

## **The Patient Index for the North Wales Hospital, Denbigh**

### **What are reception orders?**

Patient reception orders provided evidence that the patient was 'certified insane' and they included personal information as well as details of the patient's symptoms prior to admission. The reception order is the first record of the patient's time at the hospital and can be used alongside other records such as case notes to discover more about the patient's care.

### **The Project**

The aim of this project was to create an alphabetical patient index for the North Wales Hospital (Denbigh Asylum) to enable researchers to search for patients online. Reception orders are bundled in chronological sequence and we have never before been able to search the collection by name. This database now allows us to search surviving records for patients admitted between 1848 and 1914 by name and easily identify if a patient had multiple admissions to the hospital.

The patient index for the North Wales Hospital has been completed thanks to the work of dedicated volunteers listing the patient reception orders dated between 1848 and 1914. This project has taken two years to complete (2013-2014) and has involved over 15 volunteers looking at over 8000 records to create a database of basic information which include patient name, admission date, age on admission, date of discharge or death, occupation and union (i.e. the union paying for their treatment) or address in the case of private patients. The reception order contains much more information about the patient which was not within the scope of this project including the observations made by a medical practitioner and often observations by a family member.

Due to NHS rules, hospital records are closed to public inspection for 100 years. We plan to add to the database annually as records become available.

The information was recorded in two stages. Firstly, a group of volunteers worked from the original paper records entering handwritten details into a printed template. Secondly, individual volunteers worked from the completed template into a spreadsheet.

### **Omissions and gaps in the records**

We were aware that some reception orders were missing before the project began and can confirm that 228 out of 8373 records are missing from the series up to December 1914 (2.72%). It is unclear why these records did not get transferred to the archives; some may simply have been lost or the paperwork may have been transferred with the patient to other asylums across the country.

Some information may be unavailable in the spreadsheet due to a number of reasons-

- i. The original reception order may not contain the information because it was not known at the time it was completed. For example, the patient themselves may not have known their exact ages, or the spelling of an unusual name may have been unclear.
- ii. The original reception order may be illegible. For example in some cases it is difficult to differentiate between a number 3 and 5.

Although care was taken to avoid any mistakes being made, there may inevitably be some mistakes such as typing or transcription errors. We would strongly recommend consulting the original record either by requesting a copy or visiting our searchroom to confirm that all details are correct.

### **What to do if you find a record of interest**

If you find a record and would like to see the original reception order, we suggest that you contact us to arrange to visit the office in Ruthin.

If you cannot visit the office in person we can provide you with a copy of the reception order and check the records to see if there are any surviving case notes for the patient.

### **How much does it cost to order a copy of a reception order?**

There is a flat fee of £10.00 for a copy of a reception order which can be supplied by post or email. This fee includes a search for any surviving case notes. Copies of case notes can be provided at an additional cost.

You will need to read, complete and return our copying order form to place your order. Payments can be made by cheque (payable to Denbighshire County Council) or by card over the telephone.