



Mental Health: Lennox Castle

Lennox Castle - a guided tour

IDENTS:

Lennox Castle hospital opened in 1936 and closed in 2002

When it opened it was the largest mental deficiency hospital in Britain

At its peak in the 1970's it housed over 1600 patients

In 1996, former nurse Howard Mitchell, toured his old workplace

HOWARD:

You could be forgiven for thinking it was the entrance to one of the Victorian asylums of the nineteenth century. Locked stately homes for the, the mentally ill, but in fact Lennox Castle was very much a twentieth century hospital.

Coming into view are the villas, purpose built individual villas for sixty patients. Originally ten male and ten female.

We're going into the semi-circle of workshops. We had a tailors, cobblers, tin smiths, carpet makers. Patients would come from the ward to spend the day working here, again very much the idea of self-contained community.

The kitchen buildings.

This is the bowling green and pavilion.

In the background what used to be the administration block and the male nurses' residence when they weren't staying in the ward.

This was the site of the main football pitch. It was supposed to be a better pitch to play on than Hampden Park the Scottish national stadium and it was certainly very revered. People weren't allowed to walk across it. If any member of staff was caught crossing it then they were reported to the physician superintendent and they had to go for a disciplinary interview.

Part of the purpose of the hospital was to also segregate the sexes and the topography of the hospital helped to do that. We have the male side at the bottom of the hill and as we go up the hill we move into the female side of the hospital.

There is actually a demarcation line which we're coming to now, which was the hospital shop. So male patients weren't allowed to go past this point here. Female patients weren't allowed to go down beyond that and this even applied to members of staff as well in the early days.

Turning into the female side of the hospital now. Here is the laundry, seemingly an extremely unpleasant place to work.

This is the female workshops similarly arranged so it's extremely symmetrical in the hospital.

And the refectory on the female side of the kitchens and dining room.

The castle itself was used to house the first female patients who arrived here in 1929, as the villas were then built around them and was subsequently used as a nurses home. It's now been sold off for private housing.

This was the main assembly hall and also administrative building. It was used for concerts, cinema, dances. It's obviously on the female side so it meant there were some logistical problems in bringing the males up. It was very much male nurses at the front, male nurses at the back of a line and they marched them up the hill and marched them back down again, making sure nobody ran away.

The staff houses fifty yards from the wards. There was some degree of discrimination in the types of housing. We see there are four to a block here, two up, two down. These were for the general workers. Some of the other houses were semi-detached and they were for some of the more junior medical staff and the clerk of works. Although there were many dangerous patients who lived in very close proximity to the staff housing, it was generally thought to be a very safe place to live and to bring up children as well.