

History of Braemar

The Development of Mental and Intellectual Health Services in Nelson



NELSON MENTAL HOSPITAL.

12/8/2014
Miriam Clark

Introduction

Braemar has had several incarnations over the course of its life. It started out as the 'Nelson Lunatic Asylum' during the 1860s, with a purpose built Asylum opening in 1876. It was renamed the 'Nelson Mental Hospital' in 1912 and then the Braemar Hospital and Training School in the 1960s. The majority of adult patients with mental illness were relocated to Ngawhatu in 1922 and the buildings became home to those with intellectual disabilities, including children and babies.

As far as possible neutral language and terminology has been used throughout this history. Direct quotes, however, use language of the day as does any reference to the name of the institution. This is not a medical history, so while it does touch on treatment during the 19th Century, it does not in any way attempt to cover the medical treatment of patients during their time at Braemar.

Early Treatment and Care of People With a Mental Illness

After New Zealand was established as a colonial settlement people with a mental illness were called 'lunatics' and usually incarcerated in gaol. The first gaol in Nelson consisted of a raupo hut and was situated near the port of Nelson. A more secure gaol was built on Church Hill in May 1842 and operated for several years.

The first legislation concerned with the mentally ill in New Zealand was The Lunatics Ordinance, 1846. It provided that after certification a mentally ill person could be sent to a gaol, house of correction, or public hospital; or alternatively to a public colonial asylum, although no such institution existed at that time. This Ordinance represented a step forward in the development of special services for the mentally ill in that it envisaged state provision of services from the public purse and available to every person in the community.¹

In 1846 money was approved to build a gaol at a site in Shelbourne Street. When this gaol opened in 1850 it contained six small cells ventilated by a small aperture over the doors. No beds or furniture were provided although the prisoners did receive one blanket.² People with a mental illness were kept here alongside the general prison population.

In 1852 the Constitution Act placed the responsibility for health services on the Provincial Governments. In Nelson, the Provincial Government appointed a Commission of Enquiry in 1854 to examine the Shelbourne Street gaol. Conditions

¹ Bowman, I, *Porirua Hospital Museum Conservation Plan*, April, 2007

² Gemma Winstanley, 'Unwanted, Unneeded, Unremembered: The Life of the Nelson Gaol 1850-1898', on www.theprow.org.nz

were found unsuitable in every respect. It was *'badly designed, badly constructed and destitute of many of the conveniences requisite for the health of prisoners. Its accommodation is so wretchedly inadequate that it is impossible to attempt any classification of prisoners. Debtors, lunatics, felons, prisoners awaiting trial and runaway seaman all mix indiscriminately.'*³ There was no separate care or treatment of those with a mental illness so prisoners were paid 10s per week to watch them, as the Gaolers were unqualified.⁴

The housing of people with a mental illness and prisoners together became increasingly recognised as unsatisfactory. The Select Committee was very critical of this practice and following the death of a Samuel Crawford in May 1855 the Nelson Examiner also became vocal stating that *'a common gaol is not a fit place for the reception of lunatics at all.'*⁵ In 1856 Dr Renwick asked the Provincial Solicitor what steps if any had been taken by the government to establish a lunatic asylum.⁶ At some stage there was some consideration given to a separate location for the mentally ill as Smith records there was a call for tenders in May 1855 to alter the house on Acre 662⁷ to adapt it for use as a 'Lunatic Asylum' and again in June 1859 for a Temporary Lunatic Asylum.⁸

At some point people with a mental illness were moved to the immigration barracks on Hardy Street. A scathing attack on the public buildings in Nelson in 1858 recorded that located in the old immigrant barracks were all the Government offices along with *'a sort of auxiliary hospital and Lunatic Asylum and Refuge for the Destitute...'*⁹ It is unclear however when people with a mental illness were moved to the Immigration Barracks or whether some remained in the Shelbourne Street gaol.

Pressure on the Provincial Government continued into the 1860s but it seemed reluctant to take responsibility for building a facility specifically for those with a mental illness. Instead it preferred to wait and see if the central government took up the question.¹⁰ Following the death of Mrs Avery, a person with a mental illness, at the immigration barracks in 1861, a Select Committee was appointed to take into consideration the accommodation and treatment of *'lunatics'* in Nelson. Their report, tabled in June 1861, was very critical of the current situation. The Depot was deemed unsuitable for accommodating sick persons, particularly those with a mental illness and there needed to be a responsible person to ensure that the inmates

³ Ibid.

⁴ bid

⁵ Marjorie M Webby, From Prison to Paradise, Genealogy of Ngawhatu Hospital previously known as Nelson Lunatic Asylum 1840-1991 and St Mary's Orphanage at Stoke, 1991, no page numbers.

⁶ Nelson Provincial Council, Votes and Proceedings, 1856, p. 21.

⁷ On the corner of current day Rutherford and Examiner Street.

⁸ Notes by Dawn Smith c. 1985 "Asylum and Gaol", held at the Nelson Provincial Museum, Isel Park, Stoke

⁹ Dawn Smith, Shelter: Emergency Housing in 19th Century Nelson, Nelson Historical Society Journal, Vol 6, No 5, 2002, sourced from NZETC, p. 7/16

¹⁰ Nelson Provincial Council, Votes & Proceedings, 8 May 1861

received proper medical attention. The Committee had examined the buildings used for the those with mental illness (possibly the Shelbourne Street gaol) and they were '*wholly inadequate*' providing accommodation for three people whereas nine needed it.¹¹ The Select Committee was hopeful the central government would build a general asylum so they recommended altering the gaol by adding an additional wing and enclosing the yard.¹²

The following year, in June 1862, the Nelson Provincial Council passed the General Lunatic Asylum Act. This enabled it to raise up to £5000 to build a Lunatic Asylum, however lack of support from the central government meant the Province would incur further debt to build one and the matter was held over.¹³ As it transpired the construction of a purpose built lunatic asylum was held over for 13 years. In the interim the Provincial Government did progress with providing more suitable accommodation for the mentally ill. On 31 March 1863 the Colonist reported having heard that the Taranaki Barracks on Waimea Road were to be converted into an '*asylum for the insane*'.¹⁴ This marked the beginning of separate accommodation and treatment for the mentally ill.

Development of the Nelson Lunatic Asylum

The Taranaki Barracks had been build in 1860 to house European settlers fleeing Taranaki during the NZ Wars. The Taranaki Barracks consisted of six detached buildings, four of which contained ten to twelve bedrooms and a common sitting room. The fifth had a kitchen, dining hall and wash-house, while the sixth was smaller and divided into two rooms to be used as a temporary hospital. The buildings were in two rows, one behind the other facing Waimea road.¹⁵ When peace resumed in Taranaki many European settlers returned and consideration was given as to how to buildings could be used.

Little information is available about how and when the Taranaki Barracks were converted but the report on the asylum in 1864 stated that the female patients had been relocated to the Taranaki Building, one block which had been fitted up for their reception and another block was being altered for the males.¹⁶ By May 1865 the alterations to the Taranaki Buildings were now complete and provided accommodation for both sexes. A subsequent report noted there were eight rooms for the men and nine for the females.¹⁷ It was not only the mentally unwell who were

¹¹ Nelson Provincial Council, Report of Select Committee, Votes and Proceedings, 1861

¹² Nelson Provincial Council, Votes & Proceedings, 1861, Report of the Select Committee

¹³ Nelson Provincial Council, Votes & Proceedings, 1862, 21 May and 6 June.

¹⁴ Smith, p.9/16

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 8-9/16

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 9/16

¹⁷ Nelson Provincial Council , Votes & Proceedings 1869, Annual Report of William Kemp, Officer of Nelson Lunatic Asylum, 1869

transferred to the Taranaki Barracks but also the poor who previously had been housed in the Immigration Barracks¹⁸ and hospital patients with chronic illnesses who were also destitute.¹⁹ Over time the 'poor department' of the Taranaki Barracks decreased and patients with chronic illness were kept in the hospital across the road.

While the philosophy behind the creation of purpose built Lunatic Asylums was to provide proper care for those with a mental illness, records show physical restraint, solitary confinement, and reduced rations were common: "*The rebellious spirit hitherto exhibited by Mary C appears to be subdued after being confined four days in the dark room on bread and water. She has embraced the Matron, begged pardon and promised never to disobey again. For this act she has been treated very kindly with tea, gruel and a warm bath.*"²⁰ Another example from the day book in 1867 records Saddle, was put in a straitwaistcoat and her head put in a cold bath for using bad language and attempting to kick the Matron.²¹ A padded room was built in 1868 and this too was used as a form of treatment. Mrs A was put in there for being saucy to the matron and refusing to do part of the washing, Miss Cee for being quarrelsome with other patients and Mr Gee for breaking a window. Each received six hours seclusion.²²

The Taranaki Barracks were far from ideal. Patient numbers grew rapidly, particularly those being sent from the West Coast, and conditions were substandard. The building leaked in wet weather and the diets of the inmates were deemed unsatisfactory. However the 1868 report from the Provincial Surgeon did record several improvements notably a padded room, which would obviate the use of bodily restraints, and a vapour bath.²³ There was also a supply of vegetables due to some male patients digging up a garden and the addition of a front garden made the place look nicer and less like a prison. Two small rooms had been added to the male part and a small yard at the back of the men's ward for those who '*could not be trusted*' in the main yard.²⁴ However he did state further improvements were needed by providing more accommodation for the women and fixing the roof.

The inadequacy of the Taranaki Barracks buildings was a current theme in the Annual Reports from the Medical Officer and Visiting Justice to the Provincial Council from 1868 onwards. All mention overcrowding, and the damp and cold conditions. Kemp, Officer of the Nelson Lunatic Asylum, was very critical of the actual buildings which he described as '*unfit for the reception and keeping of*

¹⁸ Smith, p. 10/16.

¹⁹ Smith, p. 11/16.

²⁰ D C Low; *Salute to the Scalpel – A medical history of the Nelson Province*, R Lucas & Son, no date, p. 78.

²¹ Webby, op cit

²² Webby, op cit

²³ Nelson Provincial Council, Votes & Proceedings, 1868, 'Goal, Destitute Poor and Lunatic Asylum', Fras L Vickerman, Provincial Surgeon.

²⁴ Ibid

lunatics'.²⁵ On the male side the rooms were dark, badly ventilated and badly furnished. There were not enough rooms and often two patients had to sleep in the same room. A new wing must have been underway as Kemp stated '*The new wing, now being built would have six new rooms, will fix this*'.²⁶ On the female side, the roof was very bad and rain had made the hall and female's rooms damp and uncomfortable. Reports from the Visiting Justice in 1871 highlight the damp and cold conditions in the Asylum, making them unfit '*for any human being*'.²⁷ In his report, in 1875 on the Asylum, D Rough noted that as patient numbers increased the buildings became unfit for the safe keeping and proper treatment of the insane. He noted the section for the female patients was sufficiently well adapted for use as a temporary asylum but the day rooms, sleeping-rooms and airing-yard occupied by the men were small, confined, damp, out of repair, many of the windows broken and '*altogether such as to render the conditions of the inmates very pitiable*'.²⁸ He noted there were four men and two women who needed to be kept *apart* '*in consequence of idiocy or violence and dirty habits*' but they were kept in mere dens, which were '*otherwise very discreditable to any asylum for the insane*'.²⁹ The Visiting Justice also reported on the poor conditions in 1875. There were a number of broken windows which had not been replaced because it would be a short time until the move to the new asylum. General repairs had also been neglected and he was concerned that insufficient attention had been paid to the comfort of the patients. However he also found the Asylum clean and orderly.³⁰

Bedding also seemed to be an issue. Official Reports recorded the clothing and bedding of the males was scanty, of poor materials and very untidy. One man complained he wanted more bedding. Several men had only one blanket and one quilt which seemed to be far too little for the middle of winter.³¹

The Medical Officers Report for the Nelson Lunatic Asylum during this time also record the rapid increase in patient numbers which in turn had caused significant overcrowding. The Report for 1872 reported that the number of patients had quadrupled from 11 in 1867 to 43. Of concern was the number of patients being referred from the West Coast. By 1872 they made up half the asylum population and the main cause for their condition was spirit drinking. It was felt some ingredient in the spirits had caused cerebral symptoms, quite independent of intoxication.³²

²⁵ Nelson Provincial Council, Votes & Proceedings 1869, William Kemp, Officer of Nelson Lunatic Asylum, Annual Report of Nelson Provincial Lunatic Asylum.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Webby, op cit

²⁸ Webby, op cit

²⁹ Webby, op cit.

³⁰ Webby, op cit

³¹ Webby, op cit.

³² Nelson Provincial Council, Votes and Proceedings, 1872, 'Medical Officer's Report on the Nelson Lunatic Asylum'

The inability to separate the men and women also caused concern as did the desire to separate the quieter patients from the noisier. Kemp stated there was no classification among patients and there was a need to separate the quieter patients from the noisier as *'the latter often exercise a most pernicious influence over the former'*.³³ He also expressed concern that the men and women were not kept sufficiently apart and were able to communicate. The 1872 report also spoke of the need to separate the quiet from the noisy patients, the inability to treat habitual drunkards and the need for greater amusement. The number of patients, limited space and indiscriminate mixing rendered made special treatment impossible.

There was a general desire among the Medical Officers to provide some sort of constructive activities for the patients. Kemp recommended the creation of a library and purchase of board games because occupation *'whether of mind or body, acts in many cases most beneficially upon the insane'*.³⁴ He noted the existence of an organ which was of great importance. By 1871 patients were given outside activities such as gardening and wood chopping. Dr Paley, visiting the Asylum in 1872 from Melbourne, remarked on the lack of room for expansion and the dearth of occupation for the men, there being no farm or even a garden to employ them.³⁵ By 1875 there were periodic services and outings but no system of amusement to remove *'the lunatics from the monotony of their sad condition'*.³⁶

Staffing levels at the Asylum seemed quite low considering the increasing number of patients. Kemp reported the staff consisted of a non-resident Medical Officer, Resident Keeper, two male attendants and a Matron for the female side. Dr Paley, in 1872, was critical that there was no-one on night duty and strongly recommended that a man should be employed for this.³⁷

Restraint continued to be a form of treatment. William Kemp, Office of the Nelson Lunatic Asylum, reported that treatment was, as far as possible, that of non-restraint but was used when necessary for the safety of the patient and those around him. The preferred mode of restraint was a sacking coat, reaching below the waist and lacing up behind. It had very long sleeves which were crossed over and patient's stomach and tied behind the back. This form of restraint was seen as effective as handcuffs or strait waistcoats but less uncomfortable for the patient.

In 1871, the Visiting Justice reported that one patient was still in confinement from the previous month and chained by one leg to the wall. The Justice was informed that the man was violent and unmanageable among the other patients. He thought a

³³ Nelson Provincial Council, Votes and Proceedings, 1869, 'Annual Report of Nelson Province Lunatic Asylum'

³⁴ Ibid

³⁵ Webby, op cit

³⁶ Webby, op cit.

³⁷ Webby, op cit.

separate exercise yard should be provided with windows out of reach for patients of this character and noted a cure could hardly be looked for while chained to a wall in a dark ill ventilated noisome cell in solitary confinement.³⁸ He also recommended a higher fence to curb the many escapes and that iron inspection plates be put in the doors so the warden could look in the cells without opening the door. A visit in July 1875 found one male patient under personal restraint (hobbles) for repeated attempts to escape.³⁹

The Provincial Government was well aware of the situation at the Nelson Lunatic Asylum. It appointed Select Committees in 1869 to consider the reports of the Medical Officer at the Asylum and in 1872 to investigate the management of the Lunatic Asylum. In 1869 they agreed they should be more amusement available and recommended a more liberal dietary scale for the inmates of the Taranaki Building to include butter and green vegetables.⁴⁰ At the opening of the Provincial Council session in 1870, the speech of the Superintendent addressed the conditions at the asylum. He commented on the unsatisfactory nature of the buildings and trusted it would not be long before the Colonial Government would create a central asylum *'in which patients from all parts of the colony could be treated in a manner conducive to their recovery and safe custody'*.⁴¹ He wanted the Provincial Council to pass a resolution requesting the Central Government to act stating he was reluctant to invoke the Lunatic Asylum Act 1862 and borrow the £5000 for the purpose of erecting a suitable building. In 1872 the Committee concluded that the Taranaki Buildings were insufficient for the proper treatment and accommodation of the greatly increased numbers of lunatics. With a view to making better provisions for patients the Committee recommended that a sufficient sum be raised under the Lunatic Asylum Act to purchase a site and erect suitable buildings for a Lunatic Asylum. They also recommend two padded cells be erected without delay and asked for £150 to be added to the estimates for this. These motions were passed on 3 June 1872. In conclusion the Committee noted the patients were treated with *'all possible care and kindness'*.⁴²

Based on the above resolutions it is likely that at some point during 1873 the Provincial Government decided to invoke the Lunatic Asylum Act, raise the loan and build a specialised Asylum in Nelson. No direct evidence of this decision has been found but the Provincial Engineers Annual Report on Public Works for 1874 recorded that a contract had been entered into with Mr John Scott for the erection of a new

³⁸ Webby, op cit

³⁹ Webby, op cit

⁴⁰ Nelson Provincial Council, Votes and Proceedings, 1869, Report of Select Committee

⁴¹ Nelson Provincial Council, Votes and Proceedings, Superintendants Address, 26 April 1870, Para 11

⁴² Nelson Provincial Council, Votes and Proceedings, 1872, 'Report of the Select Committee on the Management of the Lunatic Asylum, 31 May 1872.

lunatic asylum for £4987 10 s on the design proposed by Mr Beatson. The contract for excavating the land was £123 15s and to purchase the land was £450.⁴³

The Nelson Lunatic Asylum was designed by the Wellington architectural firm of Charles Beatson,⁴⁴ a well-known architect, and business partner Belcher after they entered a competition held by the Nelson Provincial Council. They won the contract and £40 for *'best design'*. In a letter informing them of the prize, Alfred Greenfield, Provincial Secretary, wrote: *"I have also to state that your design has given great satisfaction, being admirably suited to the requirements of the Province"*.⁴⁵

The Asylum was built reasonably quickly but its completion was delayed because it was used *'for some time'* as a depot for immigrants from the *Adamant* which arrived in August 1874. The immigrants were relocated to the new immigration barracks later in 1874 enabling work to continue on the Asylum. The Annual Report on Public Works in 1875 stated that the only work remaining to make the asylum fit for patients was the erection of cells and bathrooms for the *'dirty'* and *'violent'* patients and the erection of fencing, to enclose the recreation grounds and front. Specifications for outbuildings and other works were being prepared.⁴⁶

Opening of the Purpose Built Nelson Lunatic Asylum

The opening of the new purpose built Nelson Lunatic Asylum was reported in the Nelson Evening Mail on 10 May 1876. According to Low the asylum consisted of four wards known as Montrose, Glenlea, Falkirk and Toi Toi⁴⁷, although a newspaper article stated Toi Toi, which was the old Toi Toi Valley school, arrived in the early 1900s.⁴⁸ These names were not used at the time and must have been given at a later date.

⁴³ Provincial Engineers Report on Public Works, Votes and Proceedings of the Nelson Provincial Council, 1874

⁴⁴ Charles Beatson was William Beatson's second son to practice architecture. He trained under his father and assisted him with several of his later designs including All Saint's Church and Holy Trinity in Richmond. He was employed as an assistant to the Colonial Architect in 1874 until he was made redundant in 1887. While working for the Government he was employed in large projects including the rebuilding of the Chief Post Office in Wellington, the jail at Mount Cook, the original parliamentary library and the Lunatic asylum at Whau (Carrington). While still working for the government he won the competition for Nelson Girl's College in 1882. Following his redundancy he practiced in Lower Hutt until he retired to Ngatimoti where he designed his own house and several others.

⁴⁵ Letter from Alfred Greenfield, Provincial Secretary to Messers Beatson & Belcher, Architects, Wellington, 24 April 1873, held in Beatson-Bowman archives.

⁴⁶ Nelson Provincial Council, Votes & Proceedings, 1875, Report of Public Works in the District of Nelson.

⁴⁷ Low, p. 74.

⁴⁸ 'Redevelopment of Braemar Hospital', Impulse, [no date], sourced from the Nelson Provincial Museum, Isel Park, Stoke.

The Opening was held in the entertainment room at the Asylum and was well attended by the public, with some patients also present. The Superintendent delivered a speech, noting the length of delay in opening the asylum was in part due to the hope that the Colonial Government would build a central institution. He declared the Asylum open and thereafter followed an evening of entertainment. At the conclusion of the formal entertainment the seating was pushed back and dancing occurred until *'long after midnight'*.⁴⁹

The new asylum was built on the corridor plan and had accommodation for 30 males and 30 females. The Asylum was situated on eight acres of land which was subsequently seen as too small and not affording the patients sufficient privacy. It was surrounded by public roads and the male airing court and two small yards at the rear were only separated from the road by a wooden fence. Annoyance was occasionally suffered from persons climbing the fence to stare at the patients.

Criticism was also levelled at the layout of the asylum, The corridors were too wide, the dayrooms too small and the single sleeping rooms *'far too enormous'*.⁵⁰ Furnishing was minimal. The Director was critical of the beds which consisted of iron wires carried through from end to end of each row of rooms. A straw mattress was laid on top of these wires. This set up meant that if the occupant of one room was restless or inclined to dance about on their bed all the other patients in the line were disturbed and kept from sleeping. In consequence most patients preferred to sleep on the floor.⁵¹ The windows of the sleeping rooms had no shutters but strong iron bars fixed on the inside.

There was a large recreation and dining hall conveniently situated in the centre of the buildings again scarcely furnished. Two rooms on the female side were fitted up as the laundry and washhouse. Water was supplied from Nelson and the buildings were lit by a supply of gas. There were two baths in each department with hot and cold water.

Almost all of the land belonging to the Asylum lay in front of the building. Airing courts had been fenced off in front of the male wing and female area leaving a space in between which was laid out in an ornamental garden. The remainder at the foot of the slope was turned, by the patients, into a vegetable garden.

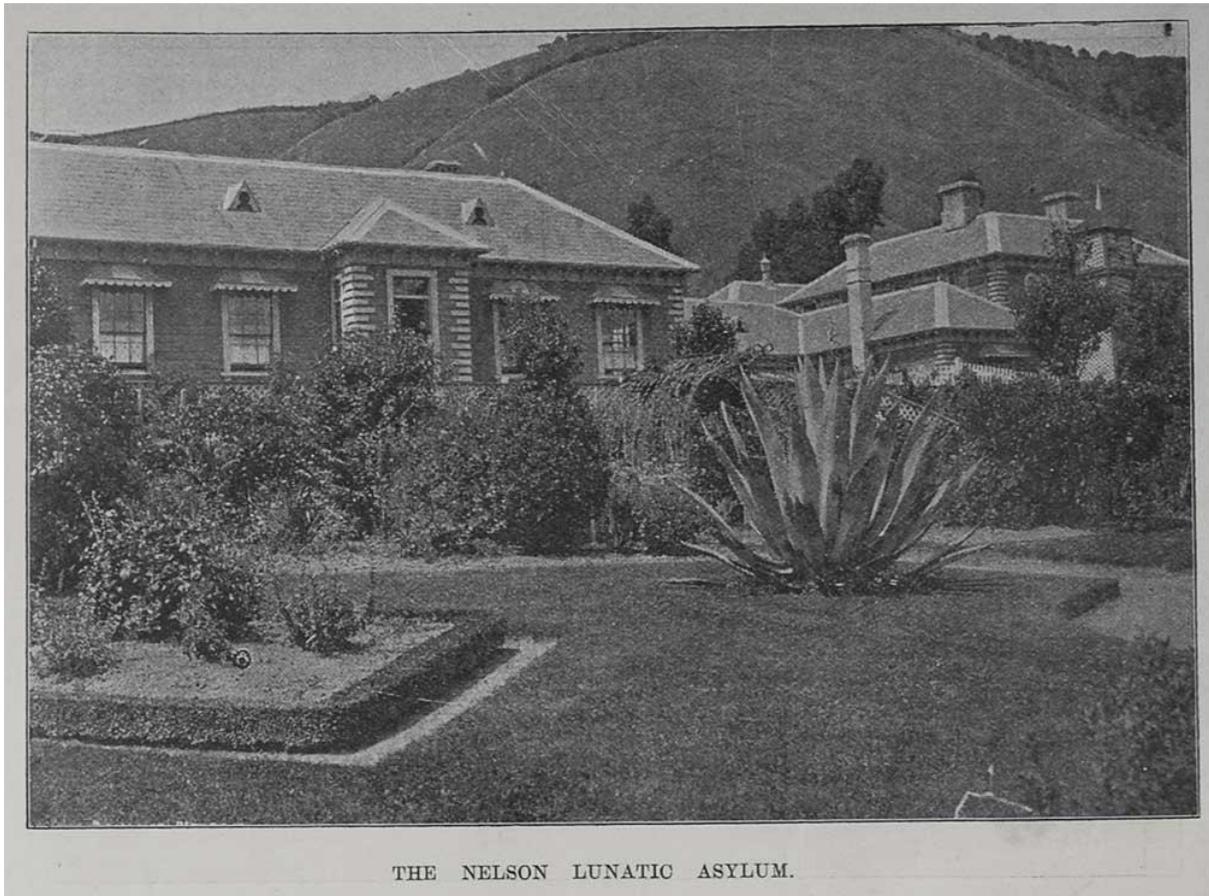
Portions of the old asylum, the Taranaki Barracks, were converted into accommodation for three married attendants, a store and workshops. The destitute poor continued to live in the Taranaki Building until 1886 when they were transferred

⁴⁹ 'Opening of the New Lunatic Asylum', in the Nelson Evening Mail, 10 May 1876, p. 2, downloaded from Papers Past.

⁵⁰ Webby, op cit.

⁵¹ Webby, op cit.

to the Immigration Depot. The Taranaki Buildings were finally destroyed by fire under the supervision of the Fire Brigade on 7 August 1909.⁵²



Growth

Over the years patients numbers increased quickly and additional buildings were constructed. When the new asylum was opened in 1876 it had accommodation for 60 patients. However this quickly became too small. By 1883 there was significant overcrowding, with there being 11 extra males and 6 too many females than could be accommodated. By 1896 patients had increased to 128, 74 males and 52 females. In order to accommodate them all, patients were divided between the Asylum main building and two detached cottages. Beds for a number of patients had to be made up on the floors in the corridors and in the billiard room. Further accommodation was desperately needed. According to Webby another building was constructed in 1898. It consisted of a detached brick building with accommodation for 54 males. In the Centre of that block there was a two story wooden building which had two wings. The wing on the right facing Waimea Road was set apart for males and contained four associated dormitories and 16 bedrooms, a sitting room and

⁵² Smith, p. 3/16.

conveniences similar to those in the male department. The Asylum now had accommodation for 100 patients.⁵³

Little information is available about the treatment of the patients during their time at the Asylum particularly after the 1870s. The official reports note several men were occupied in the garden and the women did washing, mending and cleaning. A Report from 1877 noted *'It should not be necessary to supply the male patients with beer at 2/3d a gallon to induce them to work as it was done with some'*.⁵⁴ Recreation was the occasional dance, weekly divine services, and for some occasional walks. By 1878 the wire beds had been replaced with an iron bed for each patient. The blankets had been replaced but sheets were not supplied to the male patients because of the small number of staff not being able to undertake the additional washing. The iron bars had been removed from the bedroom windows which also now opened.

Ongoing issues for the Asylum were constant growth putting a strain on resources but also logistic issues such as lack of reliable water supply, and drainage. The water supply was so feeble that it did not run until about 9pm when there was less being used in town. This caused much inconvenience as the water required during the day for baths, lavatories and the washhouse had to be carried in from tanks at the rear of the building. In 1883 the Asylum paid a subsidy of £800 to the City Council to have the water supply upgraded but to no avail. Day after day no water could be drawn from the mains but they had to depend on what water flowed at night into the iron tanks.

⁵³ Webby, op cit,

⁵⁴ Webby, op cit.



20th Century

There is limited information available about the Nelson Lunatic Asylum in the 20th Century with many of the records being accidentally eaten by rats, destroyed or transferred to National Archives in Wellington.

The Asylum continued to grow and by 1900 there were 86 males and 52 females present, fifteen more than the floor space would legally permit.⁵⁵ Accommodating the increasing numbers was an ongoing problem. It is likely the ward El Nido was built in 1899, and the Toi Toi Valley School relocated to the site in 1901. No records charting patient numbers are readily available after 1900 but it is likely patient numbers continued to increase resulting in Braemar Lodge being built in 1915.

The new Century saw a change in terminology for those with a mental illness. In 1911 the term '*lunatic*' and '*lunatic asylum*' was abandoned in law under the Mental Defectives Act. The word '*lunatic*' was removed from the iron archway at the Waimea Road entrance.⁵⁶ It appears the name was changed from Nelson Lunatic Asylum to Nelson Mental Hospital in November 1912.

In 1920 the Division of Mental Hygiene acquired a property at Stoke from the Department of Education. It subsequently built a new institution which became the

⁵⁵ Low, p. 78

⁵⁶ Nancy Shaw-Miller, 'History & Memories of Braemar Hospital', *Nelson Historical Society Journal*, Vol 7, No 5, 2013, p. 49.

Ngawhatu Psychiatric Hospital and most of the adult population from the Nelson Mental Hospital in Waimea Road were transferred to Ngawhatu in 1922. It is unclear who stayed behind at the old site in Waimea Road but possibly the move to Ngawhatu in 1922 was the beginning of separate services for psychiatric patients and those with intellectual disabilities.

In the early 1930s the whole Mental Hospital complex was condemned and a survey began in the 1940s for a total rebuilding programme to convert the site into a Psychopaedic Hospital, into which it was already transforming.⁵⁷ Consideration was given both in 1948 and 1957 to moving to the entire patient base to Levin but on both occasions plans fell through. A newspaper article reported this was a dismal period in Braemar's history '*as in the early 1960s there was on the entire campus not one single piece of outdoor play equipment*'.⁵⁸

As the 1960s progressed plans materialised to revitalise the site. Under the Mental Health Amendment Act 1961, the site became a psychopaedic hospital and was named Braemar Hospital and Training School.⁵⁹ In 1965 a comprehensive report on the site led to the construction of Iona Villa, and two activities blocks. In 1967 thoughts for villa replacement resurfaced. In 1971 twelve more beds were added to Iona and Caithness was completed in 1974.⁶⁰ The Braemar Redevelopment Plan was submitted to the Nelson Hospital Board, in October 1975, from Gillman Partners, Hamilton-based architects. It took a long time for this plan to come to fruition but nine years later, in October 1984, the redeveloped Braemar opened. This included three new villas, a child potential unit and an administration block at a cost of \$4.15 million.⁶¹ The three new villas, Argyll, Leith and Elgin each housed 24 residents. The Child Potential Unit included a hydrotherapy pool and gym. The redevelopment had a positive impact on residents at Braemar. Mrs Sue Hill, Braemar's Principal Nurse, stated '*behaviour has improved as the residents have much more stimulus and the staff are finding the environment much more cheery*'.⁶² A feature of the redevelopment was the covered ways for residents and staff and the preservation of most of the trees. There were no steps on the site. Many of the old villas were demolished but Montrose was not and is the sole remaining building on site from the original Nelson Lunatic Asylum opened in 1876.

During the latter part of the 19th Century significant changes occurred in the treatment of those with intellectual disabilities Nancy Shaw-Miller records a change in terminology during her time at Braemar, from 1973 until 2002, working as a nurse

⁵⁷ "Redevelopment of Braemar Hospital", *Impulse*, [no date.]

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Webby, *op cit.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Nelson Evening Mail, 18 October 1984

⁶² *Ibid.*

aid. She stated people at Braemar were initially referred to as 'kids' or 'patients' but these terms were later replaced with 'residents' and finally 'clients'.⁶³

Many of the residents of Braemar were resettled in the community in the latter part of the 1980 and 1990s. Braemar was closed in 2004 and the remaining villas were converted into offices for the Nelson Marlborough District Health Board, with the site now being called the Braemar Campus. Rather ironically, Montrose, the sole remaining building from the original lunatic asylum is now home to the Community Mental Health Team.



Figure 1 Montrose today

Summary and Conclusion

The history of Braemar reflects the history of mental and intellectual health services in Nelson. When Nelson was colonised by European settlers, people were called 'lunatics' and incarcerated in gaol. However part of the colonial ideology was to provide proper care and accommodation for those with a mental illness. After several years of lobbying from Medical Personnel, members of the public and the media, people with mental illness were housed in separate accommodation, the Taranaki Barracks, on Waimea Road. Women were moved there in 1864 and men in 1865. Conditions in the Taranaki Barracks were substandard and after years of further lobbying the Nelson Provincial Government, in 1874, finally commissioned a purpose built 'Lunatic Asylum'. This opened in 1876.

⁶³ Shaw-Miller, p. 50.

The Nelson Lunatic Asylum provided accommodation for 60 people but within the space of a few years there were more patients needing care and accommodation than there were beds. This led to the construction, in 1899 and 1915, of further buildings to increase the Asylum's capacity.

A shift in attitude toward those with mental illness saw the term 'lunatic' abandoned in law in 1911 and the Asylum was renamed the Nelson Mental Hospital. Most of the adult population from the Mental Hospital were transferred to Ngawhatu Psychiatric Hospital when it was built in 1922. This possibly saw the beginning of separate services for psychiatric patients and those with intellectual disabilities. From herein Braemar began a slow transformation to a psychopaedic hospital and was renamed the Braemar Hospital and Training School in the 1960s. Further growth and development occurred during the 1960s to 1980s. The dramatic changes in health during the latter part of the 20th Century saw many of Braemar's residents resettled into the community. Many of the buildings remain today, with the site called the Braemar Campus, and used as offices for the Nelson Marlborough District Health Board.

REFERENCES

Primary Sources

Nelson Provincial Council, Votes and Proceedings, 1856-1875.

Nelson City Council Site File

General Property Information supplied by Nelson City Council

Certificates of Title

Secondary Sources

D C Low; Salute to the Scalpel – A medical history of the Nelson Province, R Lucas & Son, no date

Marjorie M Webby, From Prison to Paradise, Genealogy of Ngawhatu Hospital previously know as Nelson Lunatic Asylum 1840-1991 and St Mary's Orphanage at Stoke, 1991

“Redevelopment of Braemar Hospital” ,*Impulse*, no date. Copy of article supplied by Nelson Provincial Museum, Isel Park, Stoke.

Nancy Shaw-Miller, ‘History & Memories of Braemar Hospital’, Nelson Historical Society Journal, Vol 7, No 5, 2013

Dawn Smith, Shelter: ‘Emergency Housing in 19th Century Nelson’, Nelson Historical Society Journal, Vol 6, No 5, 2002

Gemma Winstanley, Nayland College, 2011, ‘Shelbourne Street Gaol’, sourced from www.theprow.org.nz

Catherine Thomas, Nelson College for Girls, 2001, ‘Ngawhatu Hospital ... Home or nightmare?’, sourced from www.theprow.org.nz

Newspapers: Nelson Examiner, The Colonist and Nelson Evening Mail sourced from Papers Past on www.paperspast.natlib.govt.nz

Nelson Evening Mail, 18 October 1984