

REPORT

ON

THE LUNATIC ASYLUMS IN THE COLONY.

PRESENTED TO BOTH HOUSES OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, BY COMMAND OF
HIS EXCELLENCY.

WELLINGTON.

—
1872.

REPORT ON THE LUNATIC ASYLUMS IN THE COLONY.

PROVINCE OF CANTERBURY.

No. 12.

Mr. HARMAN to the Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY.

SIR,— Superintendent's Office, Christchurch, 1st August, 1872.
I have the honor herewith to forward a report, by the Inspector of the Sunnyside Lunatic Asylum, of an inspection made by him on the 30th ultimo.

I have, &c.,

R. J. S. HARMAN,

Deputy Superintendent.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary.

Enclosure in No. 12.

Mr. J. W. HAMILTON to the Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY.

(No. 21.)

SIR,— Lunatic Asylum Department, Christchurch, 30th July, 1872.

I have the honor to report that I inspected "Sunnyside" Lunatic Asylum to-day, according to the directions of "The Lunatics Act, 1868." These directions were in every point strictly complied with.

All the books were closely written up to date, except the "Medical Case Book," (clause 25) in arrear since 20th May, after which date nine patients had been admitted. The medical officer's attention was called to this omission. Out of 112 patients (viz., males 74, females 38), one was under seclusion.

Allowing for the disorder and disarrangement incidental to a general half-yearly whitewashing and distemping of the inside of the building, I found everything in its usual satisfactory condition. About 60 out of the whole number of 112 patients were and are regularly pretty fully employed about the premises. They were mostly assisting in the work of cleaning and general scouring then going on.

The photographing room was being made tenantable, as recommended at my last visit. In my report to you of 17th January last, I gave reasons why, on public grounds, it is desirable to take photographs of patients. The chemicals for this work have hitherto been provided by the keeper out of his private funds. He has found the cost too heavy for him, and I recommend that the Provincial Government should in future defray it, so that the photographing may be resumed.

A proper drying ground, with posts and lines or wires, is required for the wash-clothes. They are now hung out on bushes close to or in view of the drive up to the front of the asylum, and are neither neat nor sightly objects, besides which they injure the trees they are hung on.

A poultry yard on the eastern approach to the building would be better moved away, out of sight from the front, to where the prevailing north-east winds will not drive the smell of it towards the asylum.

When the shrubberies and flower plots are put into good order this spring, no poultry or pigs ought to be allowed to wander about loose at the risk of injuring the borders and destroying all neatness of appearance. Many of the shrubs or trees appear to have been nipped by horses or cattle, and are consequently not flourishing, nor do they look sightly. I would recommend the fencing of the ground off into convenient sized enclosures, immediately about the main building, so as to utilize the keep as much as possible, while preserving neatness of appearance.

The four new attendants' cottages require, for appearance sake, a small enclosing fence and a little plot of garden round them.

In addition to the fire tanks about to be erected, I would recommend the erection of four tanks at the corners and on the level of the upper sleeping wards, to catch the rain-water off the iron roofs, and so as to save the labour of carrying water upstairs for so many persons for washing. I think the fire tanks should be utilized also for supplying water on both upper and lower floors, for ordinary daily use.

The walls of the new building are now finished to the full height all round. It is to be hoped that when the rooms in it are ready for occupation, some separate space will be provided for "curative treatment" of habitual drunkards. As this treatment has succeeded in thoroughly reclaiming more than one patient, it will be a great pity to be obliged, as at present, to refuse admission to this class of patients, especially where they are likely to be orderly and well conducted, and do not belong to the order of irreclaimable blackguards.

The sleeping wards for males are still greatly overcrowded, beds having to be made up on the floor.

REPORT ON THE LUNATIC

A vote having been passed by the Provincial Council for the erection of a telegraph wire to the Christchurch Fire Brigade and Police Stations, I venture to urge on the General Government to order their officers here to put this work in hand as promptly as possible.

I have, &c.,
J. W. HAMILTON,
Inspector, "Sunnyside" Lunatic Asylum.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Wellington.

No. 13.

Mr. HARMAN to the Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY.

SIR,—

Superintendent's Office, Christchurch, 23rd August, 1872.

I have the honor to forward herewith a report by the Inspector of the Sunnyside Lunatic Asylum, of an inspection made by him on the 20th instant.

I have, &c.,
R. J. S. HARMAN,
Deputy Superintendent.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary.

Enclosure in No. 13.

Mr. J. W. HAMILTON to the Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY.

(No. 23.)

SIR,—

Christchurch, 20th August, 1872.

I have the honor to report that I inspected "Sunnyside" Lunatic Asylum this day, complying in every respect with the directions of "The Lunatics Act, 1868."

1. The books were found all closely written up to date, including the "Case Book" (clause 25), which, on my last inspection, I had noticed was a good deal in arrear.

2. The number of patients was: Males, 76; females, 39; in all, 115. None were under restraint. One, a female patient, was under seclusion.

3. The keeper being absent at the Resident Magistrate's Court, the Clerk accompanied me through the premises. I found everything about the building in its usual neat and satisfactory condition; the patients looking well cared-for, healthy, and very cleanly. The food being served up for the mid-day meal was abundant, wholesome, and well cooked.

4. The cook's room, and store adjoining, seem damp and unwholesome since the stove has been removed, the floor being close to the ground. This part of the building requires attention: it is old, and seems likely to rot away near the ground plate.

5. The poultry yard near the eastern and front part of the building ought to be removed, before the summer heat begins, to a position at the back, where, in the only three prevailing winds, N.E., N.W., and S.W., the smell will be blown clear of the asylum.

6. One room (in the cottage known as Mr. Stowe's) and occupied by the convalescents, was unlike every other part of the buildings, being in a slovenly and unpresentable condition, and not very cleanly. I would advise that these patients be warned that unless they undertake to keep their own room in a better state, they will be removed back to the wards they last occupied. This cottage is at a considerable distance from the main building, and requires the addition of a closet close by.

7. A ditch near the entrance gate, within two yards of one of the new attendant's cottages, ought to be at once filled up. It contains stagnant water, the drainage from the washing-house, and is immediately to windward of the cottage during the nine months of prevailing north-east winds. There is serious risk that the stench which the hot sun of spring and summer will draw up from this ditch, may breed disease in the attendant's family. There seems to be no outlet for the water to drain away, and it was only dug out originally for a fence to the kitchen garden. The drainage from the washing-house could easily be taken off in another direction, away from any of the dwelling-houses.

8. A fire-proof safe seems to me to be much needed for custody of the register and orders of admission and discharge. There are patients still alive who are among the very earliest entered on the register some twelve or fifteen years ago. The only legal evidence the keeper has of his right to detain these patients, and his only protection against any frivolous action for false imprisonment or for trespass, would be destroyed in the event of a fire occurring. I think the records of every Lunatic Asylum ought not to be without this protection. It seems to me as much required on account of the persons confined there as of the keeper and the attendants; and it might become a matter of great importance in the event of any serious abuse requiring to be inquired into.

9. I found one patient (No. 373, admitted about three weeks ago, and shortly after my last inspection,) of whom there seemed fair reason to doubt whether he ought to have been sent to the Asylum; or, at all events, whether he ought to be detained there at all instead of being left in care of his friends. This patient's mind seemed to me to be in a perfectly sound state, except on religious topics, on which he seemed to be exaggeratedly but harmlessly enthusiastic. I have instituted special inquiry respecting him.

10. I noted that patient No. 369, a female, admitted 5th July, by order of the Resident Magistrate, had been discharged 22nd July, in virtue only of an indorsement of consent on the order signed by the Deputy Superintendent. The discharge did not purport to be made by the committing Magistrate. Clause 71 of the Act (page 82) seems to leave no room for misapprehension as to the necessity for the discharge being given in writing by whoever signs the order under which the patient is received, the previous consent of the Colonial Secretary being given in writing. In the present instance, the Deputy Superintendent gave such consent under delegation. I have drawn attention to the omission, which happens not to be of much consequence on this occasion, as the patient had only three days ago been sent back to the asylum as again unfit to be at large.

If I am in error in my reading of the Acts, may I ask you to be good enough to have me advised.

11. One patient, No. 374, was admitted on the 14th instant for curative treatment as an habitual drunkard. As he conducts himself very properly, I have not the same objections to urge against his remaining, as it was absolutely necessary to make in reference to a previous patient of this class, who has been got rid of.

12. I would particularly urge that there should be (at once, before the season for gardening is past) a small garden plot laid off round each attendant's cottage, and fenced in.

I have, &c.,

J. W. HAMILTON,

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Wellington.

Inspector, "Sunnyside" Lunatic Asylum.

No. 14.

Mr. HARMAN to the Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY.

Superintendent's Office,

Christchurch, 24th September, 1872.

SIR,—

I have the honor to forward herewith a Report by the Inspector of the Sunnyside Lunatic Asylum of an inspection made by him on the 18th instant.

I have, &c.,

R. J. S. HARMAN,

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary.

Deputy Superintendent of Canterbury.

Enclosure in No. 14.

Mr. HAMILTON to the Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY.

(No. 24.)

SIR,— Christchurch, 18th September, 1872.

I have the honor to report that I inspected Sunnyside Lunatic Asylum this day, in accordance with the directions of "The Lunatics Act, 1868."

1. All the books were closely written up, and in proper order.
2. The number of patients was 114—viz., males, 76; females, 38. One female patient was under seclusion; none under restraint.
3. I found everything in its customary state of good order and cleanliness.
4. The inquiries I had made at Rangiora respecting patient 373, alluded to in paragraph 9 of my last Report (No. 23, August 20), have satisfied me that he requires to be treated at the Asylum.
5. Patient 374, under "curative treatment" as an "habitual drunkard," continues to conduct himself so as to remove all the objections which have been raised to allowing, as a general rule, this class of patient to remain in the Asylum while it is not roomy enough for special classification of patients.
6. A safe has been provided, as recommended by me, for protection of the Registers and other important papers against damage by fire.
7. The poultry yard near the eastern front of the Asylum requires still to be removed to the back, so that the prevailing N.E. winds shall not, as at present, drive the smell from it directly on to the wards.
8. The ditch running alongside the attendant's cottage, near the gateway, and containing unwholesome stagnant water and drainage from the laundry, has yet to be filled up as recommended in my last Report (paragraph 7).
9. The convalescents' cottage I found, on this visit, in a thorough state of neatness and cleanliness.
10. I would again urge that the new attendants' cottages should all be fenced round neatly, and a garden plot laid off for each.
11. The attendant's cottage at the S.E. angle of the Asylum is the only one that faces the full heat of the noonday sun and is without the protection of a verandah. One ought to be added before the summer heats become excessive.
12. The photographing room is now repaired and in good working order. A camera has been secured for taking portraits instantaneously. The advantages of this over the ordinary camera are, that it saves much trouble, a better likeness is procured, and none of the patients are alarmed at the apparatus required. Many were under apprehension that some harm was intended to be done to them with the ordinary apparatus; as for instance, that they were going to be shot at with it.

In my Report of 17th January last (page 8) I recommended the general use of photographing in all Asylums, as a means, far superior to any written description, by which patients can be identified by friends at home.

In one instance, the small outlay at Sunnyside has been highly reproductive in bringing in a guarantee of £25 per annum maintenance money from a gentleman in England, who was enabled by the photograph sent him to identify as his brother a patient whose written description was insufficient, and who was being maintained entirely at the public expense.

13. I beg again to urge on the Government the necessity for at once connecting the Asylum with the Police Depot and Fire Brigade Office by telegraph, and allowing the poles already erected along the Lincoln Road for the Akaroa line to be used for the short one of about two miles now recommended. I am informed that the Telegraph Department have objected to this wire being run along the Akaroa poles, on the very ridiculous and absurd ground that this will be a "private line!" The Lunatic Asylum is a public institution, built with the public funds, under the control of a branch of the Government of the Colony, existing in virtue of a public Act of the General Assembly, and placed under the

inspection of an officer of the Colony. The reasoning that could make out that a telegraph line to such an institution—whose sole *raison d'être* arises out of a great public necessity—can have anything about it in the nature of a “private line,” is only worthy of a “Circumlocution” office. The Provincial Governments are branches of the Government of the Colony.

I have learnt to-day from the Provincial Secretary that the local Government will be prepared to guarantee the cost of this telegraph line above the £80 voted for it in the last Session of the Provincial Council.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary,
Wellington.

I have, &c.,
J. W. HAMILTON,
Inspector, Sunnyside Lunatic Asylum.
