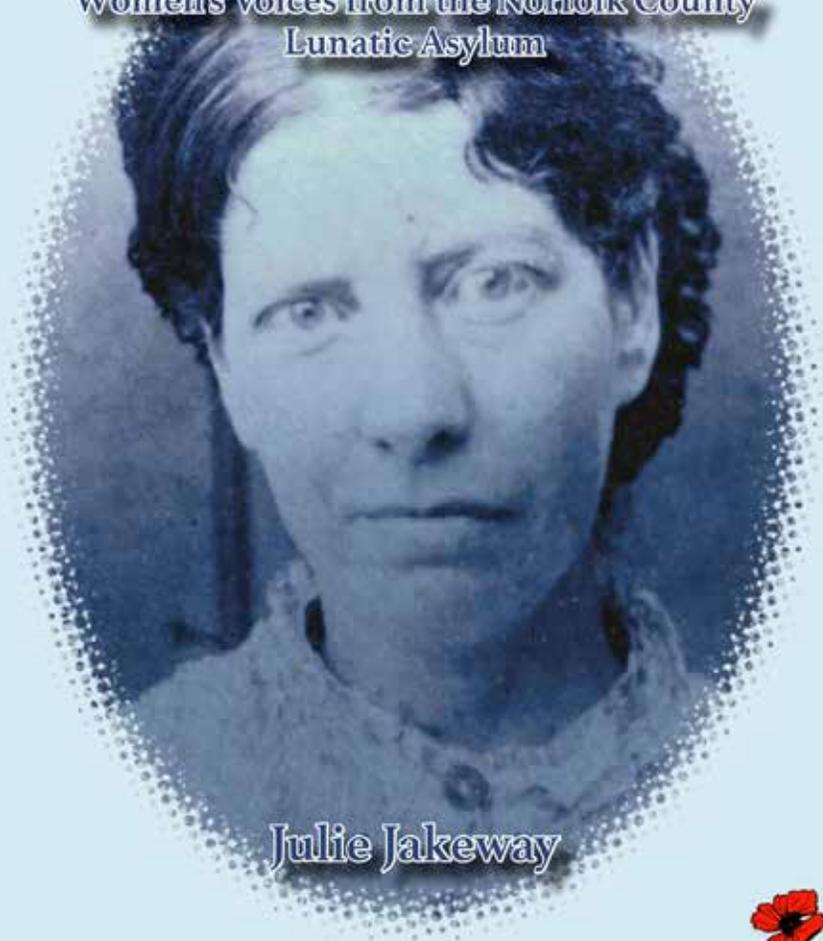


Sample

Manifestations of Madness

Women's Voices from the Norfolk County
Lunatic Asylum



Julie Jakeway



ISBN 978 1 909796 85 0

Paperback 96pp

RRP £9.95



Photo of an asylum patient c1850-1858 taken by Hugh Welch Diamond. Diamond was educated at Norwich School and later studied medicine at the Royal College of Surgeons. Specialising in psychiatry, he was appointed to Springfield asylum, the first Surrey County Asylum. From 1848 to 1858 he updated his predecessor's atlas of engraved portraits of the patients with photographs. He believed that mental states were manifested in the person's facial features or expression (physiognomy) and that photographs, as objective representations of reality, would show 'the passing storm or sunshine of the soul'.

Poppyland Publishing is pleased to announce *Manifestations of Madness: Women's Voices from the Norfolk County Lunatic Asylum* by Julie Jakeway.

By 1856 The Norfolk County Lunatic Asylum had left behind the inhumane methods of the eighteenth century where physical containment and restraint had been in regular use and adopted 'light and voluntary labour—with their judicious adaptation to various cases and temperaments'. Such amusements in the summer included outings to Lowestoft and Yarmouth, country walks, picnics and river trips. In winter there was a fortnightly ball with a brass band.

While many causes of mental disorder in the Victorian period were common to both genders: religious mania, intemperance, family troubles, work troubles, psychiatrists believed that women were more vulnerable to insanity because the instability of the reproductive systems interfered with their sexual, emotional and rational control. In this book, the author uses a series of case studies from the Norfolk County Asylum to explore women of different social status, all diagnosed with gender-specific causes of insanity. Their treatment resulted in a variety of outcomes that both reflect the success and constraint of the medical knowledge at that time.

About the author

Julie Jakeway was educated at Carew School, Ealing. An MA in local history from Leicester University stimulated her interest in Victorian asylums, her dissertation being on the Norfolk County Lunatic Asylum. Her subsequent research into the personal histories of many of the female patients led to this book.



Contents

Acknowledgements	vii
Introduction	1
Admissions	5
Life within the Asylum Walls	14
Case Studies	23
Leaving the Asylum	65
Conclusion	79
Appendix	80
Glossary	81
Bibliography	83
Index	85

Life within the Asylum Walls

IN 1842, when Norfolk Lunatic Asylum was inspected by the Metropolitan Commissioners in Lunacy criticisms included 'the amount of mechanical restraint used on patients, insufficient heating, the poor dietary, and the shortage of tables and utensils for meals.'¹ Changes were needed and by 1846, in addition to coal fires, new heating pipes had been installed to improve the comfort of staff and patients, ensuring that the temperature rarely dropped below fifty degrees Fahrenheit. Additional bathrooms were installed so that patients were bathed individually and daily, rather than twice weekly. At the next inspection it was noted that 'all the leg-locks and chains had been removed from the seats and benches in the day rooms and airing courts', and in 1853 all forms of mechanical restraint had been removed. In Norfolk the asylum had left behind the inhumane methods of the eighteenth century when physical containment and restraint were in regular use and had moved towards a more enlightened regime of therapeutic care and treatment.



The three best physicians: Dr Diet, Dr Merryman, and Dr Quit; three doctors representing diet, cheerfulness and rest, defend their patient from death.

The first Annual Report in 1854 by the medical officers of the asylum described the clothing provided for women patients:

warm under garments with neat print dresses and linen caps; some are allowed to continue their own apparel where it is thought that a change will have a prejudicial effect.

For the men who had recently worn fustian:

a neat grey cloth had been introduced; and in future we recommend that this material be generally adopted in the winter. Most of the patients are now supplied with flannel next their skin as we are anxious that the warmth of the surface be constantly maintained.

In the same report the medical officers pointed out that they frequently prescribed wine, brandy, ale and porter to patients as being the best 'tonics and restoratives'. By 1854 the food allocation had been defined clearly and for male patients breakfast was 1.5 pints of oatmeal milk broth, or porridge as it is now known, half being new milk, and 6oz of bread; for supper men were given 6oz of bread and 2oz of cheese with a half-pint of beer. Both men and women had the same midday meal; on three days this was 4oz of meat and 12oz of vegetables, mainly potatoes, with bread and a half-pint of beer, on the other days 10.5oz of meat pie or meat dumplings was served with 12oz of vegetables, the meat specified as 2.5oz without bone. In addition, 'for out-door workers, artisans [sic] and laundry women etc, ½ pt beer with bread and cheese at 11 am and 4 pm' was allocated.² Four shillings (£16.04) was allotted for each patient's food per week, twice the amount that Norfolk farm labourers were able to spend.³

The same medical officers in their first Annual Report were critical of 'some asylums' where the food allocation had been reduced for patients who were inactive, with the following observation:

we entirely object to the idea that persons who vegetate in the wards should have only just food enough to keep them alive; if such treatment were adopted the health and comfort of those who are "feeble-minded", would be embittered, their lives shortened, and every prospect of recovery taken away.

When Elizabeth Baker entered the asylum in July 1859 with a diagnosis of puerperal insanity she was said to be 'anaemic looking'. The immediate cause of her illness was suggested as overwork and general debility.⁴ For Elizabeth the daily rations at the asylum were more substantial than she was likely to have had at home: for breakfast the female patients were given 5oz of bread with butter and three-quarters of a pint of tea, and again for supper tea, bread and butter. Her midday meal of meat and vegetables with bread and beer probably constituted a more generous diet than she was used to. After the birth of her child, at the beginning of the month, she had been weak and frail, this regular nourishment was just what Elizabeth needed.

FOOD.		
Butchers' Meat, 3777 st.	.	1312 18 7
Flour 1860 st.	.	151 7 6
Bread 2901 score.	.	545 7 4
Cheese 120 cwt. 1 qr. 21 lbs.	.	375 19 10
Tea 1000 lbs.	.	172 16 8
Sugar	.	84 19 0
Coffee	.	23 5 3
Rice and Arrowroot	.	6 9 9
Groats	.	10 0 0
Salt	.	2 2 3
Milk 8028 gallons	.	267 13 4
Butter 3728 pints	.	254 8 6
Eggs	.	13 5 7
Sundry Articles of Grocery	.	37 12 0
		3258 5 7
	Carried forward	£6203 10 3½

Food purchased during 1859 in Annual Report published 1860 from Report of the medical officers and superintendent, with the accounts of the treasurer of the Thorpe lunatic asylum for the year 1859 / [Norfolk Lunatic Asylum].

The day began for Elizabeth and all the asylum patients at half past six when they were provided with facilities for washing themselves, though the precise details of these washing arrangements were not explained. Those patients unable to manage for themselves were given practical assistance by staff. Breakfast was at eight o'clock and, on Sundays, Tuesdays and Fridays a devotional service was held half an hour later. At nine o'clock work began for those fit for employment and in fine weather everyone else capable of taking exercise was encouraged into the grounds for out-door activities. Patients engaged in physically strenuous employment had a break for refreshments at eleven o'clock.

At half past twelve all patients returned to the wards and dinner was served at one o'clock. At two o'clock employed patients returned to their work and at half past two unemployed patients went back to the grounds for exercise until five o'clock in summer and four in winter. Refreshments were distributed at four to those working and supper was served to all patients at six o'clock. After supper, reading, music, card-playing and other amusements were encouraged until bedtime which was eight o'clock in summer and seven in winter.

Although work therapy was perceived to be an important aspect of moral treatment, opportunities were restricted in the early years by the lack of suitable tasks available. After acquiring thirty acres of farmland in 1853, male patients worked in the gardens and on the farm, also as painters, carpenters, tailors, upholsterers and shoemakers. The number of items made and repaired by those working as shoemakers and tailors was impressive as can be seen from the list published in the Annual Report of 1859.

Work was seen as therapeutic because it provided a mental focus and

prevented patients dwelling on their problems; it was a means of maintaining previous job skills and sometimes developing new ones. By 1860 over half of the one hundred and fifty-two men and three-quarters of the one hundred and eighty-eight women patients were working.⁵ The output of the female patients

NORFOLK COUNTY ASYLUM.

ARTICLES MADE AND REPAIRED BY THE MALE ATTENDANTS AND PATIENTS DURING THE YEAR 1859.

SHOEMAKERS.

LIST OF NEW WORK.	LIST OF REPAIRS.
33 pairs of Men's Leather Boots 4 pairs Men's Leather Shoes 16 pairs Women's Leather Shoes 61 pairs Women's Leather Boots 7 pairs Men's Duffle Boots 38 pairs Women's Duffle Shoes 5 pairs Women's Duffle Boots	276 Pairs of Boots and Shoes, soled, heeled and welted 90 pairs of Boots and Shoes, soled and welted 35 pairs of Boots and Shoes soled and heeled 81 pairs of Boots and Shoes soled 106 pairs of Boots and Shoes heeled 367 pairs of Boots and Shoes repaired

TAILORS.

LIST OF NEW WORK.	LIST OF REPAIRS.
11 Frocks 18 Pairs Braces 22 Mattresses, hair 1 Cushion Fibre 2 Curtains, blue serge 1 Knotted Rug	1013 Jackets 740 Waistcoats 1014 Trowsers 141 Frocks 3 Mattresses 32 Carpets bound 66 Mats bound 50 pairs Duffle Boots bound, and sundry repairs to padded room

Articles Made and Repaired by the Male Attendants and Patients during the year 1859; from Report of the medical officers and superintendent, with the accounts of the treasurer of the Thorpe lunatic asylum for the year 1859 / [Norfolk Lunatic Asylum]

engaged in needlework in the year of 1859 was equally impressive: 305 shirts; 45 tablecloths; 312 handkerchiefs; 360 sheets; 215 pillow cases; 160 shifts; 184 gowns; 308 caps; and many more garments too numerous to list. Just a month after her admission, Elizabeth was well enough to do a little needlework. Women also frequently worked in the laundry or as cleaners. Steam-powered washing machines, wringing machines and drying rooms had been established

'partly because the labour of the patients in connection with washing ... is not regarded a desirable occupation for them.'⁶ Elizabeth was not strong enough for laundry work; she had suffered an injury to her left knee some years previously and her leg swelled if she continually stood or walked. This understanding and acknowledgment of physical incapacity reflected the humane approach usually shown to patients by asylum staff.

In the mid-nineteenth century there was very little medication available for either mental or physical disorders and the most commonly prescribed remedies were revealed in the patients' notes: opium and morphia for pain relief; zinc ointment for the treatment of skin conditions; digitalis in cases of epilepsy and general paralysis, and the sedatives: chloral, bromide and laudanum.

Outings were organised regularly and an excursion by train to Lowestoft was arranged in the summer of 1859. Soon after Elizabeth Baker's admission in August that year, a total of 247 patients, 123 men and 124 women, left the asylum in Thorpe at eight o'clock to board the train at Norwich Thorpe station arriving in Lowestoft at around nine o'clock. A schedule which sounds quite an achievement even by today's standards. 'Railway staff and harbour authorities at Lowestoft afforded all the facilities in their power for the successful conduct of the undertaking'⁷ and the day was proclaimed a success and enjoyed by all.

An annual pattern of events emerged during the 1860s: visits to the circus at Castle Hill in January; visits to Tombland Fair in March and April; cricket matches against Norwich grammar boys in May; picnics at Postwick Grove in



Patients on an outing with Asylum staff from Montrose Royal Asylum.

June; harvest treats in the cricket field in August; evening entertainments by minstrels in December; Christmas festivities in the hall with dancing and singing with a comment by William Hills, in 1866, that 260 patients had 'retired at 10 pm expressing their regret that Xmas does not occur 3 or 4 times a year'.

These activities and the recreation provided for patients after supper, in the form of music, cards or games may have been a luxury few had experienced in their day-to-day lives outside the asylum. Weekly and monthly periodicals were provided and it was declared that the two volumes of the *Illustrated London News* supplied to each ward proved 'a source of endless interest to patients'.⁸ It is not known whether Elizabeth Baker had acquired the ability to read and enjoy the indulgence of monthly periodicals, but music and cards provided entertainment for those without literacy skills. In winter a fortnightly ball was held with a brass band providing the music where 'the patients pass merry evenings in dancing and singing'.⁹

In addition to these regular events there were also *ad hoc* entertainments from time to time: a magic entertainment for patients in May 1866; the Choristers cricket club played the asylum team in June 1866, afterwards giving an evening entertainment in the hall; there was cricket at Spixworth in August that year; General Tom Hewett's entertainment in September, and in February 1867 the



LUNATIC'S BALL.
Somerset County Asylum.

Mentally ill patients dancing at Somerset County Asylum.

patients assembled in the hall for an 'Optical Diorama'. In February the following year the patients were treated to an entertainment performed by amateurs and described by William Hills in his Superintendent's Report as follows:

vocal and instrumental music, recitations, a reading from *Pickwick*, [and] closing with a "Comedy on Marriage". Patients evinced great delight by frequent and hearty plaudits.

In the summer months cricket matches, country walks, picnics and river trips were part of the asylum routine, giving patients opportunities for socialising in a manner they may never have enjoyed before.

When the Lunacy Commissioners inspected the asylum in 1861 they noted the paintings on the walls, the framed engravings, mirrors and ornaments which added to the cheerfulness of the wards, day rooms, bedrooms and dormitories. The greenhouses with aviaries, plants and flowers all contributed to the well-being of the patients.¹⁰

Efforts to improve the ambience of their surroundings were continued by William Hills and his wife, who became matron of the asylum.



Brookwood Hospital Asylum Band.

Mrs. Hills regularly requested, and was granted, sums of £5 or £10 from the bazaar account to improve the 'ornamentation and comfort' of the buildings.

The routine of the asylum day: the fixed hour of rising, orderly meals, regular work and exercise, and the unchanging hour of bedtime, were all considered essential contributory factors to the physical health and also the mental well-being of the patient.¹¹

Susanna Sargeant, a single girl aged 24 and a governess by occupation, was admitted in February 1870.¹² On admission the cause of her insanity was unknown, but she was diagnosed with mania and the history of her behaviour as reported by her parents during the preceding six weeks was quite uncontrollable: 'she has now quite lost her reason and shouts, laughs, making grimaces, recites, gesticulates, and at times is quite incoherent, her movements are ceaseless'. By March she had 'become much quieter and more manageable', and on 30 March the case notes recorded that she had:

decidedly improved, being more natural in conversation and behaviour, obedient and inclined to be industrious and tidily in habits. She is a source of some

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published by:

Poppyland Publishing

38 Oulton Street

Oulton

Lowestoft NR32 3BB

tel: 01502 370515

email: publisher@poppyland.co.uk