

My Memories of Bexley Hospital By Lew Gagen

Hi, my name is Lew and I wish to submit a few memories of my early days at Bexley.

I first went to the hospital just before I was 18yrs - having been a seaman in the Merchant navy till that time and then waiting to be called up for National Service.

My uncle, Les Neate, suggested I seek a temporary post at the hospital till my call-up, and I was employed in the O.T department, under the friendly supervision of none other than the lovely Miss Dawson-Jones.

I became interested in mental health as a subject from that time, applied and was accepted to become a student nurse and was deferred from National Service to undergo RMN training. I went into the PTS early 1954, took my first year prelims' a year later (Tutors were Kate Forman and Mick Saunders) and then decided to get my national service out of the way - and joined the RAF for nurse training. That 'farce' is another story!

In those very early days (compared to most of you I think?) I was to see patient care before the days of modern psychotropic drugs; where ECT was given without muscle relaxants and with the patient conscious from the start - requiring four strong nurses to hold the patient safely down to the bed; where deep insulin therapy was one of the few treatments of choice for some schizophrenic patients; and where the side rooms for Mosquito fever therapy with their netted windows (to prevent the mosquito escaping presumably) were still in place on the wards - though I never saw their use!

I returned to Bexley in January 1958 after demob', to find Largactil and Reserpine (Serpasil), the original antipsychotics being used - alongside Disipal, the original anticholergenic! (or so I believe) Wow! the changes were absolutely 'electric' to my eyes.....another story perhaps for another day.

I completed my psychiatric training and graduated in 1960 - still under the tutorage of those two wonderful tutors, Kate and Mike! We were a greatly loyal student group I recall - yet I can no longer remember any of their names, that is sad! I wonder who may remember our tutors - and know of their whereabouts?

I know Mike Saunders went to Bermuda to teach! Anyone remember me either - any left, still living? I am now 70, and just retired from psychiatric social work...! My closest friends included: Idris Griffiths (sadly deceased), Gordon Jones, Dewi Rees, Will Fisher, Eddie Thomas, Eirllys Benbough (my dear Bimbo) and Bob Carter.

Tarra nurses all! Shout if you remember.....!!

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