

NELSON MENTAL HOSPITAL.

18th June, 1907.—I visited this Mental Hospital on the 15th, 16th, and 17th instant, and this morning. The changes in the population since the statistics were sent in for the annual report are as follows :—

	Males.	Females.	Totals.
Resident on 1st January, 1907	88	57	145
On probation on 1st January, 1907	3	2	5
On register on 1st January, 1907	91	59	150
Admitted since 1st January, 1907	4	4	8
Total under care	95	63	158
	Males.	Females.	Totals.
Discharged recovered	2	3	5
Discharged unrecovered	0	1	1
Died	2	0	2
Totals discharged and died	—	—	—
On register on 18th June, 1907	91	59	150
On probation on 18th June, 1907	3	1	4
Resident on 18th June, 1907	88	58	146

At the end of six months there is only one additional patient, which is very satisfactory. The following require special attention, for the reasons assigned :—

	Males.	Females.	Totals.
Liable to be wet and dirty	17	10	27
Wet and dirty at date	5	5	10
Epileptics	7	3	10
General paralytics	2	0	2
Suspected to be suicidal	3	3	6

The nursing staff (not including those whose principal duty is not with the patients) consists of ten attendants and seven nurses, of whom seven attendants and five nurses are on day duty, one each on night duty, and two attendants and one nurse are required to relieve for holidays. This makes the proportion of the effective day staff for attendants 1 to 12·5, and for nurses 1 to 11·6 patients.

The following is a copy of the staff diet-sheet for the week ended on the 15th instant :—

—	Breakfast.	Dinner.	Tea.
Sunday ...	Sausages	Roast beef, potatoes, celery, apple pie	Cake and jam.
Monday ...	Chops	Corned beef, potatoes, parsnips, rice custard	Cold meat when required.
Tuesday ...	Corned beef and pickles	Roast mutton, potatoes, cabbage, roly-poly.	
Wednesday	Curry	Fried fish, potatoes, sago pudding.	
Thursday ...	Beef stew	Roast beef, potatoes, turnips, jam tart	Scones.
Friday ...	Bacon and potatoes	Roast beef, potatoes, leeks, stewed pears	
Saturday ...	Haricot	Roast mutton, potatoes, turnips, blanc-mange.	

The staff are apparently satisfied, and are looking well. The night attendant thought he was not treated as fairly in the matter of holidays as the night attendants were at Seacliff, and wrote about the matter some time ago. I saw him, and was able to point out that it was not possible for all hospitals to be worked on identical lines, on account of local considerations, and that therefore the night staff at Seacliff worked longer hours and had longer holidays in consequence, that the same average was arrived at, and that there was only the difference of one minute per night between Seacliff and Nelson when holidays were deducted, and the working-hours were spread over the year. The health of the patients is good, and I am glad to note Dr. Mackay's interest in their welfare. No one was confined to bed during the day visits, and the majority were usefully employed.

The entries in the register of restraint referred to one patient. This is a very destructive woman, whose hands are secured to a canvas belt for a half-hour at breakfast-time, and a half-hour at dinner-time—that is, when in the press of work nurses cannot be spared to sit by her. I sanctioned the proceeding as a just compromise, because it would be unreasonable to add two nurses to the staff to obviate one hour's restraint in divided periods. The clothing of the patients is suitable, and the bedding is abundant. On a night round the patients were asked if they wanted more blankets, and declared themselves comfortable. All the patients were seen and conversed with, and many spontaneous acknowledgments were made of kindness received from Mr. Chapman and the staff. An epileptic patient, whose friends hesitated long before sending her, informed me that she actually felt that she had more freedom than at home, and that she was not nearly so apprehensive of coming to some mischief, because she had every confidence that she would be looked after. I may here parenthetically state that such spontaneous testimonies are