



Mental Health: Lennox Castle

Starting work at Lennox Castle

Howard

When I was at school, as a teenager it was the last place I thought I would ever end up was there. Without being snobby, I always felt it was 'god, please don't let me end up there'. Although I never really.

Allan

But you went to Ibrox Park.

Howard

Aye, that's right. I did, but only spectating. Not that it was beneath me, but it wasn't something to aspire to. There were two industries in Lennoxtown, the nail works and the Castle. And in many ways I viewed them the same. That's for people that don't have ambition and they don't have an education, and that they end up there.

I didn't want to be a nurse in the context of being an attendant within a hospital. I think that is probably, being a nurse is not an accurate statement. It's not being an attendant in a hospital. I think a number of us came to that conclusion. Almost simultaneously, I can think of quite a number of folk, our contemporaries who found that.

It was your father that dragged me into the job as well. I was intending to go and do teacher training, but was waiting six months to go there after the summer. And your dad said through my parents who he knew, yourself and Alec Matheson, why don't you try nursing assistant in the Castle for a wee while.

I don't think he was in PRP. But maybe he had a view of recognising people that might be able to do that job.

But I had interviewed for a weekend nursing assistant, a couple of years previously. But Joanne Shields suggested I cut my hair, so that was no chance, no chance whatsoever.

That was never a problem for me.

Well it was, if I remember right at some point. But it was certainly, I hadn't a clue what to expect, and it was actually quite an exciting thing to do. To be exposed to such a strange strange world, for me anyway.

I think there was certainly an advantage, in terms of when you started to train. And I remember the eight week blocks that you went to. The fact that you had been exposed in some way, to the hospital environment. And my exposure, prior to working in the hospital and hospital environment, was walking through on the way to school. And invariably folk knocking on windows and waving at you. Usually the same people every day. And being invited along to the famous Christmas parties. And also I don't know if you remember them Mitch, but the more able residents of the hospital would have put on shows. I have vague recollections of them, talking about, when I was quite a young child. I think they called them 'Go as you pleases'. And there was a kind of pantomime cabaret type shows. Folk put immense amount of work into these, and obviously I think a lot of folk derived quite a huge amount of pleasure from them. But that was exposure, but actually I can remember the first day that actually I walked on a ward. It was after signing the papers with Jimmy McGarvey. I was consigned to Ward 'C', at the time. Somewhere round about half past seven in the morning, by which time a resident who clearly hadn't been very happy had proceeded to smash twelve windows. And I was quite scared. And I thought to myself is this really the type of place that I would like to

work in. But, I think you became annulled to that. I think you became in some way anaesthetised to some of the quite strange practices that took place. For instance the shaving of fifty or sixty men at seven o'clock in the morning, in a fairly mechanical way.

By one or two people. Whether they could shave themselves or not.

Yes. And if you were really really fortunate you might have a resident who would be the soaper-upper, who would help you along the way. But you learn to shave very quickly. And you learn if you cut somebody that wasn't always a very pleasant experience for either the cut or the cutter.