patients is expanding gradually, that the Recreation Hall should be returned to its proper use and we hope very much that the scheme whereby a disused ward which was turned into an operating theatre during the war, would be utilized for the purpose of the staff cafeteria will be allowed to proceed."

24 Jan 1951 - "Other alterations and improvements have been carried out, but the large recreational hall is still used as cafeteria. Plans have been passed, and other steps

taken, which it is hoped will result in this valuable piece of rehabilitation of Horton taking place by the summer of 1951."

16 Jan 1952 - "Since the last visit an excellent staff cafeteria has been opened, and the recreation hall is now again available for its proper use. The cafeteria is well-equipped, comfortable and attractive, and it is a most useful addition to the hospital. The recreation hall needs redecoration, and this we understand will be done when treatment to eliminate the objectionable echo is carried out. It is hoped too, to install cinematograph projectors here.

"Eight female and four male wards are run on the open door principle, and the parole figures are notably good."

"The accommodation at present in use for occupation therapy is not good, and it is hoped to provide something more suitable in due course.' We were glad to see that one of the utility forms of occupation is being developed as a part of occupational treatment, and the carpenter's shop is a very useful and well-run unit. We hope that similar development will be possible in other kinds of useful occupations such as tailoring, dressmaking, and the like."

"Eight male and four female wards are not at present in use for the accommodation of patients."

Some interesting statistics extracted from the reports.

By 29 July 1905 the number of patients on the books had reached the total of 2030 (M.906, F. 1124), 3524 patients had been admitted, 829 discharged or removed of which 492 were 'recovered' and 662 had died. Seclusions from 13.5.04 to 29.7.05 in the case of 119 patients amounted to 743 occasions for a total of 4920 hours, the highest ever recorded in the reports. This can be contrasted with the period 24.5.12 -11.2.13 when 18 patients were secluded on 54 occasions for a total of 93 hours.

The number of medical staff employed in July 1905 for 2030 patients was 6. At one time the Commissioners made a point of recording, sometimes disparagingly (see report 26.6.06) the percentage of patients occupied. The highest percentage recorded was 67% in 1910. The highest recorded percentage of patients attending Religious Services was 34% in 1909, this had dropped to 17.7% in 1922.

The highest number of patients mentioned in the Commissioners reports prior to the evacuation of the hospital in the 1914 - 18 war was on 4.12.14., viz., M.1005, F.1174, Total 2179. The highest number reported during the period intervening between the two world wars was on 10.12.37. viz., M.564, F.1640, Total 2204. The number of nursing staff employed on that date was M.92, F.292, Medical 9.

From the date of the re-opening of the mental hospital after the 1914-18 war (i.e. from 18.2.20) to 19.12.25 the number of patients had reached M.268, F.1658, Total 1926.

Staff employed at the latter date were Male Nurses 39, Female Nurses 287, Medical Staff 8.

From the date of the re-opening of the mental hospital after the 1939-45 war (i.e. from 1.7.47) to 16.1.52, the number of patients had reached M.303, F.615, Total 918. Staff employed at the latter date were Male Nurses 81, Female Nurses Full-time 85, Part-time 109 and Medical Staff 9.

Of the recorded rates of maintenance the following are of interest as showing the fluctuations over the years:-

1905 - 11/4.5
1910 - 9/11
1914 - 11/8
1921 - 36/9
1922 - 29/2
1923 - 22/9
1926 - 28/7
1935 - 23/4
1938 - 28/-

The last ascertained cost per head for this hospital as distinct from the previous figures which were a general charge levied in respect of all patients in London County Council Mental hospitals was £5.15. 3. for the year 1951-52.