

ST CRISPIN HOSPITAL RECORDS

Northamptonshire Record Office holds the records of the Northampton County Lunatic Asylum, otherwise known as Berrywood, and later called St Crispin Hospital.

Please note that all records under 100 years old are held on restricted access due to Data Protection Regulations and any enquiries regarding these restricted records should be directed to Northamptonshire Archives who may be able to assist. There may be a charge for this.

HISTORY

Previously pauper lunatics had been taken in by the Northampton General Lunatic Asylum, close to Northampton, just off the Billing Road, which had opened in 1838. By the late 1860s it was considered too small and in 1870 the Commissioners in Lunacy recommended that they county build a separate asylum for pauper patients. It was opened on 30 June 1876 with 61 male and 54 female patients. It was located in the parish of Upton to the west of the town. The General Lunatic Asylum, having become a purely private asylum, changed its name to St. Andrew's Hospital. It still functions today as the largest and one of the most prestigious independent psychiatric hospitals in the country.

The asylum was turned into the Duston War Hospital in October 1915 and the patients were dispersed to other asylums, returning in November 1919. By 1940 the hospital was able to accommodate 1,066 patients. After the War the asylum became known as the County Mental Hospital. The hospital was nationalized following the introduction of the NHS in 1948. It finally closed in 1995.

THE RECORDS

As well as records relating to the management of the Hospital, including the work of the Management Committee and its various sub-committees, the Committee of Visitors, the Treasurer, Medical Superintendent, Tutor, Chaplain and Farm Bailiff, they also hold records relating to the nursing staff, such as wage books, and to the patients. Below are the details of the admission registers and case books available.

Admission Registers provide details of the sex, status, occupation, abode, chargeable and certifying authority, form of disorder and cause, bodily condition, duration of attack and date of discharge, and the removal or death of patients. The Record Office has the following:

- Registers of admissions (pauper) for 1876-1891 and 1897-1906
- Registers of admissions (private) for 1876-1906

(there are additional records, see below, but access is restricted)

Case books provide the following information: details of patients on admission - followed by a day to day report of the patient. Photographs of patients on admission, from 1900, and also on discharge (if applicable).

The Record Office has the following case books:

- Female case books (14 volumes) covering the years 1876-1911
- Male case books (13 volumes) covering the years 1876 – 1910

(there are additional records, see below, but access is restricted)

Volunteers have indexed the majority of the Case books and an index to the names, age, condition and disorder, and discharge or death details are noted. The place is generally the Poor Law Union which arranged the admittance rather than the parish that the person lived in.

EXAMPLES TAKEN FROM THE CASE BOOKS

On admittance, a description is given of the patient and their mental state. Some patients are obviously suffering from dementia, Down's syndrome, autism or have mental impairment but these conditions were not so well understood at that time. Please bear in mind that the description of the patient and their mental state are of the period and not necessarily those that we would consider using today.

S A C admitted 14 May 1886 age 28, single, domestic servant, supposed cause - religion. Previously a patient 1882-4. Unable to answer questions rationally, hears voices, not aware of her surroundings and appears to have only a glimmering recollection of previous time there. Form of mental disease: dementia. Prognosis Bad. A long term patient. By March 1890 it was noted that she is always idle and often excited. Oct 29 1890 - looking pale and ill and has weak heart.

Dec 13. Noted - this woman does not seem to alter much one way or other.

Feb. 1891 Has been getting up for the full day but still looks feeble.

Nov 1 1891. Restless last night and got out of bed and walked down the corridors. When returned she was exhausted but revived after stimulant. Is inclined to be purged today.

Nov 3 Purged last night three times

Nov 11 Gradually sank and died this morning in the presence of the nurse.

Notice of death attached to page – cause given as Phthisis or tuberculosis

E C admitted 24 March 1887 aged 19, single, Congregationalist, was discharged two years ago. Is incoherent in her conversation and restless, does not sleep and is violent. She is the same fat, squat little girl that she was in her former residence here. She is too noisy for any examination of the chest to be made. She is conscious of her position and recognises officers who were here during her former time. For the rest of April it reports that she looks exhausted and it is due to fits.

May 21 Has become very deathly looking, has wide, vacant eyes, unable to speak.

May 23rd Sank and died at 6.50 last evening with nurse in attendance. Notice of death states that a post mortem took place and three tubercular tumours were found in her brain.

S S admitted 7 February 1880 aged 32, was sentenced to fourteen days hard labour for running away from workhouse with Union clothes on. Form of mental disease: Dementia:

State on admission: Expression of countenance and manner both denote imbecility. Is generally talking to himself and incoherently complains of not having enough food in prison and has come here to get more. His great weakness appears to be a constant need for food.

J D admitted 25 Nov 1880 aged 18, was apprehended on charge of larceny and had another charge against him – namely an attempt to upset a train. Medical certificate: Criminal.

OTHER RECORDS

Administration – minutes of asylum committee	1870-1873	misc. Q.S. in	X6729
Administration – minutes	1877-1979		
Administration – visitors	1877-1974		
Visitors letter books in MKM archive	1911-1917		
	1932-1944		
Administration – architectural drawings	1872-1978		
with related papers (just 2 plans for original building)			
Administration – annual reports (some gaps)	1877-1946		
Administration – staff	1876-1951		
Medical – admissions	1876-1991		
Medical – case	1876-1991		
Medical – deaths & post mortems	1902-1961		
Published history			
Additional papers including on pensions and alterations to asylum	misc Q.S archive		