

£2.50

Nurture to Nature

A History of the St. Wulstan's Hospital Site



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St. Wulstan's Local Nature Reserve



Map Key



The self guided Tree Trail follows the **red** route round an easy access path and encompasses six different interpretation panels.

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 Introduced Trees and Shrubs | 4 Decaying Wood |
| 2 Meadows | 5 Seasonal Wildlife |
| 3 Mature Woodland | 6 Scrub |

The **blue** extension has two interpretation panels:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| A Young Woodland | The black extension has one interpretation panel. |
| B Hedges and Hedgerows | C Freshwater |



Nurture to Nature

A History of the St. Wulstan's Hospital Site

Compiled by Penny Ward

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*General Hospitals were mainly intended for soldiers wounded during combat.

** Station Hospitals served the needs of troops in training



Foreword

Not long after I became responsible for the management of St. Wulstan's Local Nature Reserve in December 2004, local people started recounting their memories of the site as a hospital, and pointing out on-site features that remain from that time. It soon became very clear that, as well as being an area of countryside and wildlife interest, the cultural and social history of the former hospital site was remembered with fondness.

Several members of the LNR group told me that I should collect all this information first hand before this information was lost forever. It soon became apparent that this could become a huge project, well beyond the scope of my role. But that didn't mean that I couldn't help set up and support such a project.

From this idea the "St. Wulstan's History Archive Project" was born. All along the notion has been to collect and collate information about the site from its days as a hospital to the present, produce some type of information leaflet and deposit all the information in the County Records Office so it is captured for future generations. The first step was to recruit some volunteers to do the work.

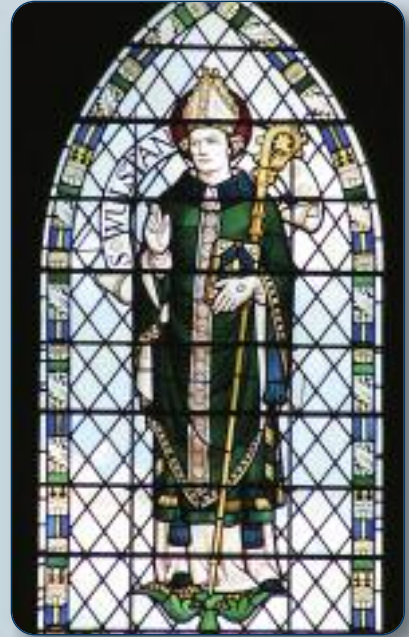
We were incredibly fortunate in that the first volunteer to come forward was a lady working part-time at the County Records Office. She gave invaluable guidance in how to collate such a history, particularly the oral record, and the legal requirements for holding such information. The next volunteer to come forward was very keen to go out meeting people and interviewing them about their recollections. With her skills in this area and local knowledge, contacts and information started rolling in. We were wondering how we were going to deal with all this when our third volunteer came forward and offered to type up all the transcripts. This amazing team of volunteers has brought together recollections from every period of the Hospital's history, as well as extensive documentary research.

This work continues the spirit of St. Wulstan's Hospital, which has always seemed to have been a place made special by the people involved, and my profound thanks go to all those who have given their time and goodwill to making this idea a reality.

LIZ NETHER, Senior Countryside Sites Officer
Worcestershire County Council Countryside Service
August 2009

The History of Saint Wulstan 1008-1095

Saint Wulstan was born in Itchington (later re-named Bishops Itchington), Warwickshire, in 1008. His name was derived combining his mother's name of Wulfgeva and his father's name of Athelstan to create "Wulstan". Wulstan was educated at the Abbey Schools of Evesham and Peterborough and was then ordained as a Benedictine monk at the Cathedral Priory in Worcester. Later in his life he gained a reputation for healing the sick, and many people came to him confident of a cure. In 1062 he became Bishop of Worcester and ordered the building of a new Cathedral Church at Worcester, work upon which started in 1084. Wulstan died in 1095 at the age of 87. After his death local people visited his tomb in Worcester Cathedral and soon miracles were being recorded. On 21st April 1203 he was canonised as a saint.



Photograph by Mr. Christopher Guy,
Worcester Cathedral archaeologist.
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Chapter 1 Long Meadow - Pre War:

The area of land which has now become St. Wulstan's Local Nature Reserve and been developed for housing was originally farmland, being part of Brickbarns Farm, and originally formed part of the Hornyold Estate.

As young children growing up in Upper Welland in the 1930s, Douglas Pitt and brothers Peter and Barry Allison, played in this area which was then known locally as "Long Meadow". They recall playing football and cricket on a flat piece of ground in the meadow where two large old fossilized tree stumps became their football posts and cricket stumps! Barry Allison remembers playing on these stumps which were up to 3ft in diameter, "we sat on them and we were driving tanks". "It was just a lovely open piece of ground to play on". The entrance from Assarts Lane into the top of Long Meadow opened up into a very boggy area called 'The Quabbs'. This area was very marshy and had a very

distinctive smell of the marshmallow flower at certain times of the year. As Peter Allison recalls “It was a slightly acrid, sweet sort of smell and we always used to smell it particularly when we were blackberrying”. There were also the traces of a raised horse gallop which ran right down the length of Long Meadow. They all remember the abundance of jays in the area and seeing many adders. Peter also remembers the harsh winter of 1940 when frozen fog descended “All the telephone wires fell down with the weight of the ice and tree branches were falling”. Mavis Wadley, a child at the time, remembers a German bomb being dropped in the area before the hospital was built. It was night time and the effect of the bomb was felt by nearby residents, including her grandmother who was so startled by the explosion that she fell out of her bed!

Chapter 2 - The American Military Hospitals 1943-1945:

In 1943 “Long Meadow” together with other land in the Malvern area was requisitioned by the War Department for the construction of five American Hospitals which would receive American Servicemen injured in the planned D-Day landings in June 1944. Under the direction of Colonel Lehmann the land



Location of St. Wulstan's Hospital (taken from O.S. map)
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would become the site of the 96th General Hospital dealing with neural cases. Other units in Malvern

Wells were set up at Blackmore Park (the 93rd General Hospital which was the administration centre and the 155th General Hospital which was the chest centre), at Wood Farm (the 55th General Hospital which was a neural surgery centre) and at Merebrook in Hanley Swan (the 53rd General Hospital – a burns and plastic surgery unit). An additional camp was built at Eastnor for black American soldiers, who were the drivers and general labourers for all the hospitals.

One of the building contractors at Brickbarns was Gazes of London. As a young boy Douglas Pitt can remember seeing their big lorries being driven in and out of the area. One of the Engineers who worked for Gazes was the father of the famous jazz musician Chris Barber who was a young child at the time. The Barber family moved to Upper Welland from London whilst the hospital was being built. There was plenty work for local people during construction of the hospitals and workers were also brought in from surrounding areas such as Kidderminster and Bridgnorth. "When they were building you would see what we called Charabancs in those days - busses of workmen being shipped in" Barry Allison recalls. Built to a standard Ministry of War plan, Brickbarns Hospital consisted of Nissen huts and single-storey brick buildings served by concrete roads.



Aerial view of the newly constructed American Military Hospital at Malvern Wells.

When the hospital at Brickbarns had been completed, it was occupied from October 1943 to February 1944 by the 56th General Hospital. The hospital was fully enclosed and had a large main entrance manned by guards. There was also a flagpole near the entrance, from which the American flag was flown. The buildings housed all aspects of the hospital, including wards, theatres, X-ray departments, laboratories, workshops and kitchens, as well as a Chapel of Rest adjoining the Mortuary. There was a concert hall, billiard room, Officers' Mess, barbers, beauty salon, library, cinema, gym and shop, plus a garage for maintaining and servicing all the hospital vehicles. There were several large water tanks on tall towers which were used as header tanks and a boiler house which contained the large coal-fired boiler which served all the hospital buildings.



General view of the American Hospital



The Motor Pool

reproduced from 96th General Hospital Year Book 1945



Mechanics at work in the service area

reproduced from 96th General Hospital Year Book 1945

The movement and allocation of Americans to the hospitals was organised by the 12th Medical Hospital Centre from their Headquarters in Malvern Link. Each hospital had up to 1,500 beds and was staffed by over 600 medical personnel. Staff accommodation was in the Nissen huts and the single-storey brick buildings were used for wards, operating theatres and stores. Censorship regulations forbade any mention of the location of these major establishments in the newspapers, and the hospitals always had to be referred to as “in Worcestershire”.

Five days after D-Day the first train load of casualties was received from France. Specially equipped ambulance trains brought the injured from Southampton to the station at Malvern Wells on the Great Western Railway line. These long hospital trains were given priority over civilian trains and it often used to take two steam engines to pull them. A new siding at Peachfield was built to accommodate the extra trains where they were met by the American ambulances which transported the patients to the various hospitals.

From February 1944 to July 1945 Brickbarns Hospital was taken over by the 96th General Hospital, a newly formed unit trained in medical and surgical care. Under the command of Colonel E.M. Smith, the Unit boarded “SS Dominion Monarch” and sailed from New York on 29th December 1943, arriving in Liverpool on 9th January 1944. It was not until they finally arrived at Malvern Wells that the Unit discovered they were not to be a surgical hospital but a neuro-psychiatric hospital! Some of the American personnel were not happy and 15 doctors left to be replaced by psychiatrists.

The Unit Chaplain, James L. Cotter, describes how morale hit an all time low, “Some liked psychiatric work; many did not”. He also complained that “For 18 months now the English rains have drizzled down upon us. For the first 10 days we did not see the sun”.

The Unit cared for soldiers suffering from shell shock and battle fatigue, or what is commonly now known as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Chaplain James L. Cotter described how “While others shot at the enemy Jap and Jerry, we shot patients in the arm. While others gathered clusters on their breasts, we were clustered with patients unnerved by the stress and strain of war”. Locals who remember the army hospital say that there were locked wards and U.S. Army guards on duty at the gate and that the patients were often in a “bad way”. As a young boy, Barry Allison remembers seeing the shell-shocked patients, some dressed in blue dressing gowns and some in red. “If you saw one in a red dressing gown you got indoors quick!” he said.

He also remembers hearing about one of the “red dressing gown” American patients who hanged himself from a tree in the woods. Whilst the site was surrounded by high fences to contain the patients, a few did sometimes escape and local people would find them walking round, looking dazed and confused. “They’d wander into the village and suddenly a jeep would come rushing down the village and out would jump a couple of Special Police and chuck them into the jeep and off they’d go” Barry recalls.



Main entrance to the 96th General Hospital



Colonel E.M. Smith, Medical Corps Commanding Officer
reproduced from 96th General Hospital Year Book 1945

Another local, Mavis Wadley, recalls the shell-shocked patients when she was a small child. "They'd come and kneel down and they didn't know quite what they were doing". She remembers going into one of the wards with her grandmother, who did some cleaning for one of the American Officers. "Everything was locked behind you and you went down with a guard".



Three medical staff preparing 'Insulin Treatment'
- A daily procedure at the hospital where patients were given insulin to put them into a coma in an attempt to improve their symptoms.

Between July and August 1945 Brickbarns Hospital was occupied by the 312th Station Hospital. In September 1945 the American Military Unit left and the 231st Station Hospital, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel S.E. King, occupied the buildings where they undertook general medical and surgical work, with a small but efficient staff of surgeons and nurses.



Brain Wave Machine - The Electroencephalography (EEG) machine was introduced in the late 1920's and used to record electrical activity in the brain. The brain wave machine used by the US Army was likely to have been one of the first machines and would have been cutting edge in its day.

Colonel King was a former Assistant Professor of Medicine at Columbia University and a practicing doctor for 20 years. A keen advocate of Anglo-American relations, he said he found the people of Malvern very friendly and hoped to return the hospitality extended to patients and personnel by organising many social events, including regular Saturday evening dances. In return the Malvern Civic Reception Committee organised parties at the Winter Gardens for the Americans. Other staff included his Adjutant Captain C. Kellgren;

Captain Achilles C. Lisle (from Oklahoma) the Executive Officer and Chief Surgeon; Major Winning (from Brooklyn) the Surgeon-in-Chief who visited the hospital at regular intervals and Lt. J. Haugen the Chief Nurse. The Americans also helped to organise parties for the local children at Christmas time.

Barry Allison recalls that the Americans “were very friendly and kind to the kids that were in the village”. “We used to go into the camp and play soft ball. They wouldn’t let you play baseball, but they did teach us the rudimentary rules”. The Americans often invited the local villagers from Upper Welland to their film shows. Barry can remember seeing one particular film called “China Seas” starring Clark Gable. “There was a horrible scene in it where Clark Gable was captured and he was tortured with thumb screws” he recalls. “I dreamt of thumb screws for weeks and weeks after that!” His friend, Douglas Pitt, remembers having Saturday lunch with the American soldiers, which was served in a divided mess tin with lunch on one side and dessert (usually peaches and cream) on the other. Douglas recalls some of the hospital staff playing dice outside The Thorn Public House in Upper Welland (now a private dwelling) on a Sunday morning. “They used to play this dice and then when it was time for them to pack up or the pub closed, they used to pick up all the silver and leave the coppers and the kids used to dive in to get the coppers.”

As well as local WRVS involvement, there was an active Red Cross Club centre run by Miss R. Daniels (from New York) who was assisted by local Malvern residents, (Mrs. Polack, Miss Day, Mrs. Harrison, Miss Acock and Mrs. Whatley. The centre had a comfortable lounge where patients could read from the well-equipped library or write letters home, a special games room and a handicraft centre. They could also participate in rehabilitation activities such as making felt gloves, wool rugs, weaving scarves or doing carpentry. Golf was a very popular activity, as were the movie shows four times a week. The Red Cross also organised trips around the Malvern Hills and to Stratford-on-Avon.

The American hospitals received many distinguished visitors during their existence. In 1945 the Princess Royal (now Queen Elizabeth II) met Lt. Col. Resch, head of the U.S. nurses and said at that time to be the only woman Colonel in the country. Another renowned visitor was Professor Alexander Fleming, the discoverer of penicillin, which was used so extensively in the hospitals.

There were a total of 14 American hospitals in Herefordshire and Worcestershire and between 1942 and 1945 over 79,000 Americans had been admitted to these hospitals. Thousands were sent back to duty and 48,953 soldiers returned to America.

From 1943 to 1945 tens of thousands of Americans stayed in Malvern, either as members of the medical staff, as patients at the five hospitals or attached to the American Army Medical Administration Centre. To commemorate this chapter in Malvern's history a plaque was unveiled at the Winter Gardens in Malvern on 12th April 1951 by Brigadier General Jack W. Wood, Senior Military & Air Attaché at the American Embassy.



The American Plaque

Following refurbishment at the Malvern Winter Gardens in the 1990's, this plaque was removed and is now on display at Malvern Museum.

Chapter 3. Displaced Persons' Camp 1947:

After the American Military Units finally left, Brickbarns Hospital remained empty for a short period of time. Barry Allison recalls going into some of the deserted huts that had been decorated by the Americans with huge nude paintings on the walls. "You know the sort of things that the Americans used to paint on the front of their aircrafts, pin-ups - Mae West, Looby-Lou and all that!!"

The Brickbarns Hospital site was taken over by the Admiralty in 1946 before being handed over to the Ministry of Health. A proposal was then put forward by the Tuberculosis & Sanatorium Committee to provide a hospital for chest cases on the site.

Prior to its conversion for use as a Tuberculosis Sanatorium, Brickbarns Hospital was loaned to the Ministry of Works for use as a Displaced Persons' Camp in 1947. Following the capitulation of Germany, thousands of people from the Baltic States and other nationalities who did not want to return to the present regime came to England to begin a new life. The Ministry of Labour and National Service had designated staff in Germany who interviewed the volunteers wishing to come to England to work and help in the manpower shortage. They were all carefully vetted and medically examined before being sent to one of the various temporary holding camps in England, prior to being placed in various types of employment throughout the country.

Brickbarns Camp became a holding camp for some of these displaced persons and was controlled by the National Services Hostel Corporation. The majority of displaced persons, or European Volunteer Workers (EVWs) as they preferred to be called, came from the Baltic countries of Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania and the Ukraine. One such person was Lidia Palmer (nee Vorno) who was born in Narva in Estonia. When Estonia was invaded by the Germans, Lidia, who was only a young child at the time, and her aunt were taken to work in an ammunition factory in Germany along with hundreds of other Estonians. When they were liberated by the Americans they were brought by ship to Hull and then put on special trains which took them to Malvern Wells. They were transferred by coach to Brickbarns Camp where everything was arranged for their comfort and well-being. Lidia can remember the joy of having a proper bath and the luxury of clean linen sheets on her bed. The Ministry of Labour and National Service

employed a Placing Officer, two senior officers, two interpreters and a general clerk at Brickbarns Camp, whose task it was to get all the EVWs into work as soon as possible. All were skilled workers, including professional and technical people, and most were found employment at Brickbarns Camp while waiting to be allocated regular jobs either locally or elsewhere in the country. Many women went straight into hospital and institutional work or domestic work and wherever possible an English speaking worker was sent with them. Lidia and her aunt, who were only at Brickbarns Camp for one week, went to Glossop where they worked in the mills. Over 1,000 displaced persons in all came through Brickbarns Camp and in his speech at the Malvern Rotary Club, Rotarian W. Kemp, Manager of the Malvern Employment Exchange, said he “hoped they would find happiness in England”.

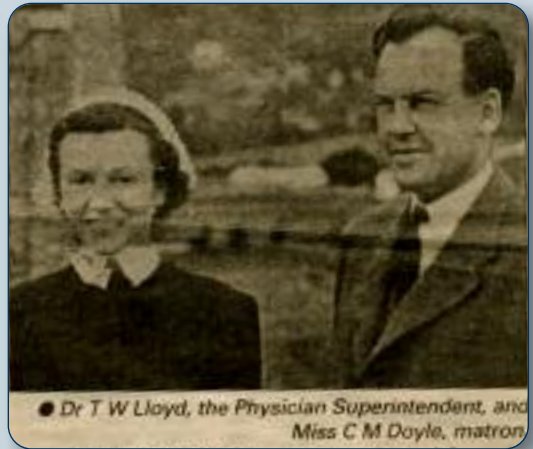
Chapter 4. T.B. Hospital 1950-1960:

Despite opposition from certain County Councillors and members of the local public, followed by delays of all kinds and difficulties in obtaining equipment and staff, the conversion of the former American “Brickbarns Hospital” was put in hand in 1948 by the Ministry of Works, working for the Ministry of Health. It was several years before the hospital actually opened with 400 beds to serve Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Warwickshire and Coventry

Known locally as “Brickbarns Hospital” during the war, the hospital was re-named St. Wulstan’s in 1949 prior to its opening.

At a meeting of the Birmingham Regional Hospital Board in November 1949 the Hospital’s Finance Board approved the appointment of Dr. T.W. Lloyd as Superintendent & Consultant Chest Physician at St. Wulstan’s Hospital. The Chairman of the meeting, Mr. R.R. Adams, said that Dr. Lloyd had struck them as “being quite prepared to tackle what he called the landscape gardening on this site left as a result of the use of bulldozers”. Dr. Lloyd’s qualifications included B.M, N.Ch(Oxford), M.R.C.P. and D.M. (Oxford), His first appointment was at the Children’s Hospital, Birmingham in 1934 with later appointments at the Birmingham General Hospital, Hereford E.M.S. Hospital and at Gloucester, Bath, Medhurst and Cranbrook.

In December 1949 Miss C.M. Doyle, Assistant Matron of the County Hospital, Harefield, Middlesex, was appointed Matron of the new T.B. Hospital at St. Wulstan's. Miss Doyle, who received her tuberculosis training at King George Sanatorium in Liphook, Hampshire, was selected from among nearly 30 candidates.



Miss C. Doyle, Matron, with Dr. T.W. Lloyd, the Physician Superintendent
courtesy the Malvern Gazette, a Newsquest publication

In April 1950 St. Wulstan's Hospital was finally opened as a new T.B. hospital to serve the area, although even then a shortage of medical equipment was restricting the number of beds available for patients. Tuberculosis is an infectious disease which affects the human lungs. The "sanatorium cure" (Sanatoria) was founded in the mid 1800's and was the first major step in the fight against T.B, the most common form of which is Pulmonary Tuberculosis, formerly known as consumption.

St. Wulstan's provided refuge for the treatment, isolation and recovery of patients suffering from Pulmonary Tuberculosis. The latest treatment and surgery was available to combat what was then seen as the last great epidemic disease, from which 400 people were dying each week. Treatment provided a dual function – it isolated the sick and the potential source of infection from the general population, whilst the enforced rest, a proper diet and the well-regulated hospital life assisted the healing processes. Patients were often in hospital for several years and much of their time would be spent in bed. Various invasive surgical procedures were used, often several times a week on some individuals for up to six months at a time.

In June 1950 St. Wulstan's was described as a "Miniature Village of Healing". Only 8 weeks after opening, several patients had already been discharged - one paying them the supreme compliment of deciding to stay on as a ward orderly. Others had responded well to treatment, with one patient putting on one stone in weight in a seven week period! At that time a further 30 patients were awaiting admission, among them St. Wulstan's first female patient.

St. Wulstan's Hospital was one of the most modern and best equipped hospitals in the country. In January 1951 major surgery had begun, with two operating days a week undertaking thoracoplasty and re-section work. The twin Operating Theatres also housed the equipment for supplying piped oxygen to the surgical wards - a very modern innovation at that time. The hospital had its own Dispensary which also produced the distilled water which was used by all the hospitals in South Worcestershire. At that time St. Wulstan's had 140 beds – 90 for men and 50 for women. It was a recognised training school for nurses for the British Tuberculosis Association Certificate and was recognised by the General Nursing Council as an associate training school for student nurses. It was also popular with staff that had come from all over the country to work there.



courtesy the Malvern Gazette, a Newsquest publication

Apart from the first-rate training facilities offered, the hospital was ideally situated facing the beautiful Malvern Hills. Dr. Lloyd stated “The air is magnificent and the site is ideal for our purpose”. During his time at St. Wulstan's, Dr. Lloyd wrote several papers on the use of streptomycin, aminosalicyclic acid and isoniazid in the treatment of Pulmonary Tuberculosis.



View of the hospital wards, looking towards the Malvern Hills.

Wards were of 15 beds divided by glass screens with French windows opening out on to the new gardens, and were named after medical men famous for work in diseases of the chest. One example was Bodington Ward, named after Doctor Bodington who first thought of using fresh air in the treatment of Tuberculosis.

Mavis Wadley recalls the patients' beds being pushed outside through the large French windows at all times of the year, unless it was raining. Colour schemes varied from ward to ward, but the most consisted of light grey and mushroom cream with a scarlet line.



Patients enjoying the Malvern air
courtesy the Malvern Gazette, a Newsquest publication

As well as altering some of the former American hospital buildings to provide extra staff accommodation, 9 new staff bungalows were built in The Crescent in 1951. Irene Rootes' father, Leo Constantinides, worked as Assistant Chief Engineer and her mother worked as a Nurses' Aid at the hospital. The family lived in one of the converted buildings across from The Crescent. Irene recalls that amongst the members of staff who lived in the bungalows in The Crescent were the Office Manager, the Head Gardener and a Laboratory Technician as well as Mr. Gimberts, the Chief Engineer, who had a television that Irene and her brother, Peter, watched once a week. Irene's father built a playhouse in the back garden for her and Peter to play in. Her younger sister, Elizabeth, was born at St. Wulstan's. Irene also recalls that visiting times at the hospital were on Wednesdays and Sundays and remembers "bus loads of visitors coming from Birmingham".



Irene and her brother, Peter, at St. Wulstan's.

A Library Service was established at the hospital by The St. John and Red Cross Library Service. Miss Baker from the British Red Cross at Worcester Royal Infirmary was appointed as temporary Head Librarian and Miss E.M. Barling as Assistant Librarian, and they were assisted by numerous volunteers.

The Library Service started with a weekly round but this was eventually increased to three rounds a week. It provided books for the patients and ordered special requests for them. About 5,000 books were given out annually, many of them being non-fiction. "In all quite 50 individuals must have helped and it is true that they all enjoyed their work and meeting the patients and one another"¹. The Service operated until the hospital closed. The Red Cross also operated a Trolley Shop service for bedfast patients.



Nursing Staff on Chandler Ward.

At Christmas time staff decorated the wards and gifts were provided for the patients by the League of Friends of Malvern Hospital. One year the theme for the decorations was "Chinatown" and John Stead remembers the wonderful decorations he and two other charge nurses put up in their ward. "We had Chinese lanterns and we made little coolies out of pipe cleaners and the whole ward looked like Chinatown". A Christmas Dinner Party was held each year for the staff at which Dr. Lloyd gave a short speech which usually consisted of a series of amusing anecdotes arising from something that had taken place in the hospital during the year.

Chris Adams was born at St. Wulstan's in September 1951 where his father worked as an electrician and his mother as a nurse. He recalls his childhood there playing on the tall slide and metal roundabout on the playing fields in Assarts Lane, paddling in the local stream and walking to Taylor's (formerly Yates') shop in the



Patients and Staff on Boddington Ward

village to buy “penny fruit lollies in little cones”. He also remembers being taken out by Matron Doyle in her little black Austin A35 to Eastnor Park, Spetchley Court and visiting the daffodil fields at Dymock. It was at St. Wulstan’s that he first met Rachel Stead whose parents also worked at the hospital. They used to play together as children and many years later ended up getting married. With plenty of open space, playing fields and apple and damson orchards, children had plenty of room in which to roam. “We were just free. So long as you turned up for meals nobody really worried” recalls Rachel. She attended the local Primary School at Malvern Wells and remembers walking up the steep hill to school with her mother and small brother, Jeremy. “Mum used to push Jeremy up in a big black pushchair and on one occasion she lost control of the pushchair coming back down and she had to ram it into a wall to stop it”.

Some of the staff accommodation was very big and proved quite challenging to furnish, having been converted from the long American hospital buildings. John and Christine Stead lived in one of the conversions which comprised a single-storey building with all the rooms going off one long corridor. “That’s one thing that amazed us, you know. The amount of space. From two rooms, we moved into a bungalow with a lounge 23ft. x 10ft.

and very large bedrooms. We put the bed across the room to try and fill up some of the space” they recall. With no central heating or double glazing winters could prove quite challenging too. “We had a coal fire in the end room, but the rest of the house wouldn’t have had any heating” recalls Chris Adams. “I regularly remember waking up in the morning and seeing Jack Frost on the inside”.

Staff had their own gardens and many of them kept chickens and pigs. Rachel Adams remembers one particular housewife who used to mash up vegetable peelings. “When you went towards her house, you could always smell the mash she’d done for the chickens”. She also remembers the tall water towers on the hospital site. “Strictly out of bounds but he (Chris Adams) took me all the way up the steps so I could look over the top. I’ve had nightmares about it ever since”.



A winter's scene at the hospital

In June 1951 a ball was organised by the newly formed Sports & Social Club at St. Wulstan's to celebrate the hospital's first anniversary. A special cake had been made by the chef, Mr. F. Kitney, which was surmounted with a replica of the famous 1951 Festival Skylon.



1st birthday cake - 1951

In August "The Friends of St. Wulstan's Hospital" held their first annual fete at the hospital to raise funds for the new Sports & Social Club. The fete was opened by Dr. Lloyd's wife and despite the unsettled weather was very well attended. The well-stocked stalls sold goods ranging from antiques to garden produce and ice cream, teas were served and the children were entertained

with a special play corner, donkey rides and balloon races. Fetes and Sports Days were held annually and plays were also performed for the benefit of staff and patients alike. In 1953 the St. Wulstan's Players performed their own Coronation Pageant entitled "The Unresting Conflict". It told the story of man's fight against disease and had a cast of more than 60. Denis Folwell who played Jack Archer in the radio programme "The Archers" was treated at St. Wulstan's for T.B. and he returned there to open their annual fete in 1956.



Dennis Folwell opening St. Wulstan's Fete in 1956



St. Wulstan's Fete - 1959

The hospital provided a lot of employment for local people and all staff and their families had to be x-rayed for T.B. regularly. Mavis Wadley started working at the hospital when she was 18 years old, cleaning the doctors' quarters. She also helped Miss James, the Assistant Matron, and Miss Price who was the Sister Tutor at that time. Many of Mavis's family also worked at the hospital – her mother worked in the canteen, her sister was a nurse in one of the wards, her uncle was a porter, her aunt worked in the sewing room and her other sister and brother-in-law worked in the operating theatres. Mavis later worked in the kitchens, preparing meals for the medical staff. At that time the staff had segregated dining rooms where their daily meals were taken. There was also a separate dining room for patients, which was used on visiting days to provide dinner and teas for the hundreds of visitors who came to the hospital.

When local resident Mary Williams left the WRAF in 1953 she went to St. Wulstan's for 12 months to train as a T.B. nurse. Arriving in August she was seconded into helping the Nursing Tutor set up the School of Nursing which opened there in September. The student nurses were taught all about Pulmonary Tuberculosis and their training included learning how to administer morphine as well watching some of the operations that were performed on the T.B. patients. Mary remembers one male patient who "had a complete lung taken out but he took his time and he recovered". At that time Mary lived in the nurses' home and regularly cycled back to Upton to visit her parents. After gaining her SRN at the Royal in Worcester, Mary returned to St. Wulstan's in 1955 to finish her T.B. training and get her Certificate. She remembers the new nurses' home being built there the following year. "It was one of the best that I've been in, and I've been in one or two I'll tell you! There was a lovely kitchen in there and bathroom and all our rooms had sinks and built-in wardrobes". There was even a flower bed at the front. As she recalls "It was proper posh!"

After completing his service in the RAF as an aero engine fitter, Norman Curnock trained at the County Hospital in Hereford before getting a post as a Charge Nurse at St. Wulstan's in 1953. At that time Norman lived with his wife in temporary accommodation in Worcester and in order to do the 12-mile journey to St. Wulstan's each day; he bought a second-hand Swallow Gadabout (similar to a Vespa scooter). "It was totally unreliable and I used to end up in the mornings soaked to the skin and sometimes late on shift" he remembers.

At Matron Doyle's suggestion Norman and his wife moved into staff accommodation in the recently renovated American PX building (the U.S. equivalent of the NAAFI) before eventually ending up in one of the bungalows in The Crescent. George Martin who was Head Porter at the hospital also lived in the former American PX building with his family. He was a Flight Lieutenant in the RAF and was on a mission near Ruhr in Germany when an anti-aircraft shell exploded alongside their Lancaster aeroplane, fatally injuring the pilot. George, who had never flown an aircraft before, managed to turn the plane and fly it back to England with six crew still on board. As they approached an American-manned airfield in Essex, George radioed ground control who talked him through how to land aircraft which he did successfully and for which he was awarded the DSO (Distinguished Service Order) and the DFC (Distinguished Flying Cross)

At this time National Service was still in force and any person who refused to go into one of the Services was forced to work in a hospital. Norman,

who was in charge of a 22-bed male ward, remembers some of the conscientious objectors who worked as orderlies on his ward. "We didn't have that much staff really, you know trained staff, so they were really very, very useful you know. They worked very well" he said. There were a lot of foreigners working at St. Wulstan's and Norman especially remembers two of the orderlies on his ward who kept it spotless. One was Boris Sobota who had been at Stalingrad with the Waffen SS eight days before the city fell and the other was Egon Brewer, another former member of the Waffen SS who had been captured in Normandy.

As part of their daily routine patients would wash themselves and then have breakfast and this would sometimes be followed by physiotherapy. Norman remembers the large number of Muslims on his ward who spent a long time on their ablutions before their prayers and upset the English patients who wanted to shave and wash before breakfast in the morning! He also recalls some of the



The original American PX building
reproduced from 96th General Hospital Year Book 1945

patients in his ward who had been on bed rest for 3 or 4 years. “Before the advent of the new drug regimes the only treatment for TB was fresh air and postural change in the hope of closing TB lung cavities” he recalls. With the advent of drugs, such as streptomycin, and a three-drug combination, patients started to improve and many were out of bed for the first time in years. Thoracic surgery was also introduced at St. Wulstan’s Hospital. Norman also remembers the mobile x-ray machines which visited local schools and factories and the large programme of skin testing which was instigated at the time.

Norman’s two children were born at St. Wulstan’s and went to Malvern Wells Primary School. “Life was idyllic – fresh air, beautiful surroundings and a great community atmosphere” he said. “The atmosphere was friendly – no-one ever locked their door at night”. The staff were approximately 50% Quakers and 50% Catholic. At Christmas Matron Doyle used to invite all the nursing staff to accompany her to the nearby Catholic Church for Mass, followed by a splendid Christmas meal. Father Austin Corney was a Master at Downside, the Roman Catholic Public School, before he retired and became the Parish Priest at St. Wulstan’s Church. He was very well liked and used to visit both staff and patients at the hospital. Holy Communion Services (or Mass for the Roman Catholics) were conducted at the bedside until a new Chapel was established in the mid 1950’s. The new Altar Cross and candlesticks for the Chapel were made by the Head Occupational Therapist, Mr. R.S. Madge, at very short notice. Because of the shortness of time before the Service of Dedication and Confirmation, the Cross and candlesticks were placed on the Altar in a roughly finished state and returned to Mr. Madge for smoothing and polishing at a later date. The Chaplain was Rev. W.T. Milne, Vicar of St. Peter’s Church, Malvern Wells.

David Roberts started work at the hospital in 1954 and completed more than 38 years service with the National Health Service, spending the majority of this time at St. Wulstan’s. He was in charge of the stores and worked in the admin block situated by the 4 large conifer trees which still exist on the Nature Reserve today.

St. Wulstan’s had its own flag which was always flown on visiting days and open days. It consisted of a Bishop’s Mitre in gold and blue with crossed shepherds’

crooks in black surmounted by a Cross of Lorraine in red, all on a white background. The flag existed until the mid 1960's when it got badly torn by high winds. The flag motif was also used for a hospital Christmas card which was sold in the hospital shop for many years.

The last person to gain the BTA (British Tuberculosis Association) Certificate at the School of Nursing at St. Wulstan's was John Stead. He had originally trained at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham. "All the QE nurses during their training were brought out to St. Wulstan's so they could see how a sanatorium ticked" he told us. John and his family moved into staff accommodation at St. Wulstan's in 1958, and after gaining his BTA Certificate, he worked as a Deputy Night Superintendent there until the T.B. hospital closed. "The one thing I do remember is being on nights, about 4 o'clock in the morning, walking across the bottom of the hospital and seeing all the glow-worms".

Mrs. Dorothy Lisseman worked as a domestic at the hospital for 2½ years before it closed. She recalls Matron Doyle as being very strict. "Everybody was on their toes when she was around. She always used to make sure that you had the eye duster out. She was very, very spotless".

Between 1945 and 1960 a remarkable development was made and more patients were cured using the new antibiotics. Dorothy Lisseman remembers this very vividly "I was there and I saw the cure and that was the most fantastic thing".

With the disease under control, less and less beds were needed and many sanatoriums started to close in the early 60's. With the steep decline in the numbers of tuberculosis patients now requiring treatment, the Planning Committee of the Birmingham Regional Hospital Board considered the future of St. Wulstan's in April 1958, when it was decided that routine operating sessions for chest surgery should be discontinued and the position kept under review. At the same time the Mental Health Services Committee were asked to consider using St. Wulstan's as a 'mental or mentally defective' hospital after closure as a T.B. Unit. Following a visit to St. Wulstan's by the Committee it was reported that "Their conclusions are that St. Wulstan's should be brought into use as a mental hospital as soon as may be possible".

Whilst it was hoped that the hospital would be used in other ways, staff were informed in 1960 that the hospital would be closing. This resulted in a number

of protests from both staff and local residents. The Rev. W.Y. Milne who was the Hospital Chaplain said “This hospital has over the years been developed into a well-equipped and beautifully laid out hospital of about 500 beds. From the hills one can see its extensive lay-out and lovely grounds. Apart from its operating theatres, X-ray department, concert hall, recreation units, nurses’ home and necessary amenities, it has a very beautiful chapel. Much of the unstinted charity of Malvern can be seen therein, as well as in the wards in the form of television sets. Every bed has its wireless”.

At their meeting on 4th May 1960, the South Worcestershire Hospital Management Committee was told that “with the sharp decline in patients it was quite clear that the hospital would have to close”. Mr. J.C. Hutchinson, Chairman of the Sanatorium House Committee stated that “The people who had built up the hospital were proud of it and they did not want to see it go. It was no fault of theirs; the doctors and chemists had dealt with tuberculosis in a remarkable manner”.

St. Wulstan’s had provided treatment for 500 patients at any one time suffering from Pulmonary Tuberculosis with up to 300 staff. By 13th May 1960 only four patients remained at the hospital. Despite all the opposition, St. Wulstan’s T.B. Hospital was closed on 16th May 1960.

Mr. N. Duggan, Chairman of the South Worcestershire Hospital Management Committee, stressed that the closure of St. Wulstan’s was only temporary and there was no intention of allowing it to become derelict.

After its closure, the hospital was put on a “care and maintenance” basis and the staff were served with redundancy notices. Out of the 132 members of staff, 17 were required for care and maintenance duties and 104 were offered alternative jobs. Tributes were paid by the South Worcestershire Hospital Management Committee to Dr. Lloyd who had built St. Wulstan’s up into one of the most successful in the country. Mr. J.C. Hutchinson, Chairman of the Sanatorium House Committee said they had greatly appreciated his services. “He was one of a team which began to work on tuberculosis in 1950”; adding “There were very few T.B. trained nurses to help him at that time and yet steadily he built up St. Wulstan’s from a small beginning to a hospital of 270 beds”. Mr. Hutchinson also added “The Committee had always felt that St. Wulstan’s was an exceptionally well managed hospital”. - Malvern Gazette 5 August 1960

Chapter 5 - Psychiatric Hospital 1961-1986:

A proposal was put forward by the Birmingham Regional Health Authority for change of use to a psychiatric hospital. A letter from the Board stated that “because of the declining bed occupancy and the likelihood that the hospital could be dispensed with so far as the tuberculosis services were concerned, the conclusion had been reached that the hospital should in future be used for some 240 chronic psychiatric patients as well as 100 patients undergoing psychiatric treatment and also suffering from tuberculosis.”

In May 1960 the Sanatorium House Committee reported that during a meeting with the Birmingham Regional Hospital Board, “It appeared unlikely that with the extensive alterations necessary, the hospital would be ready for its work as a mental occupation centre until 1961”.

In January 1961 the South Worcestershire Hospital Management Committee announced the appointment of Dr. R. Morgan as Medical Superintendent and Mr. D. Cushing as Nursing Superintendent. Mr. N.S. Manton was appointed as the new Hospital Secretary.

At Mr. Manton’s request, Dorothy Lisseman returned to St. Wulstan’s to help clean and prepare the hospital in readiness for its opening as a Psychiatric Hospital. “There was five of us who went back and scrubbed everywhere” she said. “That was in the November – it was a bitter cold winter – snow and everything. I went back and I had to clean it all up, scrubbing on my knees too!”

In April of that year a social evening for members of the Building & Works Department, who were engaged in the conversion of St. Wulstan’s Hospital into a psychiatric rehabilitation centre, was held at The Star Hotel in North Malvern. The evening was organised by Mr. Wilf Jones with a view to forming a permanent Social Club for the workers at St. Wulstan’s. Entertainment was provided by the Leigh Sinton Handbell Ringers.

For the final 25 years of its hospital life St. Wulstan’s became a regional psychiatric rehabilitation hospital with 350 beds opening on 27th November 1961. The then West Midlands Regional Health Authority referred patients from all over the region, many of whom were suffering from psychosis (a severe mental condition causing disruption of the thought processes and sensory perception).

St. Wulstan's Psychiatric Hospital was described as unique and it became an internationally recognised hospital which helped people suffering from serious psychiatric illness to regain their independence and self-esteem in an environment as close to normal as possible. It aimed to rehabilitate patients back into the community at a time when most patients with psychosis resided in long-stay wards in large asylums that dated from the Victorian age. The hospital focused on training patients to live independently in the community whereas most hospitals at that time looked to provide sanctuary and safety away from the modern world. It believed that a structure which allowed patients to progress through the wards to living in accommodation with minimum staffing would aid them to moving out of the hospital to live independently in individual homes or bed and breakfast establishments.

In an interview for the BBC Midlands TV programme "Scan" in 1961, Dr. Roger Morgan, Medical Superintendent, outlined his plans for the hospital which he said was "for people who get seriously out of touch with life" and for people who need special treatment "to return to life". Patients needed structure and routine to their lives and an important part of their rehabilitation programme was the provision of realistic work for which they were paid. As part of their daily routine, patients would get up at 7.30 a.m. and be ready to start work at 9 a.m. for five days a week.

Staff worked in ways that were different to other psychiatric hospitals of the time. To help patients gain employment, the hospital worked with people's skills, training them to be able to work with others. During the day patients and staff worked alongside each other doing clerical, laundry, kitchen, garden and workshop jobs. In the workshops surgical implements and dressing packs were assembled and packed before being sent off to be sterilised for use in the theatres and on the wards of general hospitals. Patients also packed items such as exhaust clips, brake cables and other car parts, made coat hangers and dismantled telephones. There were carpentry workshops where patients were taught to make wooden items such as children's chairs, dolls' cots, flower troughs, magazine racks, bird tables and bird boxes.



Patients making up dressing packs



Patients in one of the metal workshops

One outside area was turned over for the production of concrete slabs and garden fence panels. Patients worked in the vegetable gardens growing potatoes, onions, cabbages and runner beans which were sold in the staff shop. They received a weekly wage for their work and many spent the evenings and weekends at the Patients Social Club enjoying a soft drink and a cigarette, or watching television.

A workforce of some 200 patients worked a 37 hour week supervised by nurses and supported by technical instructors to ensure adequate quality control and productivity. Patients who had progressed to living outside the hospital returned there daily for paid work. Dorothy Liseman returned to do her training at St. Wulstan's and Powick Hospitals and gained her SEN Certificate. "We had patients working on the conveyor belt which they never had done before. It was all a new thing and every one of these patients was paid for their work" she recalls. "We had so many people from everywhere coming to learn the way we taught our patients".



The vegetable gardens

St. Wulstan's provided employment for a lot of local people. It had its own minibus (or "brake" as it was called) which met the busses on the Wells Road and brought staff in to work and then took them back again. The hospital had its own switchboard which was staffed 24 hours a day, a sewing room for making and altering uniforms, a hospital shop, Concert Hall and Ecumenical Chapel. The Chaplain, David Scott Wells, was a retired Baptist Missionary and held Services every Thursday evening. His wife played the organ. There were extensive gardens and orchards on the site, as well as a cricket pitch, football pitch and tennis courts. The Head Gardener was Mr. Cox, assisted by Mick Fletcher, who cut the grass lawns and playing fields with a grey Massey Ferguson tractor. Staff often played cricket on the green in front of The Crescent and St. Wulstan's had its own cricket team and football team.



St. Wulstan's Hospital Nursing Badge

A Holiday Savings Scheme was operated for the patients and many of them enjoyed a week's holiday escorted by hospital staff. Dorothy Lisseman remembers taking some of the patients to resorts such as Southport, Blackpool and Bournemouth.

Mavis Wadley returned to St. Wulstan's Psychiatric Hospital to work as a cook. She prepared meals for the staff, patients and student nurses. Working early shifts, she would sign in at 6 a.m., unlock the kitchens and start preparing the breakfasts. She remembers the large kitchen boilers. "They were big, huge and you'd do your porridge in one in the morning" she said. The meals were put on trolleys for the porters to take out to the individual units. Some of the patients used to come and help out in the kitchens "as long as they were safe" said Mavis.

Mavis remembers one female patient who kept escaping from one of the wards. "They used to get out now and again. Sometimes they'd got no clothes on. The one lady was well noted for it!!" Another patient was nicknamed "Mad Mary" as she used to walk about in very high fur boots in the summer months and wear open sandals in the winter months. Douglas Pitt's father worked first at

the T.B. Hospital and later at the Psychiatric Hospital as a Storekeeper. His father told him about a couple of psychiatric patients who had been going out together. One day they went out for a walk together and the female patient never came back. Apparently the male patient had accused her of being unfaithful to him, he murdered her and her body was later found in the field adjacent to Watery Lane. Another tragedy occurred at the hospital when one of the female psychiatric patients committed suicide by drowning herself in one of the water tanks.

Stan Smith started working at St. Wulstan's Hospital as Assistant Engineer. He lived with his wife and family at 19 The Crescent, next door to Ronnie Stott who was the Hospital Engineer. When Ronnie left St. Wulstan's, Stan took over his role, responsible for the maintenance of the site and buildings. The Health Authority decided to have their own Fire Service at the hospital and purchased a second-hand fire engine. The Hospital's Reserve Voluntary Fire Brigade was manned by volunteers, including Stan Smith. On 19th July 1984 one of the schizophrenic patients started a fire in the day room in one of the wards. This was put out by the Hospital's Voluntary Brigade, assisted by the Hereford & Worcester County Brigade. No-one was hurt, but the blaze caused £45,000 worth of damage.

Another former member of staff who had worked at St. Wulstan's as a Nursing Assistant for 12 months completed her Registered Mental Nurse (R.M.N) training there.

During her time as a Nursing Assistant she worked under Sister Pat McCann on Blue Unit which comprised a nurses' office, a kitchen area and larder, lounge and dining area, bathrooms, several single rooms for patients who wanted privacy and a large dormitory area where the most of the patients slept. Each patient had a wardrobe for their personal possessions and a little laundry box marked with their name which was collected regularly. For some patients who had been there for a long time, it was their home too. "One of the things that St. Wulstan's certainly had for people was peace and sanctuary if they wanted it.



The Hospital's Voluntary Fire Crew and Engine

The grounds were absolutely fabulous and people were free to go and wander into the village if they wanted to” she said, or “go into town on the bus”. Most of the staff, both medical and domestic, tended to remain at St. Wulstan’s for a very long time which helped give the patients a sense of stability in their lives. “I think St. Wulstan’s was pretty unique” she said. “People were given hope, they had a path to work towards, and I’m quite proud to have been a part of it”.

Trevor Haselton moved to St. Wulstan’s in November 1981 where he worked as a Charge Nurse for 4 years. He lived with his wife, Pat, and their family in the first bungalow in The Crescent. Pat remembers that The Crescent was especially beautiful in the spring when all the blossom trees were out in full bloom. “We had a constant stream of visitors to St. Wulstan’s, all who still remember it as something unique” she said. They saw lots of squirrels and foxes in the vicinity and one night a huge owl landed on their front garden. “In the summer we would sit on the front lawn and watch the cricket. It was such a lovely setting and a great community”.

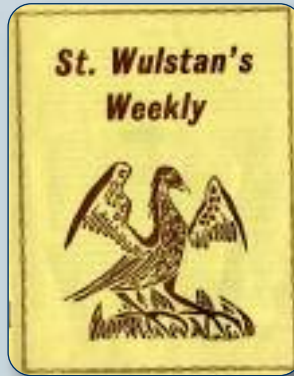


Blossom time in The Crescent

St. Wulstan’s had a thriving Staff Sports & Social Club. Dances were held regularly and there was a weekly Whist Drive. Mary Williams remembers walking up to the Wells Road and catching the 144 bus into Malvern to buy prizes for the whist drive. Darts and snooker matches were frequently held and cricket matches between the hospital staff and local villagers were arranged. There were weekly film shows. The Social Club organised day trips in the summer to places such as Barry Island, and also arranged a Bonfire Night each year when parkin and toffee apples were served. At Christmas time parties were organised for the children and staff and on Christmas Eve “Father Christmas” would visit the staff houses giving out presents to all the children. The staff decorated trees for all the wards and parties for the patients were held in each ward, followed by carol singing. Other festivities included a staff Christmas dinner, Variety Show, film show, Boxing Day Bingo and a New Year’s Eve dance.



1985 Christmas Programme cover.



St. Wulstan's Weekly

The hospital had its own cricket team made up from both medical staff and support staff. They often played against a team made up of the psychiatric patients and also other local psychiatric hospital teams such as Powick, Coney Hill and Rubery. Following a game of cricket refreshments were served in the Hospital Club House. St. Wulstan's produced its own newsletter "St. Wulstan's Weekly" and the flagpole from the American days was used regularly at the hospital, with the Union Jack being flown on special occasions such as the Queen's birthday.

During his time as Minister of Malvern Baptist Church, Geoffrey Rusling inaugurated the John Merton Society. At the suggestion of The Rev. Scott Wells, who was the Free Church Chaplain at St. Wulstan's Hospital and also a member of the Baptist Church, members of this Society were involved with entertaining patients from St. Wulstan's both at the Church Hall in Abbey Road and at the hospital. These socials were held once a month on a Saturday. Patients were transported from the hospital by bus and the ones that had been sectioned out and were living in the community were collected by car and taken to the Church Hall for tea and games. Refreshments were provided by the volunteers and the patients were then entertained with games, slide shows and sing-songs. A group of ladies called



Stan Smith, the Hospital Engineer, raising the Union Jack

“The Ladybirds” who wore long dresses and gloves performed songs, dances and sketches. At Christmas time the volunteers held a party for the patients in the Church Hall. The Hall was decorated with a Christmas tree and the patients were given a meal and a small present each. The volunteers from the John Murton Society also visited the patients at the hospital, talking to them and entertaining them with sing-songs. They sang carols in the Hospital Chapel at Christmas time.

One of the volunteers, Edith Hartwright, who was in charge of refreshments at the Church Hall recalls serving the patients with “loaves of sandwiches, cakes, pie tarts – everything. On special days they had fruit and cream”. Her husband, John, who helped out with these socials, also held carpentry workshops at the hospital teaching woodwork to the patients as part of their occupational therapy treatment. He even helped the patients make a complete set of wooden fronted cupboards which the Church used. Edith says he loved his job. “He used to say if he was a millionaire he wouldn’t want to do anything different. He loved helping people”. Edith also provided a half-way house for some of the patients who were thought to be ready to go out into the community. Many of the patients were in their 40’s and 50’s and had been at St. Wulstan’s for a very long time. Edith recalls one particular patient “She came to us, but she just couldn’t cope, she’d been there for so long”. The John Murton Society continued to provide socials for the St. Wulstan’s patients for several years after the hospital closed.

Ronald Clews was employed by the NHS as a Building Supervisor and he regularly visited St. Wulstan’s to carry out refurbishment and redecoration work. One unusual feature of the original war-time buildings he noticed was that the bricks had been laid on edge. “They weren’t built normally flat with the wall being 4½ inches wide” he said. “The bricks were laid on edge so that walls were only 3 inches wide”. He was responsible for redecorating up to 4 wards in any one year and also upgrading some of the ward kitchens. Work on the kitchens had to be done overnight and at weekends so the kitchens could still be used during the day. “That was a bit difficult” he said “because everything had to be put away in the morning for the caterers to come in and cook the food for the patients and then we’d start again at 7 o’clock at night and work through the night”. Decorating the wards involved moving the patients out of the ward and moving all the furniture into the middle of the room and covering it over. As most of the patients smoked a lot, the nicotine on the ceilings had to be

washed off before the redecorating work could start. “Then when it was finished, start to get them all back in again and clean it and then we’d move on to the next ward”.

Ronald later took over maintenance of the grounds and gardens. He recalls one day visiting Mick Fletcher, now Head Gardener, down in one of the orchards. “I went down and there were two men asleep under the tree with gardening tools by the side of them. And I thought: Gardeners asleep in the day? This is really strange, and I went further on – another one asleep under the tree with his gardening tools. And I thought: What’s going on here?” It turned out that they were patients who helped out in the gardens as part of their therapy treatment. He also remembers the large water towers on site which were used as header tanks. It was a great source of amusement to Ronald that Stan Smith used one particular water tower situated by the boiler house to keep fish in. “He had to go up one day to check something on the water tank and he came down and said ‘Well all my fish have died’” recalls Ronald. He also recalls how a lot of the asbestos roofs on the buildings were ripped off during a great storm in 1976. “Can you go to St. Wulstan’s and can you sort all the problems out” he was told. “It was horrendous. I couldn’t believe it” he recalls. “We had to rope the roofs on temporary. It took weeks and weeks to put right”. Ronald also remembers the original coal-fired boiler which served the hospital. “It was a huge black boiler” he recalls. “Six metres high and probably as wide”. It started failing in the early 70’s and was replaced with several decentralised boiler houses.

St. Wulstan’s was much more integrated with the local community than might be the case nowadays. Patients often went out to the local shops in Upper Welland and Malvern Wells. “The patients had the freedom of going out. They had everything they wanted” said Dorothy Lisseman. John Tretheway also recalls “We used to see patients around the village. They caused no problem – it was just an acceptable part of Wells life”. Local residents watched and often took part in the cricket matches that were held in the hospital grounds. They visited the Staff Sports & Social Club and the local children regularly attended the Friday night disco’s held in the hospital.

The hospital was under threat of closure for a number of years before its eventual closure in 1986. Moves were made for closure in 1975 and a campaign was launched to keep it open. Dr. William T. Query, an American doctor and former Senior Psychologist at St. Wulstan’s, added his voice to the campaign.

“The pioneering work carried out at St. Wulstan’s Hospital was an example to the rest of the world” he said. He had followed the growth and development of the hospital for a decade and written a book on its unique philosophy in caring for the mentally disturbed. “This relatively small hospital would, I sincerely believed at the time, be duplicated throughout the Western World where human work and care for the emotionally ill would be wedded into a reversal of the century-old custodial institution” he wrote in a letter to the Malvern Gazette. “It would be extremely discouraging to see such an example as this hospital close when we here in America are now beginning to emulate it” he added.

Of the 1,000 patients referred to the hospital since it opened in 1961, St. Wulstan’s had a 95% success rate in terms of getting patients to the point where they were willing to undertake some form of regular work. It had a total discharge rate of 50% at a time when nationally only 1 in 20 patients were being discharged from mental hospitals. Mr. Michael Spicer, M.P. for South Worcestershire, took the fight to keep St. Wulstan’s Hospital open to the House of Commons. “To my knowledge there is no other hospital comparable to St. Wulstan’s in this country” he said. “What a tragedy it would be if, once again, we were to set in motion a process of undermining and eventually killing off yet another centre of excellence in our nation” he added.

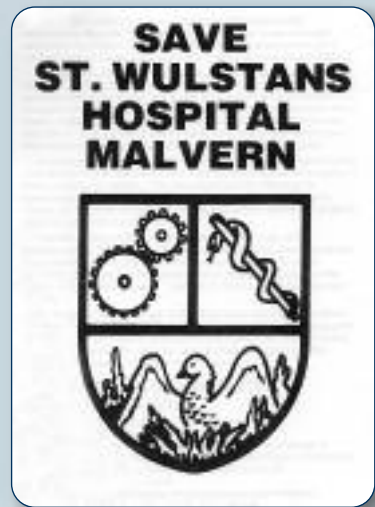
St. Wulstan’s survived the 1975 scare, but was threatened with closure again only two years later in 1977. David Roberts who was the Hospital Administrator at the time organised the patients into helping to whitewash the local stone which was used to spell out the words “SAVE ST. WULSTAN’S” which could be seen from the Malvern Hills. Following fierce opposition and a strike by staff at the hospital, St. Wulstan’s won a reprieve which guaranteed that the hospital would remain open for another five years.



Judge's postcard
reproduced from a postcard printed by Judges of Hastings
(c) unknown

In 1981 a fact-finding team reported on the running of the hospital and in May 1982 the Regional Health Authority once again considered closure. In September 1982 the Secretary of Worcester Community Health Council wrote a report outlining “the historical circumstances which have led to recent developments causing further uncertainty over the future of St. Wulstan’s Psychiatric Rehabilitation Hospital”. In April 1983 a Consultation Document produced by Worcester & District Health Authority reported that “The hospital had been built quickly and of very basic construction for the war period and was expected to have a limited life. The buildings had been subject to conversions and upgradings in 1950, 1960 and 1978 but the basic structure had been altered little”. In June 1984 Kenneth Clarke, Minister of Health, “gave approval in principle to the closure of St. Wulstan’s Hospital once the present patients (currently 214) had been assessed and found suitable accommodation elsewhere”.

Despite passionate opposition by many of those involved, St. Wulstan’s Hospital eventually closed for the last time at the end of 1986. The patients, many of whom had lived there for a number of years, were suddenly expected to return to their home areas. Of the 143 remaining resident patients at St. Wulstan’s, 54 were transferred to Powick Hospital, some were re-homed in staffed hostels such as Sheffield House in Barnards Green while others went into bed and breakfast accommodation and struggled with a loss of structure in their lives.



Chapter 6 – Occupation by Squatters – August 1990 to January 1991.

Following closure of the Psychiatric Hospital in 1986, the buildings remained empty and derelict for several years, although the site was used briefly by the Police Force for riot training purposes.

In 1987 the Malvern Hills Ecology Party conducted a survey of public opinion about the future use of St. Wulstan’s Hospital. In January 1989 Bovis Homes,

who had an option to buy the land, made an application to build 50 houses on part of the St. Wulstan's Hospital site and to refurbish the nine former staff bungalows in The Crescent. Malvern Wells Parish Council, who has a statutory right to see all planning applications, took the view that before they commented on this proposal they would need to consult the local people. A General Meeting was held on 15th January 1990, at Malvern Wells Village Hall, and it was packed out by local people who had gone along to express their views. As the entrance to the site was unadopted, many of them were worried about losing parts of their gardens for a new access road to the site. They were also concerned about the possible increased amount of traffic and the fact that the building work would disrupt the peace and quiet of the area. Some even voiced the opinion that the land should be returned to its former agricultural use.

In August 1990 nine families of squatters (12 adults and 8 children under the age of 10) in urgent need of housing moved into the derelict staff bungalows in The Crescent. The nine bungalows had been vandalised and the water and electricity supplies had been disconnected. The Malvern Families, as they became known, were all from the local area. Many of them were homeless as leases expired or as temporary accommodation came to an end and they could not afford the high prices of local rented accommodation. Andree Treymayne, who occupied one of the bungalows, told a reporter from the Malvern Gazette "We just want to get these houses back into use – they are perfectly habitable and they are not that old". The families set about repairing floors and doors, replacing smashed windows and decorating the bungalows. They cut the waist-high grass and started clearing the over-grown gardens. They collected their water from wells on the Malvern Hills, and used camping stoves for cooking. One of them even managed to rig up a power supply. A community spirit prevailed - people helped each other out, shared transport and resources and got together to eat by candle light in front of their open fires and small wood stoves. "It really did feel like a little haven" said Sue Black. "There was no traffic so the children could run around, play on their bikes and make dens".

Some of the Malvern Families were part of a co-operative housing association, The Homestead Housing Project, which hoped to renovate the bungalows and rent them from the West Midlands Health Authority on short-term leases. Mr. Michael Spicer, the Conservative M.P. for South Worcestershire and also Housing Minister at the time, supported the squatters' fight for short term tenancies on the houses. "I am very unhappy about the under utilisation of the bungalows on the old St. Wulstan's hospital site" he told the Malvern Gazette. "I understand, of course, the authority wishes to sell this land but under the Government's new short-hold tenancies, the authority would have the complete right to repossess these properties after six months. I think it right, both in terms of the authority earning rent from these properties and in terms of provided extra accommodation, that these properties should be rented out as soon as possible in as far as they are fit for dwelling" he added. At the time Malvern Hills District Council had the worst housing problem in Hereford & Worcester.



Squatters at St. Wulstan's
courtesy the Malvern Gazette, a Newsquest publication

The Birmingham Housing Association (SHAPE) presented proposals to the West Midlands Health Authority for a two year lease and renovation programme. SHELTER, the charity for the homeless, and the Bournville Trust also supported the project.

Another aim of the Homestead Housing Project was to find some land in the Malvern area on which to build affordable eco-housing using alternative energy. The site at St. Wulstan's seemed to be the ideal place. Whilst they hoped to initially rent the bungalows, they also hoped, with the aid of various grants, to eventually buy the bungalows and some of the land with a view to providing self-build affordable accommodation to rent to members of their co-operative. However the WMHA had already agreed to sell the land to Bovis Homes for residential development and subsequently issued eviction notices on the Malvern Families. In October 1990 the squatters were due to be evicted from

the bungalows, but gained a temporary reprieve while they appealed against a County Court Order made at Worcester Crown Court. However, they lost their subsequent Appeal and were finally evicted by the High Sheriff on 28th January 1991, bringing to an end five months of legal argument. This has a very emotional impact on the Malvern Families who had seen St. Wulstan's as "a place of peace and hope". As Sue Black recalls "It was very traumatic. It split up relationships, split up friendships". Some of the families were housed in local bed and breakfast accommodation, while others went to stay with friends of even left the country altogether.

Armed with crowbars, the bailiffs entered the nine bungalows at St. Wulstan's where the Malvern Families had been living. They broke down barricades and were forced to drag some of the squatters out. They dumped any remaining furniture and belongings outside the bungalows. Chris Murphy, one of the first squatters to move into the bungalows, told the Malvern Gazette "We just decided we are not going to go without making a statement. The reality is that this is a scandal. These buildings will be empty once we've left".



One of the squatters being evicted
courtesy the Malvern Gazette, a Newsquest publication

In January 1991 plans were approved for residential development on part of the former hospital site. The scheme proposed by Bovis Homes was to develop a 40-acre plot on the site while the remaining 60 acres would become a semi-wooded common for use by the local community.

Jan Bowden, who moved into the area in 1992, recalls the charm and fascination of the overgrown hospital site. "It was a real sort of ' Sleeping Beauty' land really". She recalls literally cutting her way through some of the narrow slab paths that ran around the decaying hospital buildings with their windows falling out and roofs falling in. There were wild roses growing everywhere and an abundance of wildlife, including badgers, brown bats, foxes, hares, rabbits and muntjac deer.

Despite several appeals, planning approval was eventually granted to Bovis Homes on 28th July 1994. One of the planning conditions was that Bovis cleared the whole of the hospital site, including the area which was subsequently dedicated to Malvern Hills District Council and now forms the Nature Reserve.



St. Wulstan's Hospital before demolition



St. Wulstan's Hospital after demolition

During the demolition work the contractors occasionally dug up ammunition from World War Two. Jan Bowden recalls how the whole site came to an amazing standstill one day when a couple of very old shell cases were discovered. The entire site and the road leading to it had to be cleared before the shell cases were checked and then removed.

Bovis Homes finally started the first phase of the residential development in 1996. This comprised building the new homes to north of St. Wulstan's Drive, St. Peter's Close and The Crescent, plus refurbishment of the 9 bungalows. The remaining development to the south of St. Wulstan's Drive was completed by Cala Homes (Midlands) Limited in 1998.

7. Formation of St. Wulstan's Nature Reserve

Malvern Hills District Council now had to decide what to do with the remaining land which comprised areas of formal landscaped garden, hay meadows, scrub and woodland. Jan Bowden, who was a District Councillor at the time, had a meeting with Dr. Peter Holmes from English Nature, and it was at this meeting that the idea of turning it into a nature reserve was first suggested. Carly Tinkler, who worked as a Design Officer for Malvern Hills District Council, was also involved with the nature reserve from a very early stage. "She was experienced with dealing with wildlife on site and very determined that this site was going to be a good one" as Jan Bowden recalls. After consultation with Dr. Holmes and extensive help from Jan Bowden, Carly prepared an application for status as a Local Nature Reserve. Following an inspection and Report by Dr. Holmes, the Council agreed at a meeting on 18th September, 1996, that the land "should be designated as a Local Nature Reserve for nature conservation purposes and that it should be known as St. Wulstan's Local Nature Reserve." Carly produced a planting plan for the site and did a lot of research into what types of seed should be sown and what kinds of trees and shrubs should be planted. "It was one of the most worthwhile projects I have done" she said.

The site was landscaped before being officially designated and opened as St. Wulstan's Local Nature Reserve on 25th April 1997. The official opening ceremony was conducted by Councillor John Tretheway and was one of the last civic duties he carried out as Chairman of Malvern Hills District Council. As he recalls "It was a horrible wet day. We had a lot of people there, including children from the local schools". The 22 hectare reserve, situated on the eastern slopes of the Malvern Hills, is a mixture of ancient woodland and grassland, with ornamental trees that have been planted by hospital patients among the native species. It is a haven for birds and butterflies, including the Brimstone butterfly which has become the Nature Reserve's emblem. Following a meeting at Malvern Wells Parish Hall a volunteer group was set up to help protect and manage the site. Janet Davies, Assistant Planning Officer at Malvern Hills District Council, said that the meeting gave people a chance to find out about the history of the Reserve. "The site was used as a hospital and an American base, and so one of the aims is to maintain the cultural associations of the site so people won't forget there's a history" she said.

It was at their first work party, on Sunday 12th September 1997, that the newly-

formed Volunteer Group discovered an original hospital path whilst clearing the undergrowth. This path led down from what was the main part of the American hospital to the staff accommodation, including the Matron's accommodation, and has now been named "Matron's Path". The base of the original flagpole from the American days has also been discovered. Another of their tasks was to lay out the car parking area and then decide the best routes for the various footpaths. George Roberts, who at 85 is our oldest volunteer, and the brother of David Roberts, helped to cut these paths with a strimmer earning his nickname "Strimmer George".



George "Strimmer" Roberts

Other work carried out by members of the Volunteer Group have included tree and hedge planting, hedge-laying, clearing scrub and managing the grassland, installing benches and putting up bird boxes. Glow-worm counts and butterfly and reptile surveys have also been carried out by members of the volunteer group.

In March 1998 a Site Management Plan, prepared for the District Council, was published. This included a five year work program of habitat management for the Reserve. The St. Wulstan's Local Nature Reserve group was constituted in June 2000. The group continued to work on the Reserve, working to the management plan. Although the group worked hard, they struggled to carry out all the work in the plan.

Concerns about what might happen to the nature reserve were the catalyst for the formation of the St. Wulstan's Residents' Association, whose membership is drawn from those living in the immediate vicinity of the Reserve. This group, constituted in November 2003, keeps informed about the management of the Reserve and lobbies to protect it when appropriate.

Malvern Hills District Council gave some assistance, but recognized that they did not have the expertise to manage a Local Nature Reserve. The District Council entered into discussions with Worcestershire County Council Countryside Service and in December 2004 a service level agreement for management of the Reserve was signed. An action plan drawn up in December 2004 as part of the service level agreement guided work up to March 2007. The initial 2-year agreement was extended to the end of March 2007 during which time a ten year management plan for the Reserve was written. A further 3-year agreement, to April 2010, followed.



Members of the LNR Group planting the commemorative Whitebeam

In 2007 celebrations were held to celebrate the Reserve's 10th Anniversary and a commemorative Whitebeam tree was subsequently planted by the St. Wulstan's Local Nature Reserve Group.

In July 2008 St. Wulstan's Local Nature Reserve was awarded the Green Flag Award in recognition of attaining the national standard for greenspaces in England and Wales. Find out more by visiting the St. Wulstan's website at: www.stwulstans.org.uk

Contributors

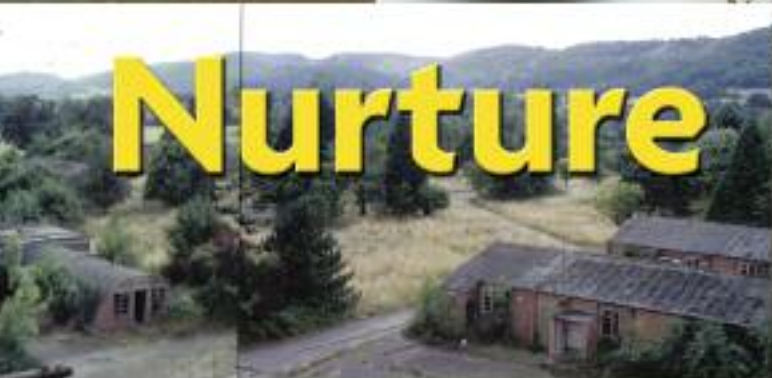
Chris and Rachel Adams
Barry Allison
Peter Allison
Mrs. Susan Black
Jan Bowden
Bruce Capstick
Ronald Clews
Norman Curnock
Trevor and Pat Haselton
Mrs. Edith Hartwright
Dr. Peter Holmes
Mrs. Dorothy Lisseman
Andy Lyon
Malvern Baptist Church
Malvern Gazette
Malvern Museum

Gethin Newbold
Frederick Orme
Mrs. Lidia Palmer
Douglas Pitt
George Roberts
Mrs. Irene Rootes
John T. Shook
Mrs. Joyce Smith
John and Christine Stead
Carly Tinkler
John Tretheway
Mrs. Mavis Wadley
Keith Wagstaff
Brian Wilcox
Miss Mary Williams





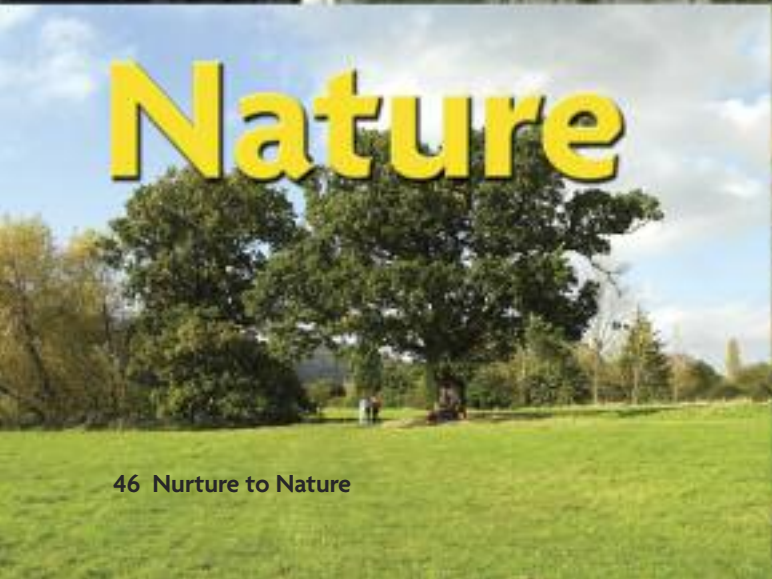
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For more information about St. Wulstans Local Nature Reserve or any of the other sites managed by Worcestershire County Council's Countryside Service please call the Worcestershire Hub on tel: 01905 766493 or visit www.worcestershire.gov.uk/countryside

