



Life in the Victorian Asylum: The World of Nineteenth Century Mental Health Care

Mark Stevens

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Life in the Victorian Asylum reconstructs the lost world of the nineteenth century public asylums. This fresh take on the history of mental health reveals why county asylums were built, the sort of people they housed and the treatments they received, as well as the enduring legacy of these remarkable institutions.

Mark Stevens, the best-selling author of *Broadmoor Revealed*, is a professional archivist and expert on asylum records. In this book, he delves into Victorian mental health archives to recreate the experience of entering an asylum and being treated there, perhaps for a lifetime.

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From Reader Review Life in the Victorian Asylum: The World of Nineteenth Century Mental Health Care for online ebook

Sarah says

Informative and interesting read in parts. Some parts of the book reminded me of my current job, as I work in a dementia care home. However, I became a little confused at times as to whether the book was aimed towards asylum employees or residents as it seemed to jump between the two. I got halfway and got bored with it. I tried to pursue it but I have just lost interest.

Joyce Barrass says

Sensitively and imaginatively written, backed up with solid facts from the asylum archives.

Trudy Boan says

really enjoyed. would recommend.

Sharon says

Was unable to finish this book, it just couldn't hold my intrest enough. Quite a interesting angle of telling the story of being a asylum patient though.

Brunilda says

Come rendere interessante un resoconto sui manicomi dell'eopoca vittoriana! Il libro descrive la struttura, le stanze, i pazienti, i trattamenti, il personale e la routine giornaliera di un ricovero per malati di mente verso la fine dell'Ottocento, quando di psichiatria ancora non si parlava. Il narratore si rivolge al lettore coinvolgendolo, come se questi fosse un potenziale paziente cui viene descritto cosa lo aspetterà nella struttura, arricchendo la narrazione grazie ad aneddoti tratti dalla vita - spesso infelice - di chi vi era davvero ricoverato.

Mandy says

An excellent look at mental health care during the Victorian period, very easy to read. Highly recommended, especially for those with an interest in medical history or Victoriana.

Ernie McCracken says

Fascinating. Well-written chronicle of a somewhat surreal, hidden away world.

Doghouse Gav says

Very interesting

Loved the angle of selling the asylum as some kind of estate agent description. Very clever. Really enjoyed the book. A real eye opener.

Emma Dargue says

interesting, thought-provoking and sincere. Mark Stevens writes faithfully about a controversial subject. however he writes with sincerity and real heart and you get a real feel for the real life people who lived within the structure of these controversial places.

Angela Buckley says

Ever wondered what actually went on behind the locked doors of a Victorian asylum? Mark Steven's 'Life in the Victorian Asylum' is a fascinating glimpse into the rather forbidding world of strait jackets and padded cells. In fact, his detailed and knowledgeable account shatters any preconceived ideas, and challenges the age-old stereotypes of this august Victorian institution.

The book is divided into two sections. Part I provides a step-by-step guide for new admissions to the asylum, covering information from daily routine and institutional roles, to medical treatments and rehabilitation. Part II offers more information about the history of asylums and the management of mental health care, including a thought-provoking summary of the changes in provision since the 1800s, which bears a striking contrast to the situation today.

Archivist, Mark Stevens, challenges the popular image of the Victorian asylum as a place of cruelty and harsh treatments and, instead, presents the progressive and well-intentioned institution that it was. His viewpoint is refreshingly different and, through his engaging and powerful narrative, he dispels the myths of invasive, and often harmful, treatments for mental health patients in the late Victorian era, and places the emphasis on holistic care.

'Life in the Victorian Asylum' includes anecdotes from the real-life cases of inmates and staff at Moulshford and Broadmoor asylums, as it brings the history to life with evocative and colourful detail, providing a tantalising snapshot of asylum life. It is very well written and thoroughly enjoyable to read. The friendly, conversational tone engages the reader from the beginning and guides them gently through the corridors and procedures of the institution with a reassuring voice and a wry sense of humour. The 'tour' includes clear instructions to new inmates and advice to the families of the afflicted, amidst the more serious consideration of wider themes, such as gender inequality and the stigma attached to mental health issues.

There are both surprises and shocks in store for the first-time visitor, such as the importance of recreation, and the number of children confined in asylums. A positive tone is maintained throughout, with occasional glimpses of the ultimate power of the superintendent and the rigidity of the rules. At times, the 'safe' world of the asylum seems almost quite appealing. There are direct links to modern life and the subject matter is highly relevant to today's challenges.

'Life in the Victorian Asylum' is an outstanding book and an excellent guide for researchers, family historians and everyone interested in life in the Victorian era. I would highly recommend it.

T. K. Elliott (Tiffany) says

This book is a nice introduction to the organisation of, and day-to-day life in, a late Victorian lunatic asylum. The first part of the book (which is most of the book) is written as if it's a guide to asylum life for the new patient - it makes it a little easier to read, but does mean that this book isn't suitable if you already have a working knowledge of how the asylums were run.

The authors clearly loves his subject - he has also written a book on Broadmoor - and his enthusiasm for it comes across on every page. Recommended as an easy-reading introduction to the subject.

GeorgiLvsBooks says

I really wanted to like this!! But I just couldn't.

So much of the information for me was not needed and a lot was quite boring.

I found myself skipping pages/chapters. Just not for me I'm afraid.

Mick Finlay says

A very useful book about one asylum in Victorian England. Engagingly-written.
