



## Local History: Pest Houses and Hospitals

### LEPER HOSPITAL

The earliest known hospital in Alton was the hospital of St Mary Magdalen for lepers, for which there is evidence between 1234 and 1302. It lay at the eastern end of Alton. At least one of the buildings must have been substantial as it was still inhabited in the early 1800s and known as the Spittle House. By 1828, this had been demolished and replaced by a 'Capital Mansion' – which became known as Alton House.

### MEDIEVAL HOSPITAL

By the early 1500s there was a medieval hospital in the western part of Anstey Manor and John Brown was appointed Warden here in 1519. There are later references to its buildings and land, but no later ones to having patients have been found so far.

### PEST HOUSES

Pest houses were buildings, usually as far away from the population as possible, where people were put when they had an infectious or contagious disease, such as small pox. The first known pest house in Alton is that shown on the map of 1666 (copies of which can be obtained from the Curtis Museum) in the area of the dell along Ashdell Road.

For much of the 1700s, the building that was leased for this purpose was the windmill house on Windmill Hill. This belonged to the Hawkins family (who owned the Swan Inn) and was not used by the miller as he lived nearby in the town. The pest house was used several times during epidemics of small pox until the owners decided to take back the site and it later became the Windmill public house.

The next place used for isolating people was Butts House. In 1764, a payment was made for '*drawing the Leases for Butts House*' and, in 1768/9, Mary Dedman was paid for acting as a nurse there.

In March 1790, the Hampshire Chronicle reported an unfortunate incident that took place at Butts House:-

*'Friday last an inquisition was taken at Alton... on the body of John Faithful, who, with a woman was desired to watch a person unknown in the habit of a sailor, at the Butts near Alton, on the 11th of February last, who had the smallpox then on him. It happened about the middle of the night, the person unknown was seized by a violent fever, the smallpox as is supposed being then on the turn, left his bed and took from out his breeches pocket, a clasp knife, and stabbed the said John Faithful in*



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*his left arm and side, who languished from the said 12th of February until the 17th instant, and then expired. (The said unknown person died on the fourth day after the above accident happened.) Verdict that the said John Faithful died of stabbing, and incisions given him by the said unknown person, when in a fit of phrenzy.'*

Soon after this episode, the pest house seems to have moved yet again when a new workhouse was built alongside Anstey Road in 1792. A later document mentions a *'Meadow House formerly called the Pest House on the premises of the Union House'*. Presumably a special pest house was put up in the grounds of the new workhouse to replace all the leased properties that had been previously used for the purpose.

### THE COTTAGE HOSPITAL

In 1868, an appeal was started to raise money in order to establish a cottage hospital in Alton for patients from the town and the surrounding villages. The main force behind the scheme seems to have been Rev C Causton of Lasham Rectory and, by July, over £100 had been raised. A committee was formed and they rented 10 Butts Road from the owner, James Morgan.

Several 'Rules and Regulations' were established with the first one being - *'This Hospital is designed for the accommodation of sufferers from severe disease, or accident, or any case which cannot be adequately treated at the home of the Patient.'* The fourth rule was - *'Except in cases of emergency, all Patients applying for admission must be recommended by a Subscriber of not less than 10/6 [52p] per annum, but the admission of Patients must depend on the sanction of the Medical Officers, and the accommodation of the Hospital.'*

Treatment was not free, as *'A weekly payment varying from 2/6 to 8/- shall be made by each Patient, and the amount of such payment shall be fixed by the Patient's Employer, or Person recommending, with the concurrence of the Medical Officers'* although *'Every requisite, except personal clothing, will be provided in the Hospital.'*

Annual Reports were published in which were listed, among other things, the names of those who had been treated in the Hospital. In 1874, one of those was William Hale of Bentworth, aged 50, who had been recommended by Mr Coulthard. His ailment was *'amputation of finger'* for which he stayed in the Hospital between July 6 and July 14. The comment in the 'Result' column was *'cured'*. The names of many of the patients can be found in the Local Studies Area of the Curtis Museum.

### INWOOD COTTAGE HOSPITAL



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When he wrote his will in August 1874, Daniel Inwood of Binsted left £1500 to the Hampshire County Hospital, £1500 to Kings College Hospital in London, £1500 to the Ophthalmic Hospital, Moorfields, London, and £1500 to Alton Cottage Hospital. *‘But I declare that in case the name of “Inwoods Cottage Hospital” shall not be adopted by the said hospital within 12 months after my decease or in case such of my said Trustees as aforesaid shall not be made life Governors within the same period then and, in either of the said cases the said sum of £1500 shall not be applied for the benefit of the said Hospital but shall be held upon the trusts hereinafter declared concerning my residuary personal estate’.* Daniel died in 1877.



In the same year, Henry Hall, the brewer, offered a piece of land called Crown Close to the Town as a site for a drinking fountain, a new Cottage Hospital, Reading Room and Institute and Public Baths (the latter proposal was soon changed to Assembly Rooms). Daniel Inwood’s gift came just when the Hospital Committee were trying to raise the £2000+ that was needed to build and furnish the new premises.

William Curtis noted, in his book on the history of Alton, that *‘the new Hospital was completed in 1880 and the patients were transferred on 6 October. On the following day a Dedication Service was held by the Lord Bishop of the Diocese.’*

The original Inwood Hospital had two wards of three beds each, an accident ward and a convalescent room. In 1924, the hospital extension was formally opened. It remained Alton’s Cottage Hospital until 1951, after which it was used for training and living quarters for nurses. Eventually left empty, it was then renovated by the Shaftesbury Housing Association in 1983.

## ISOLATION HOSPITAL

In September 1892 there was an outbreak of scarletina in the town. The Medical Officer, Dr Bevan, suggested that the Local Board should establish an Infectious Diseases Hospital. A building in Amery



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Street was adapted for use as a temporary hospital. After using this site for five years, it was decided that it was not really suitable and a search began for another one.

Not much happened until a bad epidemic of diphtheria in 1908 caused Dr Bevan to realise that the facilities were not sufficient. A temporary solution was found by sending the girls to two houses in Beech and the boys to the Abbey while a more suitable hospital was built up Windmill Hill. Possible uses for the empty building were being considered in 1961.

### ABSENT MINDED BEGGAR'S HOSPITAL/ PRINCESS LOUISE HOSPITAL

On 23 June 1900, the *Hampshire Herald* announced the approval by the Secretary of State for War for a convalescent camp for about 500 soldiers from the South African War. It was to be built locally by the Absent Minded Beggar Relief Corps in connection with the *Daily Mail* and it was hoped that the site would be able to receive men during the 1st week in August. The *Daily Mail* reported that, thanks to the patriotic and ready sympathy with the project by Mr Montagu Knight of Chawton House and of the authorities in Alton, all troubles had been eventually overcome. The Corps had secured from Mr Knight 'a beautiful park-like piece of land' of 155 acres. It lay 'on the slope of a tree-crowned hill which will protect the hospital from northerly and easterly winds'. 'The subsoil is chalk, the water excellent and the new light railway to Basingstoke skirts the property on one side, permitting of a railway siding being built immediately in the rear of the wards'. 'The air at Alton is delightful'. (The Hospital was to be, in fact, in Chawton until the boundary change in 1932.)

By 1903 the hospital was empty, but in May the Alton Urban District Council received a letter from Lt. Col. Rainsford saying that the Hospital would in future be known as the Princess Louise Hospital. The Princess visited the town on 16 July and was received at the station by the Council. She then drove through the town to reopen the site.

Soldiers who died at the hospital were buried locally in Chawton Burial Ground. These include:-

- 1904 April 9 John Channon 2 Devon Reg.aged 27
- May 25 Arthur William Ferrett-aged 45
- July 18 William Jackson Lancs.Fus.aged 24
- Dec.29 Thomas Flower 2 Wilts.Reg.aged 19
- 1905 May 1Harry Cumberpatch-aged 18
- June 14 Frederick Hunt-aged 30
- Sep.6 George Felks Beds.Reg.aged 32
- Sep.9 William Bell K.R.R.aged 24



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The site was left empty when it was no longer needed by the military.

### LORD MAYOR TRELOAR HOSPITAL AND COLLEGE

Sir William Purdie Treloar became Lord Mayor of London in 1906 and launched 'The Lord Mayor's Little Cripple Fund'. This was to raise funds for a hospital for the treatment of children suffering from tuberculosis of the bones or joints and a college 'to train crippled boys in skilled handicrafts to enable them to earn their own living'. He raised £70,000.

Sir William heard about the empty site at Chawton (although it was always described as being in Alton) and came to inspect it in March 1907. The property was transferred to the newly formed 'Lord Mayor Treloar's Cripples' Home and College' Trust and the premises made ready, receiving the first children in September 1908.

The Trust acquired a site at Hayling Island and in 1919, Sir William laid the foundation stone for the Seaside Branch of the Hospital.

The Hospital and College continued until 1948 when the newly formed National Health Service took over the Hospital and the College then moved to a new site at the nearby village of Froyle. The Hospital was renamed the 'Lord Mayor Treloar Orthopaedic Hospital' and it served the Wessex Region for many years, taking both adults and children. Sadly, the future of the Hospital became uncertain and, despite a valiant fight, it was closed.

The story of the Hospital and College can be found in *The Lord Mayor Treloar Hospital and College* by GSE Moynihan, Paul Cave Publications, 1988. *Treloar's - One Hundred Years of Education* by Jane Hurst was produced in 2008 by Phillimore

### RED CROSS HOSPITAL, ASSEMBLY ROOMS

A Red Cross Hospital was opened in Alton Assembly Rooms on 30 October 1914, with 50 beds – the number later increased to 84 beds. British patients were received from the Cambridge and Connaught Hospitals in Aldershot, and wounded Belgian soldiers were also nursed here. The Hospital was closed on 31 December 1918 having treated thousands of men.

### ALTON GENERAL HOSPITAL

Charlie Hawkins described this hospital in his book *The Story of Alton*:-





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*On Wednesday, October 26th 1927, the Alton Board of Guardians opened a new Infirmary in Anstey Road between the Old Workhouse and Eggar's School.*

*'Prior to the outbreak of the Second Great War an emergency hospital consisting of four wards was built, on unoccupied ground surrounding the new infirmary, by the Ministry of Health, and was occupied in the first place by patients from Southampton and Portsmouth. Subsequently this hospital was handed over to the Canadian Army together with the old workhouse, and after the war was restored for public use until coming under the control of the National Health Service.*

*'Inwood Cottage Hospital continued until 1951 when, the Emergency Hospital and the former Poor Law Institution buildings becoming established under the National Health Service as a General Hospital, the Cottage Hospital was closed as a hospital and used to provide living quarters for nurses and a training hospital.'*

When the Lord Mayor Treloar Hospital became the principal hospital in the town, Alton General mainly housed the Maternity Unit, the Out-Patients Department and the elderly. Gradually these were transferred elsewhere and the General was demolished.

### **MORLAND HALL/GAUVAIN HOSPITAL**

In 1869, Frederick Crowley, a member of the brewing family, started to build his new house on fields to the south of King's Pond. The house was called Ashdell. After Frederick died in 1910 the house was sold to Guy Ferrand who changed the name to Morland Hall. The estate passed to Mrs Gladys Ryder Cobb, who put it up for auction in 1923.

The next owner was Sir Henry Gauvain, the Medical Superintendent of the Lord Mayor Treloar Hospital. After joining the hospital in 1908, Sir Henry had become a pioneer in the treatment of children with tuberculosis of the bones or joints in this country, writing numerous papers on surgical tuberculosis, hospital design, and heliotherapy.

In 1925, Sir Henry opened a clinic for private patients at Morland Hall and it was here that he died in January 1945. The premises were later acquired by the National Health Service and the name changed to the Henry Gauvain Hospital. In July 1958, together with Alton General Hospital and the Lord Mayor Treloar Orthopaedic Hospital, it came under the Alton Group Management Committee and it was they who offered all the furniture and other contents for sale in March 1964. The site is now the Ashdell housing development.