

BEXLEY HOSPITAL



Corner of Nurses' Home

DARTFORD HEATH
BEXLEY
KENT

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FOREWORD

This booklet has been produced with the object of giving potential recruits to the nursing profession some indication of work and life in a large and progressive mental hospital today. If it helps to dispel the far too prevalent impression that the modern mental hospital is a gloomy institution where the hopelessly insane are shut away from the world – and thereby encourages recruits to a service which provides deep and lasting personal satisfaction – then it will have achieved its purpose. Some two-thirds of new patients are admitted of their own free will for some specific course of treatment and the great majority are discharged after a few weeks or months in a recovered or greatly improved condition.

For those whose illness is of a more chronic type, there is much in the way of occupational and recreational treatment that can now be done, and this adds enormously to the interest of the nursing. But like most worthwhile jobs, mental nursing is not an easy task. Neither, for that matter, is it a dangerous and depressing occupation to be undertaken only by the strongest and least sensitive of women.

It is a profession which calls for the same devotion, care and skill in the treatment of sickness of the mind, as a general hospital displays in the care of the diseases of the body. It provides too, an interesting and profitable career in a progressive service where research and constantly improving medical knowledge must be allied to a skilled and devoted nursing staff, if progress is to be maintained.

THE HOSPITAL : Bexley Hospital, Dartford Heath, Bexley, Kent, is a Hospital of 2,300 beds for the treatment of all types of mental and nervous disorders. Its patients are drawn from the local districts and from South East London. Most of the patients treated at the hospital nowadays are those referred from out-patient clinics in general hospitals, which are organised and staffed by our hospital consultant medical staff.

The hospital is situated in a very pleasant country district in North West Kent, and while it is on the fringe of London (35 minutes by rail from the West End), it is within easy reach of some of the loveliest districts in Kent. The buildings are set in beautiful wooded grounds, which cover over 100 acres. Altogether the hospital is fortunate in being conveniently situated in relation to the populated centres – the local bus service to Bexley and Dartford passes the hospital gates – yet at the same time it is able to retain the rural charm of the Kentish countryside.

Bexley has good reason to be proud of its traditionally friendly atmosphere and although its buildings cover many acres it has nevertheless succeeded in retaining a compact and happy unity which the Management Committee are naturally anxious to retain and foster.

TRAINING : During training the student nurse is paid a rising scale of allowances, and on passing her final nursing examination, which is possible at any time after 3 years service (2 years in the case of a general trained nurse), she is graded as a staff nurse.

Students have a special course of two months in a preliminary training school and are coached throughout by qualified tutorial and medical staff. The nurse may, after obtaining her certificate in mental nursing, be given leave to take her general nursing training, covering a reduced period of 2 years. The Management Committee of the hospital are anxious that suitable nurses should be encouraged to take a qualification in both general and mental nursing – for it is in this way that potential candidates for higher mental nursing posts are assured - and in consequence of this policy, a qualified mental nurse may be granted her staff nurse pay when she takes her training as a probationer in a general hospital, and thus suffers no financial loss.

All training is, of course, free and all lectures are given in duty hours.

UNIFORM : In consultation with the nursing staff a new and attractive uniform has been designed. Uniform is, of course, provided and laundered free of charge.

HOURS OF DUTY : Duty hours are arranged on the basis of a 48 hour week with a complete day off duty every week .

ANNUAL LEAVE : All nurses are given twenty-eight days leave with pay.

ACCOMMODATION : The hospital is fortunate in possessing a modern and attractive Nurses' Home in the grounds. Each nurse is provided with a separate bedroom and it is the aim of the hospital authorities to make the nurses' accommodation as homely and comfortable as possible. Comfortable sitting rooms are provided with radio and piano, and laundry and ironing facilities are available in the Home so that the nurses may, if they choose, launder their personal clothing. Kitchens, too, are provided in the Home, where nurses may make hot drinks.



Demonstration to students

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A Student Nurse's Bedroom



Nurses' Sitting Room

The hospital also possesses a modern hairdressing saloon which is under the supervision of a qualified ladies' hairdresser, and a well-stocked canteen for the sale of sweets, cigarettes, sundries etc. Nurses have their own dining room where they are waited on at meal times by the hospital domestic staff. The food provided in the hospital is as excellent as circumstances permit and every effort is made by our qualified catering staff to ensure that the meals are as attractive and varied as possible.

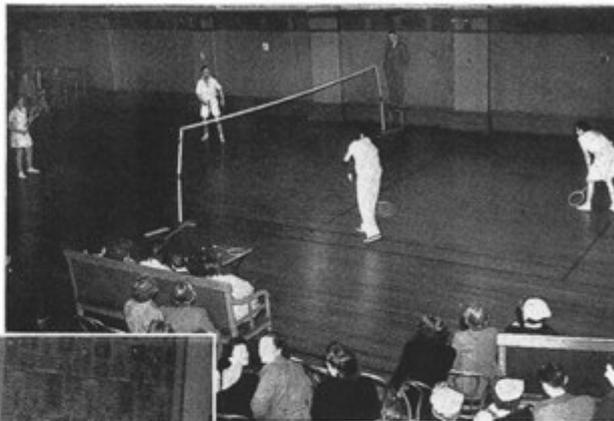
RELIGIOUS SERVICES : The hospital has its own chapel within the grounds where Church of England, Non-Conformist and Roman Catholic services are held. Ministers of Religion in all three denominations attend the hospital regularly.

RECREATIONAL AND SOCIAL FACILITIES : Bexley is extremely well served in these respects. It possesses four tennis courts and a first class sports field where hockey, football, cricket and athletics can be carried on. The hospital is justifiably proud of its sporting record and teams are regularly entered in inter-hospital competitions and leagues. Inter-hospital games are also made the occasions of friendly socials and dances where nurses can mix in happy and congenial circumstances with their colleagues from other hospitals.

There is a very active Sports and Social Club at the hospital and badminton and table tennis matches, dances, socials and whist drives are held frequently.

PAY AND PROSPECTS : These have been improved very much for the nursing profession in recent years – particularly since the inception of the national Health Service – and Nursing can no longer be regarded as an overworked and underpaid profession, for the pay now stands favourable comparison with that of any other industrial or professional field.

Student nurses in training receive £230 for their first year; £240 for their second year and £255 for their third year. A deduction at the rate of £100 a year is made for board, lodging, uniform, laundry, etc. In addition, nurses can qualify for 10/- a week allowance for an adult dependent. Proficiency allowances, too, are payable to student nurses, who receive a lump sum payment of £20 after 2 years training on passing the preliminary nursing examination and a further £30 after 3 years training on passing the final examination. Nurses who qualify by passing the examination are automatically graded as Staff Nurses and immediately enter a scale commencing at £335 per year, rising to a maximum of £435 per year.



A Badminton Match



A break for Tea

Promotion prospects for the mental nurse are exceedingly good, particularly for the nurse who obtains both her mental and general nursing qualifications, and after qualification the trained nurse can look forward confidently to a career offering great opportunity for advancement.

SUPERANNUATION : From the onset of training, nurses over 18 are able to participate in the comprehensive Health Service Superannuation Scheme which carries a wide range of benefits. Retirement with a good pension and lump sum is possible at age 55 and Mental Nurses have the considerable advantage of being able to count double all contributory years of service in excess of 20. This ensures a maximum pension at the earliest possible retiring age. Contribution is at the rate of 6 per cent of remuneration and this is returnable with compound interest if the nurse leaves the nursing service.

If you are interested in becoming a nurse at Bexley Hospital will you please write to the matron who will gladly give you any further details you may require

Remember

- Salaries for mental nurses are amongst the highest paid in the nursing profession
- Generous scales of allowances enable student nurses to be self-supporting during training
- Plenty of off duty time and well organised social activities, including dances, concerts and outdoor sports
- Four weeks holiday with pay
- Nurses accepted for training at any age between 18 and 40
- Opportunity for an interesting and profitable career which is of great service to the community
- Every encouragement to reach the top of the profession
- First rate superannuation scheme

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