

# Friern Barnet *Newsletter*

Published by Friern Barnet & District Local History Society

Issue Number 78

September 2019

## **HAPPY 200th QUEEN VICTORIA!**

On Friday 24 May a small group from the Society assembled in front of the statue in Friary Park. A bottle of Prosecco was produced, five glasses were filled, and a toast was made – to Queen Victoria, whose birthday was two hundred years ago. So, what was this all about?

In 1909 Sydney Simmons, a notable local businessman and founder of the Patent Steam Carpet Beating Company Ltd, had given Friern Barnet Urban District Council the sum of £7500 for the purchase of the Friary estate for the creation of 'a public park for all time'. Middlesex County Council gave a further £1937 towards the cost. The park was to have been opened on Saturday 7 May 1910 by the Lord Mayor of London but unfortunately King Edward VII died the day before, so the official ceremony was postponed until 21 July, but the public were allowed into the park from 2pm as originally planned.

It was not until February 1911 that a statue was erected in the park, which the *Barnet Press* reported as being 'much admired'. The statue stands on 200 tons of Dartmoor granite and there are inscriptions on two of the stones: 'In memory of the Peacemaker King Edward VII' and 'Erected by Sydney Simmons, J.P., the donor of this park, which opened to the public on 7<sup>th</sup> May, 1910, the day following His Majesty's lamented death'.



*Commercial postcard postmarked 8 November 1938. The spear is intact!*

An inscription on the base of the statue itself reads 'J DURHAM SCULPT LONDON 1862'. The statue is 9 feet high and the long sceptre that we later learnt was held in her left hand in 1863 had gone: she arrived in 1911 with a workaday spear. There is, however, a mystery concerning the statue – who, if anybody, was it meant to represent, where did Sydney Simmons find it and where had it been since 1862?

## **QUEEN VICTORIA. FRIARY PARK**

*by Nick McKie*

Our statue had slid into total oblivion until somehow discovered by our own Sydney Simmons in 1911, and even then with her identity unknown or deliberately obscured: this, from the heights of 26 October 1861, when Prince Albert had stood in front of this 'model of the statue of the Queen....before it is sent to be cast....His Royal Highness expressed himself much pleased with the statue'.

The model Albert saw was of his wife, 42 years old. It was made of plaster, coloured bronze: 9 feet high, a palm branch in her right hand and in her left 'a sceptral rod, on the top of which is perched the dove of Peace'. Now, having been approved by him, it was off to Elkington and Co, brassfounders, to become the statue we see today. She now holds a spear: the sceptre may have met with an accident or have been replaced deliberately so as to remove any trace of royalty – the spear does seem fairly unlikely as a symbol of Peace.

She was meant for the memorial to the 1851 Exhibition - still seen behind the Royal Albert Hall. Victoria had agreed to this, but even as her model was on its way to being cast, Albert died on 14 December. Victoria withdrew her permission and demanded a statue of Albert take her place: he is there still.

The memorial committee now had a statue on its way to being cast, and nowhere to place it. On 31 January 1862 they 'most respectfully place (this statue..which is now being produced in bronze) in the hands of Your Royal Highness' – the Prince of Wales, future Edward VII. He now owns our yet-to-be statue. But No! The Prince of Wales had made other plans and wrote from 'Osborne, Dec 28 1862' to the Royal Horticultural Society: 'I have... the permission of the Queen my mother....presenting the statue thus proposed to be placed in the gardens under your management': the RHS now have claim to her. As late as 26<sup>th</sup> February 1881 Sir Henry Cole enquires into the ownership of the statue, but his correspondent 'declines to answer in writing'. This looks like a statue looking for an owner.

But back to the opening the Great Exhibition of 1862 on 1 May. The statue appears in two places: one as the plaster model in the main entrance, the other as one of the 'mighty figures modelled by Durham [the sculptor] for the Great Exhibition memorial lying in their copper baths'. Elkington must have been an obvious exhibitor, well known as a brass statue founder, and happy to show the operation of their electrotyping method.

So, some time after 1 May 1862 electrotyping is complete, the parts are assembled and the statue finished. Her first recorded sighting is at the opening of the RHS gardens on 5 May 1863 reported in *The Observer*: the article includes the statue as one in an exhibition of statues in the gardens. There is an unrelated albumen print, undeniably our statue, endorsed '(one of) 13 views of garden statues, 1862 International Exhibition at South Kensington' here seen carrying the long sceptre with dove. The photograph is not otherwise dated.

The *Hawkes Bay Herald* of 24 June 1863 reports Joseph Durham (her sculptor) offering her for sale to the New South Wales government. 'His statue of the Queen is ten feet high, and Her Majesty is represented with attributes of Peace – an olive branch in the outstretched hand – the other hand holding the long sceptre of sovereign dignity. The work is the property of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, and was modelled under the supervision of his late father, who took a great interest in it, and attended its production throughout, ultimately telling the artist that it was an entire success'. She is shown here at once the delight of her husband, but now the object of brute commerce: if Durham is to be believed it firmly places her in the POW's possession not that of the RHS.

The sale did not happen. Her last sighting is reported in *The Times*, 31 March 1864. The Queen spent 'a few moments' examining the statue when she visited the second flower show of the Horticultural grounds 'at Kensington' on 30<sup>th</sup> March. 'Her Majesty, accompanied by the Council, and followed at some distance by many of the visitors, went into the arcades.....where her statue by Mr Durham, which was to have occupied the summit of the Exhibition memorial, had been placed on a temporary pedestal. After a few minutes spent in examining this fine work the conservatory was entered'.

There is no later report of a physical sighting. Sir Henry Cole's diary of 26 February 1881 implies her still being in the RHS garden, and records continuing indecision over ownership. Significantly, the POW is cited as a possible owner. The Imperial Institute was being built in 1887 on the RHS site: she must have been removed before then.

She disappears from sight until just before 4 February 1911 when she is 'in course of erection' in our park

She is important as a statue produced by Elkington's electrotype process, and as the work of an eminent Victorian sculptor: but more than this, it is an historic snapshot of Queen Victoria as she was age 42 and as her husband saw her just two months before he died.

### **Footnote**

Electrotyping, invented 1838, used an electric current to deposit metal on an object or cast. In the case of a statue, the original was often created in plaster and moulds made from it using a flexible material like gutta percha – a natural latex. The moulds would then be coated on the inside with graphite to make the surface conductive; a wire is attached to this surface and the mould suspended in an electrolyte solution. A metal source, usually copper, is also suspended in the solution, current is applied and copper transfers from source to mould by electrolysis. With enough build-up of copper, current is switched off

This thin shell of copper is often backed with other metals such as lead to give weight and strength to the statue. Such statues were sometimes called galvanoplastic bronzes or 'bronzes' – a term which had come to describe any statue created in metal. Patina such as gilding was readily applied to the finished object making it still more difficult to determine its composition from the outside.

## TWO FIRSTS FOR FRIERN BARNET

*by David Berguer*

In recent years much emphasis has been placed on finding a solution to pollution in London, particularly from traffic. Transport for London (TfL) introduced hybrid buses which have been running on most routes including those in our area. These consist of a normal diesel engine backed up by batteries. Whenever the bus stops the engine cuts out and batteries take over until the bus reaches about 12mph when the diesel cuts back in again. This not only prevents pollution, but the buses can achieve some 12mpg – about double that of a diesel-only bus.

Recent advances in technology have made it possible for buses to run purely on batteries. TfL decided to conduct a trial using two different makes of zero-emission double deck buses and compare how they perform. They chose two routes for this experiment, both covering Friern Barnet. On route 43 (Friern Barnet – London Bridge), 37 Enviro400EV buses made by Chinese company BYD in conjunction with British company Alexander Dennis will operate, and on route 134 (North Finchley – Warren Street), 31 Optare Metrodecker EVs by BYD in conjunction with British company Optare will be used.

The liquid-cooled lithium-iron phosphate batteries are located at the rear of the bus, where the diesel engine would have been and because of the increased weight of these the seating capacity is slightly reduced to keep within regulations. It is claimed that the buses will have a range of 150 miles before needing to be recharged at the garage. Each bus has two charging points, so a full recharge only takes two hours.

For those of you who remember trolleybuses, riding on the electric vehicles will bring back happy memories as they are virtually silent; the loudest noise coming from the air conditioning.



*Alexander Dennis Enviro 400EV at Friern Barnet on route 43*



*Optare Metrodecker on route 134 at North Finchley*

Tests are being made elsewhere with hydrogen-powered and compressed biogas vehicles and If all these tests are successful it is almost certain that eventually all London buses will be zero-emission which will make living in London a healthier experience. Remember though that you saw them first in Friern Barnet!

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## **D-DAY**

*by John Philpott*

During the 75th anniversary commemoration at Portsmouth on 5 June, Theresa May read a letter written by Captain Norman Skinner two days before D-Day, a letter of farewell to his wife Gladys and their two young daughters. It was found in his pocket after his death on the 7 June, the day after he had landed on Sword Beach.

My Darling,  
This is a very difficult letter for me to write.  
As you know, something may happen at any moment  
and I cannot tell when you will receive this.  
I had hoped to be able to see you during the  
weekend but it was impossible for me to get away  
and all the things I intended to say must be written.  
I am sure that anyone with imagination must dislike  
the thought of what's coming.  
But my fears will be more of being afraid than of what  
can happen to me.  
You and I have had some lovely years which now  
seem to have passed at lightning speed.  
My thoughts at this moment, in this lovely Saturday  
afternoon, are with you all now.  
I can imagine you in the garden, having tea with



Janey and Anne, getting ready to put them to bed.  
 Although I would give anything to be back with you, I  
 have not yet had any wish to back down from the job  
 we have to do.  
 There is so much I would like to be able to tell you.  
 Nearly all of which you've heard many, many times.  
 But just to say, that I mean it even more today. I am  
 sure that I will be with you again soon and for good.  
 Please give my fondest love to my Anne and my  
 Janey.  
 God bless you and keep you all safe for me.

Norman Skinner was a local man. His name is on our Friern Barnet Second World War memorial, as is that of his younger brother, Howard Skinner, sergeant, RASC, who also landed on D-Day and who also died on 7 June. Both are buried in Hermanville War Cemetery, situated behind Sword Beach, which contains 1003 war dead, most of whom died on D-Day, 6 June, or the following few days.

Norman (born 1906) and Howard (1911) were sons of John and May Skinner. They had five siblings: John (1904), Evelyn (1907), Alan (1909), Billy (1914) and Phyllis (1917). The children were born and grew up in Muswell Hill, baptised in the church of St Andrew, Alexandra Park. By 1932, they had moved to 147 Friern Barnet Lane (the house that is now Friern Barnet Rectory). Norman lived there until his marriage; it was Howard's home until his death.

In 1936, in Barnet Register Office, Norman married Gladys, daughter of Alexander and Jessie Woods of the White House Hotel, Uxbridge, of which Alexander was licensee. Like Norman, Gladys was born and grew up in Muswell Hill, where she was baptised in St James's Church.

After their marriage, Norman and Gladys's new home was in Ruislip. They had two daughters, Jane and Anne.



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Office of Origin	No. of Words	Time of Dispatch		No.
<p>Dear Mrs Skinner,</p> <p>It is with the utmost difficulty that I write this letter to offer you my most profound sympathies on the untimely death of your husband. All the time he had been under my command he had done a grand job of work.</p> <p>Should there be any matters in which I can be of assistance please do not hesitate to let me know.</p> <p>Yours very sincerely,</p>				

Before the war, Norman worked as an insurance inspector, following in the profession of his father, who had risen to become joint managing director of an insurance firm. Howard was working as a bank clerk. At the outbreak of war, Howard was living at 147 Friern Barnet Lane with his parents, his two unmarried brothers (both also bank clerks and both enrolled as ARP wardens), his sister Phyllis and his sister Evelyn, with her husband and their 5 year old daughter. The household also included a housekeeper and general maid.

1944 started with a happy event for the Skinner family: in the spring John and May's son, Alan, was married. Then, in June, came the loss of two of their sons, Norman and Howard, killed in the Normandy landing aged, respectively, 37 and 32. The year ended with another family tragedy: on 18 December John himself died, aged 68, of a heart attack at their home in Friern Barnet Lane.

Soon after the end of the war, May moved from Friern Barnet Lane. Her daughter and son-in-law, Eve and Cyril Hunt, moved to 89 Raleigh Drive, where they lived for the rest of their lives, and were active members of the church of St James the Great, Friern Barnet. May lived with them in Raleigh Drive in the last few years before her death in 1967. During the war, Norman and Gladys had moved to Hillingdon. In 1957, Gladys remarried. She continued to live at the Hillingdon address with her new husband, Harold Sheppard. Norman and Gladys's daughter Jane lived there with her mother and stepfather until her own marriage in 1967. Gladys lost her second husband in 1990; she survived him by two years.

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## **WARTIME MEMORIES OF BARNET - Continued**

*by Philip O'Donoghue*

I was too young for pubs, but my father was a friend of the landlord of *The Mitre*, Clifford Pope. During his visits I was entertained by Mrs Pope and her elderly (maybe as old as 18 or 20) daughters Eve and Jessie by being given a baked potato in the kitchen, with very generous butter (severely rationed at that time, but barter is an English tradition). Apart from its abundant pubs - at least five have vanished from the High Street in my time - there were teashops remaining, I suppose, from pre-war days of cycling or bus excursions out to the town. I think only one was still operating, opposite Hadley Church just before the gate, and my mother, who believed that the way to cool down on a hot day was to drink a scalding cup of tea, on several occasions took me there (I have said that I was too young for pubs).

The newsagent next to the chemists on the corner of Bedford Avenue showed traces of serving refreshments and would still crack open a bottle to sell a glass of fizzy but otherwise characterless "lemonade". Next door to the Court House on the corner of Normandy Avenue was the Singing Cattle, which had quite half of its frontage devoted to a by then closed tearoom which bore Cyclist Touring Club signs. The part that remained open was a sweet shop, and I used to brood over a table covered with bars of chocolate - including it seemed a near-infinite variety of soft fillings - at 2d a bar. Before long they vanished into wartime austerity, although the dearth of sugary foods never protected me from tooth decay. When such sweets returned after the war, their manufacturers quickly learned to supplement their income not only by price rises but also by less easily detected cuts in size.

A shop with particular fascination for an early-teens boy was the Green Man Garage in Whetstone. Its fascination lay in the tiny shop occupying the right hand part of its

frontage, selling balsa wood, tubes of cement for it, minute bottles of special paints, and mouldings (propellers, undercarriages, cowlings etc) for modelling aeroplanes. It also sold paper and dope for those noble souls who sought to fly the result of their modelling rather than caring what it looked like. Not that balsa wood was essential for non-working models; I carved a passable Junkers (210?) from a piece of firewood when off school with a chill (what everyone nowadays calls 'flu, unless they have really had influenza, when they treat the word with more respect). The Green Man Garage also sold tiny electric motors to turn the model's propellers, but they must have been in its later, effete, postwar days just before it turned back into a garage.

One final shop reminiscence. Among the many grocers then in Barnet High Street – Salmons, Hudsons, Williams, Sainsbury's – were two aristocrats. One, Stevens, dealt more with tinned or otherwise pre-packed goods; I remember an early postwar attempt at high pressure selling, or perhaps just hysteria at a slowly returned flow of goods, when it had a window entirely devoted to "delicious matzos" – things were as bad as that. The other, easily the most "classy" grocer in town, was Willis's, a low ceilinged, deep old shop on the north side of *The Salisbury*. In its window was a coffee roasting machine, a sort of heated rotating drum, apparently made out of brass mesh and ventilated to outside the shop which they used to fill the deprived High Street from end to end with delicious fumes.

Incidentally, besides the matzos the only other attempt at mass marketing I can remember hitting our rather staid town was the Jehovah's Witnesses who used to stand along the High Street on Saturdays with prams and other small vehicles from which they sought to sell their magazine, *The Watchtower*. I don't think they had much success. Attempt to care for Barnet souls seemed as fruitless as attempts to charm its palate; Witnesses and motzas soon disappeared from general view.

On the south side of the small car park in front of the Salisbury was the Barnet Cinema. If the programme there did not tempt you or the queue was too long, you could try the more magnificent Odeon at the foot of the hill, managed by a tall, thin moustached oldish man who was building it as a private venture but ran out of money and had to sell. Or there was the Regal in New Barnet, the Dominion (later Essoldo) next to Clockhouse Parade in East Barnet, the Odeon North Finchley, and others further afield. The most splendid was the Gaumont at Tally Ho Corner. I was in there with my aunt and cousin one afternoon when the Blitz started. There were noises and air-raid warning notices were flashed onto the screen, but we stayed to the end of the programme. When we came out, we saw there was a fire somewhere locally. Oddly it seemed to follow us as we trolleybussed back to Chipping Barnet, and only that evening did we learn that what was burning was London Docks – a fire so far away that our little journey home hardly altered its perspective. My parents walked up to Manor Fields at Hadley for a view of the holocaust.

When as much activity as possible was relocated from central London, the Odeon Temple Fortune, then named the Orpheum, became the headquarters of the London Philharmonic Orchestra – our best, as the London Symphony was going through a bad patch and I believe the Philharmonia had yet to be formed. My father took me there on many occasions to see and hear artists and music not otherwise available. Of course, there was the wireless but, apart from lacking the sense of occasion of a visit to a live performance, wireless (radio nowadays) was not exactly hi-fi then and in any case the evening when many favourite programmes were broadcast, was also the time of choice for German air raids. Whatever music or speech was being broadcast vanished under



an infuriating diddle-diddle-diddle noise that our side put up to jam the frequencies and stop them being used for navigation by the raiders. We were in the Orpheum when., after a long quiet spell, the “Little Blitz” began – a very enjoyable few weeks full of anti-aircraft fire and so forth, which ran into the V1 flying bomb business and that into the V2 rocket attacks. On our way home, with no buses about, father and I had to skulk under a concrete overhang – an air raid wardens’ post perhaps – down by the Naked Lady because the shrapnel was pinging off the pavement. I was disappointed that my dad would not let me go out to collect some to add to my collection.

**To be continued....**

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### **FRIERN HOSPITAL IN THE EARLY DAYS**

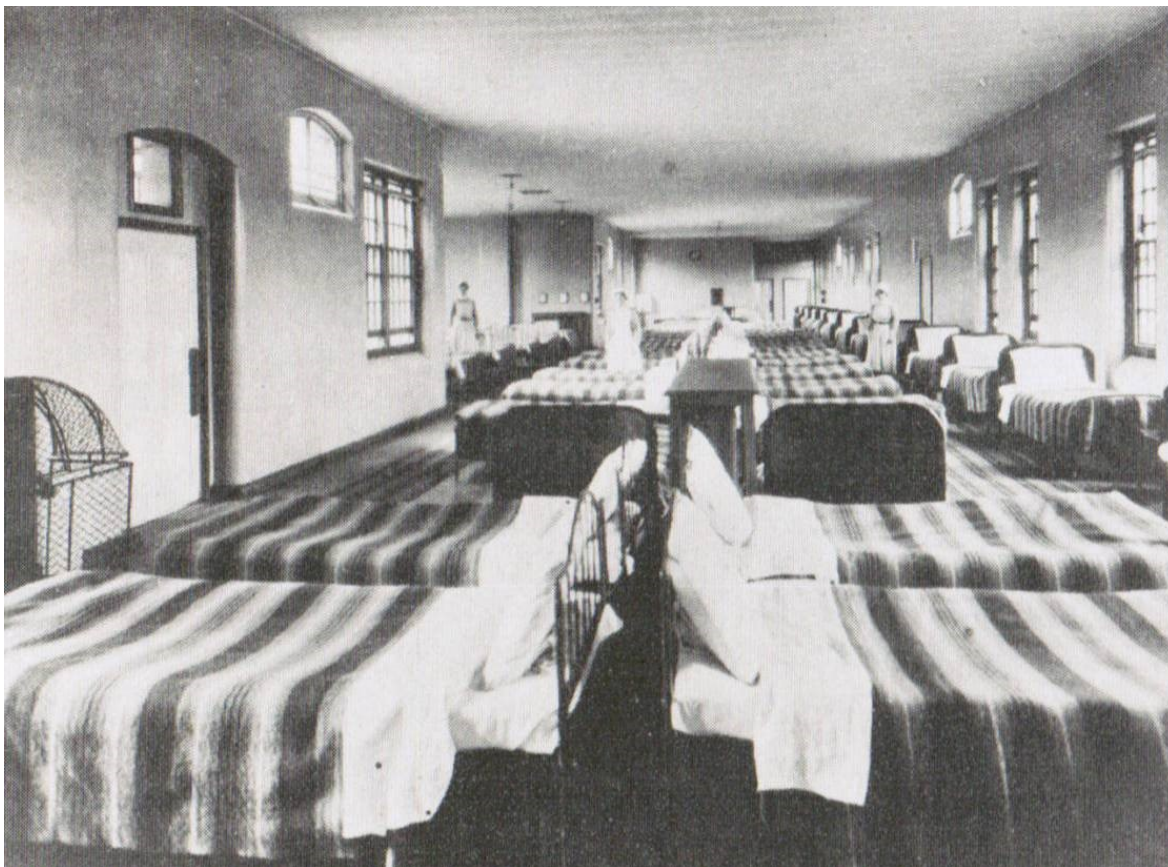
In a book published in 1858, entitled *The Night Side of London* by a Mr J Ewing Ritchie, there is a fascinating, albeit flowery and verbose, description of the Colney Hatch Asylum which had opened only seven years previously, on 17 July 1851.

“A few miles from the terminus of one of our metropolitan railways is an immense plot of buildings, looking more like a town than a single house. It is a stately pile, beautifully situated, and I doubt not many a care-worn Cockney, as he had been hurried past it by rail, has often wished that he had a little niche in it where he could come of a night after the day’s toil was over, and smell the sweet flowers and the fresh grass; yet the place is a lunatic asylum, and whilst I write there are in it fourteen hundred men and women bereft of reason, unaccountable for their actions, and shut up away from their fellows. Very often the number is much greater, and yet this does not contain all the pauper lunatics of the metropolitan county.

It would do some of the noisy poor, who waste their time in low pot-houses talking of their rights – when all that a man has a right to is what he can get – good to look over such a place as Colney Hatch. There are pauper lunatics lodged in a palace, waited on by skilful male and female attendants, living in light and airy galleries, as clean as wax-work, with four meals a day, and with every want supplied. I am sure every Englishman must confess that our asylums and hospitals are the glory of our land. None can deny the active and practical character of the philanthropy of our days.

You may depend on it, nine-tenths of the men and women here were never so well fed, lodged, and cared for before. Their day commences at six and terminates at eight. Such of them as can be usefully employed are, in cleaning the wards, and in various domestic duties; but they have plenty of spare time – the women for sewing or knitting, and the men for outdoor exercise or reading. In one ward I found some good books on the table, such as Boswell’s *Johnson*, Gibbon’s *Life*, popular works on science, and *Punch* and several magazines. The only woman I saw reading was an old one, with a Bible before her.

The women are by far more troublesome than men. Directly I went into one ward, a middle-aged woman advanced towards me, with one arm uplifted, exclaiming, “Here comes my husband, King John.” Another female, still plainer and more elderly, seemed inclined to address to me endearments of a still tenderer character. It was clear that they retained the instincts of their sex without its clearness. Yet there were some to whom the novelty of a stranger offered no excitement – who sat huddled up by the window, with scowling eyes and dishevelled hair, flesh-and-blood pictures of despair.



*A ward in 1900. Note how close the beds are!*

This one had led a gay life – what a termination for a votary of pleasure! That one had become what she was by drinking; this one again by the grand passion, which underlies all history, past and present – all philosophy, objective or subjective – all religion, true or false.

But hark! It is a quarter to one, and that is the dinner bell. We enter the hall, a room capable of holding seven or eight hundred persons. Some enormous Yorkshire puddings, with some excellent beef, are borne by several eager assistants (patients) on the knives and forks to the tables in the middle of the room; they are immediately cut up, each portion is enough for one person's dinner. When the tables set apart for the women are served, the door opens, and in rush the poor creatures in a manner that shows they have not lost their relish for food. On the men's side similar preparations are made, and then in they rush; and when all are seated, a blessing is asked, and dinner commences: it does not last long. As soon as the patients have cut up their pudding the knives and forks are carefully removed – and in a very few minutes a signal is made; they all rise – thanks are returned, and the meal is over – such as have not had enough generally managing to collar a bit of pudding as they march out. This is very short work, you say, but it is quite long enough. You will hear a woman screaming now and then, short as it is, and an attempt will be sure to be made to get over to the men's side before the meal is over.

You see enough to sadden you, but the worst cases you do not see – they are wisely concealed from the curious eye; it is enough to know that they are humanely tended. Why should we care to look on such? Going down a staircase, I saw through a glass door a poor creature suffering from suicidal monomania; night and day she had to be

watched, and such had been the case for years. Well might she wish to lay down her life, that her crazed brain had rendered insupportable.

It is a sad sight that of an assembly of insane men and women. At the asylum to which I refer they are very humane people, and very successful in their treatment of the distressing cases constantly occurring, and twice a year – at Christmas and Midsummer – they give an entertainment, at which the better-behaved lunatics attend, and seemingly enjoy themselves very much. I was recently at one, and when I arrived, found that a field adjoining the asylum had been set apart for the purpose. There were about five hundred lunatics, male and female, present, and besides there were several gentlemen and ladies present, spectators like myself. It was a lovely afternoon, and there was music and dancing, and playing cricket, and battledore and shuttlecock. And all the various enjoyments of outdoor life; but in all these matters I found the attendants appeared to take the initiative; still the poor creatures seemed to enjoy themselves, and were happy in their way. Yet the pleasure-seeker will not go to such a spectacle again. I do not say the vulgar idea of the maniac was realized; on the contrary, the poor creatures seemed decent and very well-behaved but there was a pitiable want of fine physical development, there were in abundance crooked forms and stunted figures. You do not like to see what a poor thing man is when his reason is dethroned.

Of course the refractory patients we do not see on such occasions, but, looking up at a window, I saw one woman's face – as she viewed in its despair scene in which she might not participate – so wild in its anger and hopelessness in its despair, that face haunts me yet. It set me thinking how a woman could get in that state. Perhaps her father and mother, ignorant of physiological laws, had married, and she had been the result; or the ignorance of her friends, or her own ignorance – or the competition of modern life – or the wrongdoing of others – had precipitated a catastrophe which otherwise might never have occurred, and thus society pays indirectly for its ignorance far more than it would have to do for a genuine useful education. Think of what desolated homes these poor creatures form a portion. Remember what a fearful cost it is to the respectable hard-working amongst us, who can barely manage to make two ends meet, to have to rear such palatial residences for our pauper lunatics. The asylum of which I write in its erection cost the county of Middlesex an enormous sum – in its maintenance it does ditto – and I hear it is now in an insecure state, firm as it looks, and the county of Middlesex will have to spend upon it some tens of thousands of pounds more.

I once visited this place in the wintertime; a large hall was lighted up; and there were some pretty dissolving views exhibited, and there was dancing and music and eating and drinking going on. The room was covered with laurels and flowers and banners, and, of course, there were many ladies and gentlemen present, and the place had a cheerful air; and all confessed it was a good thing to give the poor creatures a little innocent amusement. But only think of dancing with lunatics – and such ugly ones too – and being held by the buttonhole by some wild-eyed ancient mariner.

What a contrast the present treatment of lunatics is to which prevailed till lately! The exposure of the wretched system pursued at Bethlem, which took place in 1814, in consequence of the investigation of a parliamentary committee, appears to have been productive of great good. The visitors thus describe one of the women's galleries: "One of the side rooms contained about ten patients each chained by one arm or leg to the wall, the chain allowing them merely to stand up by the bench or form fixed to the wall, or sit down again. The nakedness of each patient was covered by a blanket gown only.

The blanket gown is a blanket formed something like a dressing gown, with nothing to fasten it in parts. The feet even were naked.” Many women were locked up in cells, naked and chained, on straw, with only one blanket for a covering; and the windows were unglazed, the light in winter was shut out for the sake of warmth. In the men’s rooms, their nakedness and their mode of confinement, continues the report from which we have already quoted, gave this room the appearance of a dog-kennel. At this period the committee for months together made no inspection of the inmates. The house surgeon was in an insane state himself, and still oftener drunk; and the keepers were often in the latter state; yet at this very time the governors spent £600 in opposing a bill for regulating mad-houses, and I dare say they cried out lustily. No centralization! – no interference with vested interests! as enlightened Englishmen and parochial dignitaries are want to do in our days.

Could we not do without lunatic asylums, if society gave up its drinking customs? Not exactly; but their number might be very much decreased. Two-thirds of our lunatics become so through drink. “They are very bad at first, sir,” said one of my informants to me, “but after a little while they get quieter, and perhaps they are cured in two or three months.” And yet I find all these lunatics are supplied with beer. “They has two half-pints a day, sir, and when they work they gets two half-pints more, and very good beer it is, sir” continued my informant, “as strong as any man need drink.” Now is not this preposterous? Men who drink till they become lunatics should be taught to do without it; but they are allowed their beer even in the asylum, and when they go out they begin drinking again, and of course relapse. Thus we keep feeding our lunatic asylums, at the very time we profess to cure lunatics. I admit these places are in many respects well managed – that the buildings are commodious – that the attention is good – that the governors are humane, and the medical officers vigilant; but which is the truer humanity, to take care of the man when in a lunatic asylum, or to keep him out of it together?”

### **Footnote**

The above appears in the website: [www.victorianlondon.org/publications3](http://www.victorianlondon.org/publications3)

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### **AGM**

At the AGM on 22 May we proposed a motion to increase the subscription rates. This was as a result of several increases in costs over which we had no control, such as postage rates, printing costs, rents and speakers’ expenses. The motion was carried so from 1 April 2020 the subscription rates will be £10 for a single person and £16 for a couple.

A copy of last years Accounts is enclosed for those who were not able to attend the AGM.

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