

took place. The first was a visit in 1828 by Samuel Tuke of the York Retreat; the second was a visit by a magistrate from Middlesex in the same year, three years before Hanwell Asylum opened. These events suggest that the Bethel had active contact with developments beyond Norwich, but their extent cannot be gauged.

The management of the residents was not explicitly recorded. Inventories taken in the 18th century list chains, padlocks, waistcoats, and "chairs and staples", all items of restraint. The earliest surviving rules, dated 11 December 1797, reminded the Master and Mistress of "the duty and humanity" they owed to the patients, who were to be controlled not by "blows or . . . any weapons" but by "the most gentle and humane means". Sadly, by 1881 the Governors were seeking estimates for two padded rooms.

From 1814, the Bethel lost its unique position in caring for the mad of Norwich, even more so after the city asylum opened at Hellesdon in 1880. It seems to have grown into a small, comfortable private asylum. One of the physicians died in 1814. Perhaps as a sign of relative decline, his post was not filled until the appointment of an RMO was made mandatory by the Lunatics Act of 1845, the requirements of which were unsuccessfully opposed by the governors. The reports of the Commissioners in Lunacy were not always complimentary. In their first report of 1844 they felt it was "ill-adapted . . . for the reception of the insane"; in 1849 they felt that the Bethel was "very deficient in many essentials" for the restoration of health, noted that the linen was worse than in the workhouse, and recommended that the institution should be moved into the country.

Hopefully, the first two observations were acted upon. The last was not, and the Bethel remains on its

original site to this day. It was founded at a time of increasing concern for the relief of the poor in one of the two leading provincial centres; Bristol has established a similar facility in 1696. Content with simple care for 30 years, the increasing medicalisation of madness was mirrored in the changing records from the early 1750s. The Bethel's first century witnessed the beginning of the modern profession of medicine, with its emphasis on hospital care and physical treatments. The quality of medical care was generally high at this time and continued into the 19th century. Although it had no lasting influence outside Norwich, the Bethel served its community faithfully until overtaken by social and political developments elsewhere. Surrounded by Victorian and later buildings lies the original heart of the first purpose-built provincial establishment for the mentally ill, the oldest such building to survive, and one which still plays an important part in the mental illness service of Norwich.

Sources

- BARCLAY, C. V. (1963) An eighteenth century mental hospital. *British Journal of Psychiatric Social Work*, 7, 21–26.
- BATEMAN, SIR F. & RYE, W. (1906) *A History of the Bethel at Norwich*. Norwich: Gibbs & Waller.
- NORFOLK RECORD OFFICE *Minutes of the Bethel Hospital, 1724–1895: BH9–15, BH16–20*.
- *Visitors Book, 1828–1850: BH25*.
- (An extensive collection of other manuscripts is held in the Norfolk Record Office; these include continuous minutes from 1724, disbursement books from 1730, account books, registers (some extending back to the late 18th century, albeit damaged), casenotes from the 19th century, and miscellaneous bills and correspondence).

Miscellany

Merck Awards – Scotland

The winner of the 1990 Merck Award in Scotland was Dr Robert Kehoe, a senior registrar at the Royal Edinburgh Hospital. The award will enable him to visit emergency psychiatric services in the USA. On his return he will present a paper at a quarterly meeting of the Scottish Division of the Royal College of Psychiatrists.

New publication

The Centre for Policy on Ageing has published a report entitled *Living Dangerously: risk-taking, safety and older people* by Deidre Wynne-Harley, price £7.80 (64 pp).

Further information: Nick Hayes, Centre for Policy on Ageing, 25–31 Ironmonger Row, London EC1V 3QP (telephone 071 253 1787).