



Gorse Hill Isolation Hospital - Scarlet Ward

Gorsehill Isolation Hospital

Gorse Hill Isolation Hospital was designed by the architect H. J. Hamp and was built in 1892 as a joint project by Swindon Local Boards and Highworth District Council at a cost of £4,500. The hospital opened on 12th February 1893 and replaced the old "Pest House for infectious diseases" which was built in Old Town during the 1800s. Five Scarlett fever deaths were reported for 1893, by Health officers and appear in *Swindon Advertiser 24-11-1894*. Hospital staff included a Matron, Charge Nurses, Assistant Nurses and Probationers, who worked for the board for a two-year period. The Hospital, which was taken over by Swindon Corporation in 1900 and expanded, had an isolation block that could accommodate up to 12 patients suffering from diphtheria and typhoid, diseases that often erupted into epidemics and were related to the poor living conditions of the 19th century. At the beginning of the 1900's W. H. Kinneir was clerk.

Tenders to supply Coal & Coke to Fever & Smallpox Hospitals, Gorse Hill, and Hyde Farm House from 30th June, estimated at 50 tons. *Swindon Advertiser 21-02-1902*.

Tenders for food suppliers – *Swindon Advertiser 12-09-1902*.

Tenders to supply Coal & Coke to Fever & Isolation Hospitals, Gorse Hill, and Hyde Farm House up to 31st March 1903, estimated at 50 tons. *Swindon Advertiser 12-09-1902*.

For a period of around 12 months, 1902-1903, Hyde Farm was used as an overspill building. *Swindon Advertiser 24-07-1903*

Fire at the new laundry building last Wednesday. The night-watchman, Mr Farmer, saved further damage by turning off the boiler. The boiler room was completely destroyed but rest of building was saved although much damaged. *Swindon Advertiser 16-01-1903*.

Advert for Man & Wife as Caretakers, wages £1 per week with house, firing and garden. *Swindon Advertiser 04-09-1903*.

In 1928 it contained wards for Scarlet Fever, Typhoid and Small pox. Disinfecting ovens, laundry and mortuary were provided.

Contaminated drinking water was a big problem throughout the country at this time and a cause of spreading infectious diseases. In 1936 the Isolation hospital served the Borough of Swindon and the rural districts of Highworth, Cricklade and Wootton Bassett, but also took patients from other parts of the country when accommodation for infectious diseases became overstrained.

The hospital grounds included an Administration block for staff, a discharge block, stores, steam laundry and a mortuary. A medical report written by the Medical Superintendent, F. E. Streeton, states that there were 36 beds at the hospital for treating patients with Scarlet Fever, a disease widely known as the scourge of the 19th century which killed thousands of people across the country. The disease caused devastating pandemics and many people died.

Children who caught Scarlet Fever often had their bed linen and toys burned for fear of spreading the infection and were kept in Isolation Hospitals for weeks. The disease, which is named after the bright red rash that occurs in sufferers, often resulted in complications with patients suffering from secondary diseases such as pneumonia and rheumatic fever.

In 1947 they were advertising for staff for the 84-bed hospital, Ward Sister & Assistant Matron, Staff Nurses, Assistant Nurses. Salary and conditions in line with Rushcliffe Report. *The Citizen* 25/2/1977. (Still advertising until end of August)

The hospital was finally closed in 1966.

How many even realise that an Isolation Hospital was built there when they visit the Hawthorn Medical Centre, a busy doctors surgery in Cricklade Road, Gorse Hill and then pop into the nearby Hawthorn pharmacy for their medication?

Deaths

William Edward HILL, 2 years 3 months, on May 27th, youngest son of Allen Y Hill, 20 Cambria Place. *Swindon Advertiser* 05-06-1897.

Frederick Michael DAVIS. 4 years 3 months, on Oct 24th, son of Alfred & Helen Davis of the Police Station, Moredon. *Swindon Advertiser* 30-10-1897.

Frank REES, aged 4, only son of Francis Griffiths REES of 39 Clifton Street, Swindon. *Swindon Advertiser* 20-01-1899

Elizabeth Winifred STAGG, aged 8, forth daughter of George & Sarah Jane Stagg of 7 New Road, Marlborough. *Swindon Advertiser* 07-07-1899.

Charles Richard PADDON, aged 25, only son of Henry Paddon of 13 Hastings Terrace, Alfred Street, Swindon. *Swindon Advertiser* 03-11-1899

Emily Elizabeth WHEEL, daughter of Benjamin & Emily Wheel of 32 Cromby Street Swindon. *Swindon Advertiser* 11-10-1901.

Annie Elizabeth Maud APPLEFORD, aged 7 years, of 40 Farnsby Street, Swindon. *Swindon Advertiser* 15-11-1901.

Reginald Francis STRANGE, aged 2 years and 3 months, third son of Walter & Belinda Strange. *Swindon Advertiser* 06-12-1901.

Ernest HARRIS, aged 3 years 11 months, son of E & R Harris of 13 Dryden Street, Swindon. *Swindon Advertiser* 21-03-1902.

Daisy Burchell RICHARDSON, aged 10, eldest daughter of William. *Swindon Advertiser* 04-09-1903.

Charles Hartley NOAD aged 5, only child of Charles & Mary Jane of 12 Lorne Street, Swindon – *Swindon Advertiser* 26-08-1904.

Gladys May USHER. Aged 4½, of 144 Albion Street, Swindon. *Swindon Advertiser* 30-06-1905.

Maggie SINCLAIR, aged 18, fifth daughter of Peter of 16 Devizes Road, Swindon. *Swindon Advertiser* 07-07-1905.

Charles Cecil TITCOMBE aged 4 years 5 months, third son of John & Emily of 40 Clifton Street.

Edith Martha WHITEMAN, aged 5, youngest daughter of Farmer & Edith WHITEMAN, 12 Manchester Road, die of diphtheria. *Swindon Advertiser* 14-02-1908.

Frederick STONE, 15, eldest son of George Stone of 41 Linden Avenue, Rodbourne Cheney, died 05-02-1927. *North Wilts Herald* 11-02-1927.

Cecil Desmond BROOKMAN, 18y 11m, youngest son of Mr. & Mrs. W H Brookman of Hunter's Grove, Swindon, died 2nd Sept. *North Wilts Herald* 09-09-1927.

Emily BROOKMAN, 56, wife of W H Brookman of Hunter's Grove. *North Wilts Herald* 23-09-1927.

John Henry CRIPPS, 65, of 268 Cricklade Road, died 23-01-1928. *North Wilts Herald* 27-01-1928.

Charles DOWSE, 54, died March 27th. *North Wilts Herald* 05-04-1928.

Frederick Nichols THUMWOOD, 49, son of the late B H N Thumwood. Died 09-10-1930. *North Wilts Herald* 17-10-1930.

John RUDMAN, 29, of 74 Medgbury Road, died 17-11-1930. *North Wilts Herald* 21-11-1930.

Kathleen Beryl WARREN, 11, eldest child of Mr & Mrs Arthur Warren of 23 Groves Street, Swindon, died 16-10-1931. *North Wilts Herald 23-10-1931.*

William James HAWKES, 78, of 154 Kingsdown Road, buried Lower Stratton 01-09-1932.

Florence May STONE, (nee. TUCK), 29, daughter of George Thomas Tuck of 252 Cricklade Road and the late Mrs G T Tuck of Eaton Hastings. Died 21-09-1933 of bronchial pneumonia. *North Wilts Herald 23-06-1933.*

Ernest Leslie WELLS, 39, died 15-12-1933. *North Wilts Herald 22-12-1933.*

Thomas Henry SIMPKINS, 59, of 449 Ferndale Road, Swindon, died 30-12-1933. *North Wilts Herald 05-01-1934.*

Leslie George MORGAN, 27, youngest son of John & Anne of 33 Linslade Street, Swindon, died 09-01-1934. *North Wilts Herald 12-01-1934.*

Frederick Brian SNELL, 7, of 63 Swindon Road, buried at Lower Stratton 03-02-1934.

Robert Ansell BIRD, 35, of Swindon Road, buried at Lower Stratton 21-02-1934.

James WESTALL, 49, of 61 Dryden Street, Swindon, died 21-05-1934. *North Wilts Herald 25-05-1934.*

Francis ROLFE, 17, daughter of Mr & Mrs C Rolfe of 28 Radnor Road, Swindon. Died 17-09-1934. *North Wilts Herald 21-09-1934.*

Leonard HACKER, 4y 9m, son of Mr & Mrs Hacker, 272 Cricklade Road, died 19-10-1934. *North Wilts Herald 26-10-1934.*

Doreen BERRY, aged 5, daughter of Mr & Mrs J Berry of 174 County Road, Swindon. *North Wilts Herald 20-03-1936.*

Edward Robert CROOM, aged 33, on 5th Dec, husband of Blanch of Upper Liddington Wick, Coate. *North Wilts Herald 06-12-1940.*

Kenneth James HUFF aged 6 years and 10 months, son of Mr & Mrs A Huff, of 19 John Street. *North Wilts Herald 14-02-1941.*

As family were not allowed to visit bulletins were placed in local paper –

13 Aug 1937 – Today's bulletin – Vera DREWITT much the same, all other patients doing well.

24 Apr 1939 – Today's Bulletin – Mrs WELLS is improving, Christopher HABGOOD is much the same, all other patients doing well.

25 Apr 1939 – Today's Bulletin – Mrs HOBBS & Mrs WELLS, seriously ill, Christopher HABGOOD, much the same, all other patients doing well.