

Extracts from listening clips

Consultant Psychiatrist on range of treatments

The other observation about Shenley was the unusual medical culture, It had traditional medical psychiatrists that worked alongside thinking psychiatrists.....There were consultants who attracted doctors to work at Shenley who had an interest in psychotherapy.

'You had someone looking at institutionalisation and thinking about it; you had David Cooper and the therapeutic community; you had patients that you would not go near with an antipsychotic; and then you had lobotomies that were being done every week, every month; ECT and all the conventional [treatments]. Insulin treatment was still being used at Shenley up until 1970 because that was a treatment that was being used then.'

Consultant Psychiatrist on Villa 21 and antipsychiatry

Villa 21:

'David Cooper who was an alkylate or a friend of Ronnie Laing; an existentialist psychiatrist who really shook the cages and talked about real experiences. He had responsibility on the Harrow side and established a ward called Villa 21 [where] schizophrenic patients were not treated with medication but became a community where they talked through their family experiences and so on.'

'[In Villa 21] the majority of patients with longstanding schizophrenia, male patients, were not being treated with antipsychotic medication and in 1975 and 1976 when the Medical Research Council has a research unit which I was part of; the division of psychiatry, clinical research centre at Northwick Park Hospital in Harrow; an agreement was made that they could use Shenley for some of their experiments and some of their work. Three of the consultants began to investigate and see some of these patients as possible subjects for studies in schizophrenia which they became world experts in.....So here was a hospital that on the same campus had those conventional, traditional treatments if you were female but if you were male you had a different mindset for treatment options.'

3 Nurses reflecting on their 3 year nurses training:

'first of all we had to go and work on the wards....so you would have to go and light the fire, you would have to clean the wards, pull the beds out, sweep...then we went to the School of Nursing which was in the beautiful mansion....it was fantastic wasn't it....the tutor was Ronnie Laing. It incorporated a lot really; as well as Psychiatry we did a lot of anatomy, physiology, practical nursing care and hygiene.'

Consultant Psychiatrist on closure of Shenley:

'What made Harrow work better [compared to the closure of Napsbury at roughly the same time] is that there was a commitment not only that there would be continuity for the older population, the Old Age Psychiatry Service at a medical level; when the individuals were transferred there was also a commitment that the most disabled and complex individuals be moved into NHS provision in Roxbourne House in Harrow....rather than split up into lots of little independent providers. What this meant was that the continuing rehabilitation needs and long term support needs of these most complex group of individuals was provided for by the NHS over the decade. This I think stands out as

one of the features of the Shenley closure programme that deserves credit.'

'The location of Shenley was not in a community that any of its patients came from....so I think that....despite being a long time in hospital, having now returned to some of their roots in an urban community is a very important step.'

Occupational Therapy

'The nurses talked to me and they sent me to a an occupational therapy department which was called 'Male O.T.' which later changed to the Phoenix unit. The therapists were very, very nice indeed....we did all sorts of nice things. Oh wow, we put on a play....a pantomime and of course the regular things. They were mad, mad, mad for making baskets....which were all right. I enjoyed more than anything else, carpentry and I made a bureau.

Patient talks about putting on a pantomime

The pantomime was based on a science fiction story called Dusty Zebra. The gist of it was creatures from outer space come along, and brought along all sorts of gadgets which they thought would help us and of course we had to make the gadgets.....I made a television set with an eye on it.... The OT's were very keen on stage performances because they thought, quite rightly, that it was good O.T. to express yourself.

Occupational therapy and self sufficiency

Before I started at Shenley, I heard from staff they make their own meals and serve it to the public. There was a farm there as well you see. But regrettably this changed, because, you know, they don't want to make use of the patients as 'cheap labour'. In fact, I think is a bad idea because now, patients doing nothing.

Music and social life

There was a place I went to in a social point of view. We used to congregate in a villa. To pass time, listen to music, 60's-70's pop music. It's where we used to go to have a social life and light relief.

League of friends:

The league of friends organised a library, there was a red cross library, they organised the tea rooms and there was a shop. They were all manned by volunteers from Shenley village and St. Albans, some from Brent and Harrow. There was a great deal of support. My children, tiny tots, roamed through the grounds of Shenley hospital and never once were harmed. They were safer there than out on the streets, strange enough.