

Book Reviews

elucidation. The second part is a useful study in brief of the hospitals of the South West of England, and as such is concerned with matters of record. However, the volume as a whole provides a valuable updating of our knowledge of medieval hospitals.

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E J Dennison, *A cottage hospital grows up: the story of the Queen Victoria Hospital, East Grinstead*, 2nd rev. ed., London, Baxendale Press, 1996, pp. 304, illus., £15.00 (0-9520-933-91).

E J Dennison was a GP at the Queen Victoria Hospital from 1938 to 1977 and is similarly devoted to its history. This updated version of his book, first published in 1963, provides an institutional account of an unusual hospital with several histories. A cottage hospital existed at East Grinstead from 1863 to 1874. From 1888 a new hospital developed, via two relocations, into a modest 36 bed facility serving a local population of nearly 30,000 by 1939. The account is complemented with a photographic record, a succinct survey of early English cottage hospitals and examples from the 1863–4 hospital casebook. Donations of land, buildings and equipment are dutifully recorded, as is the early involvement of “workingmen’s organizations” in this part of England, and a strong sense of community effort is conveyed.

In September 1939 the Ministry of Health designated the hospital one of three national Maxillo-Facial Units for war casualties, initially RAF and Allied pilots. A specialist medical staff and temporary accommodation was provided, and Ministry funding and grants from the Canadian Government and British War Relief Society of America transformed the hospital into a 200 bed institution. This combination of a national centre for plastic surgery and jaw injuries with a local general hospital, each with their respective medical staffs, was maintained after the war. Little is

said of any consequent internal tensions, though relations with external authorities were occasionally strained. Thus there was some distancing from the voluntarist British Hospitals Association over Sussex regional funding, followed by a protracted argument with the NHS Regional Board over the use of moneys raised locally, largely before 1948, for a children’s ward.

Dennison offers new post-1963 material in a “non-political” light, but conveys the loss of local control and increasing anxiety for the hospital’s future during successive NHS reorganizations. The securing of Independent Trust status in October 1993 is presented as a lifeline which restored local initiative and was critical to the retention of facilities, with the hospital cast as “market leader” in regional services in the ubiquitous mission statement.

This is a valuable account, subject to three main criticisms. Detail on medical and other staffs contrasts with little information on local patients and their experience of the hospital. Comment on specialist-GP relations, given the unusual nature of the hospital and the author’s direct experiences, could have illuminated a recurring theme in medical history. Finally, although the expressed hopes for an assured future for the hospital are fully understood, indications of any price paid to date or some personal assessment by the author would surely not be inappropriate.

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Dorothy Atkinson, Mark Jackson and Jan Walmsley (eds), *Forgotten lives: exploring the history of learning disability*, Kidderminster, British Institute of Learning Disabilities, 1997, pp. xii, 144, illus., £18.95 (+£1.00 p&p) (paperback 1-87391-84-4). Distributed worldwide by: Plymbridge Distributors Ltd, Estover House, Plymouth, UK, OL6 7PZ.

The ten chapters in this book are based mainly on the contributions, by a multidisciplinary group of people, to the Open University seminar on the Social History of