

Susan Piddock once again comes to our aid with another excellent piece, this time about the New Norfolk Asylum situated some 20 miles outside Hobart, Tasmania.

### **The New Norfolk Hospital for the Insane.**

The New Norfolk Hospital for the Insane was not a purpose built a lunatic asylum rather it was to grow out of the need to provide for the insane among the convict invalids. The town of New Norfolk was located 22 miles from what was to become the capital of Tasmania, Hobart Town. Situated on the river Derwent, the town was accessible by boat and by road. In 1827 it was decided to use the invalid barracks at New Norfolk for all the colony's invalids. Due to poor conditions in the two room building, Dr. Robert Officer, the District Surgeon in charge of the establishment requested a new building. A positive reply was received and Officer and the Police Magistrate of New Norfolk, W. H. Hamilton sought a site and prepared a plan of the proposed Hospital. The hospital plan appears from a surviving map sent by Hamilton to Governor Arthur to be a u-shaped building designed to house sixty convict invalids and importantly ten lunatics. The hospital included accommodation for the Medical Superintendent and occasional patients. Arthur approved the proposal and the Colonial Engineer John Lee Archer was asked to prepare a final plan which was ready by 1829. Hamilton indicated in his letter of Feb. 5<sup>th</sup> 1829 that there was an area of 4 acres behind the intended building that could be made into vegetable gardens, and he recommended its inclusion in the purchase.

A letter from Arthur to the Engineers indicated that, by late 1829, the Hospital was now to accommodate 100 men with two rooms for the Superintendent's use. But the Colonial Secretary noted that this plan did not have any dining rooms or the lunatic ward of Officer's plan. Arthur thought that one of the invalid wards could serve this purpose. Hamilton and Officer by this time had selected a new location across Burnett street from the first location, which had been near the parsonage and closer to the Lachlan Creek.

Arthur ordered work to begin on the Invalid Establishment which the Colonial Engineer Archer did not believe could be completed by the end of summer. Delays in obtaining materials appear to have slowed work in March.

There is no indication of when the Hospital was actually opened. From mid to late 1830 Dr. Officer was seeking a overseer and matron for the hospital so it may have opened some time around late 1830 or early 1831.

By June 1831, possibly in response to a request by Governor Arthur, Dr. Officer had prepared a plan of a building suitable for housing insane persons at New Norfolk. Archer approved of the plan with the only suggested change being a change from small windows to small skylights or trunks in the ceiling to ventilate and light the cells. In August Archer informed the Colonial Secretary that additions to New Norfolk would cost £604 0s. 2d. Along with asking Officer for a plan, Governor Arthur had also appointed a Board of three military officers, J. Logan, J. Briggs and J. Russell to consider the best means of providing medical assistance to insane persons or sick paupers – the Board defined these as free rather than convict. They found that insane individuals were being accommodated in the Colonial Hospital at Hobart town which was small, confined and not secure, while others roamed the street. The Board supported the erection of a suitable building for the insane adjoining the Invalid Hospital: “The building should be sufficiently large and well-enclosed to allow of the lunatics being kept under that restraint and moral discipline which can alone (sic) their comfort and security, or hold out a prospect of their being ultimately cured.”

The Colonial Surgeon, J. Scott offered a different view in believing that any accommodation for the insane should be close to the greatest number of people and removal to the asylum should be as easy as possible: “the early placing of such patients under proper treatment with as little harassment as possible to both body and mind increases the chance of recovery.” It was decided to go with the Board’s recommendation and work was begun in 1832. The design chosen saw the lunatic buildings being arranged around a courtyard with the rear of the hospital forming one wall.

The New Norfolk Invalid Hospital and Lunatic Asylum was funded by the Imperial Government because the establishment was intended for convicts for whom they were responsible. Free persons could only be admitted to Colonial Hospitals in cases of extreme poverty and by written permission of the Colonial Secretary. It is unclear whether the same restriction was placed on the admission of the insane, possibly the numbers involved did

not make the matter so urgent. As in late 1833 there was only 20 lunatics compared to 89 invalids. In 1834 the number had risen to 136 and 300 in early 1836 (including 3 children). Officer in a letter to the Colonial Surgeon dated 27<sup>th</sup> June 1836 indicated the need for additional buildings, particular as it was impossible to achieve any classification among the lunatics based on their malady or constitution of mind: “under such circumstances, the chance of recovery is greatly lessened and their domestic comforts (a most necessary part in their treatment), sadly diminished”

One of the few surviving plans of the Hospital, dating to 1829 and including the proposed additions of 1836, shows it to be composed of two squares with the invalids occupying the front section and the lunatics the rear. This rear quadrangle was divided into male and female sections. Roger Kelsall's plan and elevation shows a modified H plan with extensions to the right and left of the back building line. Some rooms are identifiable, while on others the legend is not clear. On the left hand side of the front quadrangle were two wards in a two storey building extending out from an overseer's room (sic). Moving upwards there was a store room, office, dead room, wash room, two wards, a store, two wards in the dividing section, with the kitchen in the centre, then another two wards with a store in the corner. Down the right hand side were three wards, an unidentifiable room, the surgery and dispensary, an overseer's room (sic) and the two wards extending to the right. The left side of the back quadrangle had two rooms, then 12 pairs of cells, a ward and a store in the corner. Along the back was a washhouse, kitchen, Superintendent's Quarters, a second kitchen, and a store in the corner. The right side was composed of a ward, 14 cells, and then a second ward. The interior space was divided into male and female divisions with a chapel near the kitchen. From available documentation it appears the chapel was never built.

Two extensions formed a continuation of the back wall. The buildings (identically arranged) were composed of two rooms marked 'overseers', a passage containing a staircase, a large lunatic ward which appears to have some form of open partitions dividing the space, a second staircase passage, two large wards, another staircase passage, and two wards again. These

extensions were separated from the original building by small yards, with privies located in the yards.

Along the outside of the main buildings were six yards of different sizes equipped with privies. From modern photographs of Willow Court (taken in 2000), which formed the front courtyard, it appears that there were rooms above the centre block, and at the corners and ends of the building range. It is possible that the centre rooms may have been accommodation for one of the Superintendents. It is possible to speculate the other rooms may have been additional wards. There is certainly no indication of day rooms on the plan. The accommodation was basic in the extreme. There were no bathrooms and water closets were only placed in the yards. The centre wall through the yard along with the Superintendent's quarters divided the back quadrangle into male and female divisions. The provision of two kitchens took this separation to the extreme and, interestingly from a gender perspective, the washhouse was on the male side rather than the female. The separation of the invalids and lunatics was maintained through the dividing building only opening onto the front quadrangle.

There is very little evidence about the conditions under which the insane were being kept at New Norfolk for these early years. Concerns about the management of New Norfolk and its closed nature found vent in the *Colonial Times and Tasmanian* of December 10<sup>th</sup> 1847. The Editorial clearly indicates that New Norfolk was a convict establishment in the eyes of its inmates who did not welcome free people who paid heavy fees to be there. The Editor also expressed the belief that no cure was being attempted rather inmates were imprisoned, a factor that had led to mental derangement in the first place for some. Visitors were not welcome at New Norfolk, which was viewed as an attempt to hide what went on behind the walls. A view echoed by John Morgan of Hobart who in a letter in *The Hobart Town Courier* of June 7<sup>th</sup> 1855 indicated that no records were kept nor inquests conducted, and in fact a secret Bastille system was still be practised in Tasmania with no regulation of the administration of New Norfolk or public monitoring of the asylum. This latter factor the Editor of the *Courier* believed was a consequence of the financial control of the institution by England and a lack of

legislative power among Tasmanians. This was to change with the handing over of the New Norfolk establishment to the Colony on October 18<sup>th</sup> 1855.

### **From An Imperial to A Colonial Establishment**

With the change in responsibility came the establishment of a Board of Commissioners who were given charge of the New Norfolk Hospital, and the first snapshot of conditions within the Hospital. The Commissioners were to find much wrong with the Hospital as indicated in their initial report to the Governor:

... its condition very far behind that of similar institutions in the Mother Country. The internal accommodation of the several buildings were small, badly constructed, ill ventilated, dark dismal, while the day rooms, so called, afforded very inadequate convenience for the purpose intended. The yards and grounds were subdivided by high walls, and the spaces allotted for exercise and outdoor recreation were of the most limited character.

The 100 women resident in the Hospital had the use of two small yards of less than a quarter acre each. The adjoining three acre paddock was forbidden to them. The Male division had a walled garden of a quarter acre. Two small enclosed yards of a quarter acre each were in use for unquiet inmates, and a small area in front of the hospital was used by quiet and convalescent inmates. There was no classification of the inmates in the wards.

In response to these conditions the Commissioners were to begin what was to be a cycle of requests that sought to reshape the New Norfolk Hospital. The first priority was the replacement of the cells, particularly the wooden ones. The second priority was the provision of separate accommodation for those of a superior rank, 12 of each sex, in a secluded part of the grounds. The Commissioners further recommended that an area be enclosed to allow the separation of the “worst” females from the quiet, and that verandahs be built to offer shade and exercise areas in wet weather.

There was an almost immediate response by the Colonial Government to the problems at New Norfolk as extensive repairs were undertaken in January 1856 to the value of £1,209 8s.; while a verandah for the female yard was being built.

In 1856 the Commissioners indicated that they wished for a residence for the underkeepers, a chapel, suitable accommodation for 6 males and 6 females of the inferior rank of life, a lodge at the front gate, a further house in the female division and a new kitchen. While Tasmania was facing bankruptcy in 1857 work was begun on building the cottage for superior male patients in 1858 and the female additions were in plan form in early 1859. Plans had also been drawn up for the proposed additions to the Male Division cells and to improve ventilation and heating. A new laundry and store in the Female ward was also planned. Most of these planned changes were completed by 1861.

### **Bishop Willson and the New Norfolk Hospital for the Insane**

In 1858 the first Roman Catholic Bishop of Hobart, Robert William Willson was appointed to the Board of Commissioners placed in charge of New Norfolk and he began the task of seeking major improvements to the Hospital through a series of letters to the Colonial Secretary.

New Norfolk resembled nothing more than a prison. Gloomy ill-ventilated dark cells, prison walled yards, swarms of vermin in the wooden buildings, no classification at all with the noisy and offensive mixed with the delicate and tranquil, the congenital idiot with the recently admitted, the imbecile with the neat in habits. Conditions were so bad that even Dr. Conolly or Mr. Gardiner Hill, who instituted reforms in England, could do little with the place Bishop Willson believed. The front part was imperfectly arranged and 70 cells to the rear were unfit for use and reconstruction was out of the question.

In reply to Bishop Willson's letter, E. S. P. Bedford, President of the Board of Commissioners at New Norfolk while admitting that the cells were gloomy and ill-ventilated, that classification of the patients was impossible, and the buildings a patchwork, argued they were not prison-like and the yards not gloomy. In defence Bedford indicated that:

A place of confinement for Lunatics, including

many of a dangerous character, must from the necessity of security, ever partake to some extent of the nature of a prison-house.

Bedford did agree with Willson that there was ongoing problems with the buildings, and importantly noted that even when improved to their uttermost: “the inherent defects in their construction will probably preclude the possibility of arriving at that perfection which is to be desired.” Much needed to be done to improve the existing buildings as the Commissioners had ceaselessly urged on the Government.

They noted that a house had been erected for the more refined male patients and a vote of money had been obtained for a female house and alterations to some of the cells and work would begin soon. The Commissioners were to hope that the Government would continue to unhesitatingly vote moderate sums to improve New Norfolk. They felt judicious internal arrangements would go a long way to improving the institution.

The site of New Norfolk the Commissioners felt was healthy, with a good supply of water, sufficiently far from Hobart to prevent idle visitors from disturbing the patients and surrounded by cheerful scenery

### **The Joint Committee of 1859**

In response to Bishop Willson’s letters and general concerns about New Norfolk a Joint Committee was appointed in mid 1859 to *take into consideration the Correspondence which has passed between the Government and Certain Individuals regarding the Accommodation and Site of the Hospital for the Insane at New Norfolk*. This combined with the New Norfolk Commissioners first Annual Report for the same year gives a unique insight into the buildings of the Hospital and what was seen as the role of the Hospital in the management of the insane at New Norfolk.

The question being addressed by the Joint Committee was whether the present Hospital should be added to or an entirely new building erected on a site closer to Hobart Town incorporating all the improvements the recent experience of the cure of the insane indicated were needed. The Joint

Committee found a great many deficiencies that: "have been allowed to exist for too long" on examining the position of the asylum, the extent of the grounds, and the accommodation provided especially with regard to the health, classification, occupation and recreation of the inmates.

The site of the Hospital (also referred to as an asylum in the Report) they considered healthy and cheerful, but distant from Hobart Town (22 miles). Although this was slightly offset by access by steamer via the Derwent River. The site had ready access to water and overall covered 10 acres, 1 rod, 34 perches. Parts of the site were given over to gardens and a cow paddock. The Hospital was bounded by roads and the Lachlan Creek. Across the road from the Hospital was a Government owned paddock of 5a. 3r. 31p. which the Committee believed could be put to the use of the Hospital if the road was closed. Exhibiting a knowledge of English asylum practices which appears to have been common among medical practitioners and some lay people in the colony, the Committee noted that this 17 acres would be less than the recommended one acre per four patients (New Norfolk housed 205 inmates at the time) which allowed land for field work and gardening among the patients. Consequently they also recommended the purchase of a further 9 acres between the eastern boundary and the Lachlan Creek. They went on recommended the purchase of the rented house occupied by the Medical Superintendent opposite the main entrance to the Hospital which would add a further 4 acres.

The growth from a Infirmary for Incurables into a Hospital for the Insane had resulted in a range of buildings that were unsuited to their purpose, particularly as the insane required totally different accommodation than that of wards for sick convicts. In 1859 the men had been divided into 3 classes each with their own yard. The First class had the use of an area of ground flanking the main entrance, they appear to have been using the original hospital buildings which formed a U shape. They had the use of a verandah and an eating room but no day room for indoor activities. The dormitories they were using were designed to hold 6 inmates but were housing between 10 and 15 men. These rooms were ill-lit and without proper ventilation. They required re-building in the eyes of the witnesses.

The Second class were housed in enclosed inner quadrangle behind the original buildings. This had a veranda along one side and cells for accommodation, which were considered worse than those at Hobart Gaol. The Committee recommended that the interior be stripped and rebuilt as a corridor ward with improved light and ventilation. The inmates were restricted to this small gravelled yard with occasional access to the front yard. This the Committee felt was “antagonistic to any curative process”.

The location of the Third class yard was not precisely indicated although the Committee Report indicates that it led out of the Second class one. As with the First class there was a verandah for day time use but exercising space was limited to the enclosed yard for these violent and excited inmates, with a few working outside. The cells were the same as those of the Second class.

While the New Norfolk Commissioners intended to re-arrange these cells and money had been voted for this purpose by Parliament in 1858, the Committee seemed to think before this went ahead some thought should be given to a replacement of the buildings. Drs. Officer and Benson had testified that the yards needed walks and plantations to enliven the mood of patients and to allow them to exercise comfortably. This the Committee did not think could be done due to the crowded placement of the central buildings that allowed no room for expansion and re-organisation might be the best option.

A detached building for men of “refined habits and education” had been recently built against the east wall of “the Male side”. This prevented persons of a higher rank from mixing with pauper patients, having to use the same quality of utensils and tables, and from sharing the prison diet. In their own building they could have the comforts of a home. It is an interesting that the Victorians associated the ability to appreciate a home environment with social class, and seems more a way to reinforce the sense of social superiority than having any basis in reality. The Committee felt this building should have its own kitchen to provide these patients with a better quality of cooking. Even this new building had faults: the grounds were too restricted and the wall prevented a view out. The Committee recommended the replacing of part of the wall with an iron railing and the expanding of the recreation ground in front and behind the building.

New Norfolk required an ample day room for activities to take place in. There was some employment of a handful of men in the wood-yard, garden, and tailor's and shoemaker's shop. Unfortunately the plans do not indicate where these were, they may have been temporary wooden structures. The Committee felt there was definitely a need for a larger workshop and more gardening needed to be undertaken, as exercise in the open air invigorated the mind and body. Interestingly this option was not available to women who worked inside all the time, reflecting interesting gender perceptions in terms of activities. The kitchen was deficient, and the male department needed baths. The keepers did not live in the asylum and the accommodation on offer the Committee felt would put off possible applicants along with the low rates of pay.

If the male department was defective, the women's department was far worse. Only two grades of classification were possible, and the buildings needed reconstructing. The Committee noted that money had been voted for a new women's building but the plans did not allow space for exercise and recreation, and needed reviewing. The sole day room was wretched and small. It seems likely this might have been one of the rooms originally marked as a ward or again some form of wooden building. Again a spacious day room was needed. In terms of occupations the women sewed and washed clothes. A new and large washhouse, laundry, drying room and baths were all required. It was felt that the dairy paddock could be used for additional recreation space for the women. The women of the Second class, who were violent and excitable, had the use of a narrow corridor on to which their 12 cells opened and which acted as day room and dining room. Great change was necessary with more space for occupation and exercise, the buildings needed to be better arranged and much larger.

The Committee was to be divided in their recommendations. Five Committee members recommended the erection of a new asylum, while four others considered the question of alterations to New Norfolk and the erection of a new asylum needed further consideration.

The five Committee members argued that New Norfolk as too remote from Hobart. This prevented the visits of friends of the patients, and from interested individuals as defined by Bishop Willson. Aside from pecuniary

considerations, great curative results could only be achieved in a newly constructed building: “one supplied with the modern and necessary appliances of quiet dormitories”, single cells which should be: “wholesome, well-lighted, and cleanly, with day-rooms affording liberty for inmates to pursue undisturbed their different tastes in the enjoyment of attractive in-door recreations, where out-door pursuits could always be followed,”. Classification could also be achieved. The Committee had received advice from the architect Mr. Hunter that an asylum for 200 could be built for £30,000 using the Lunatic Asylum for Counties of Cumberland and Westmoreland as described in *The Builder* as a model. Hunter believed the plans presence in this authoritative journal indicated that it would feature those modern improvements expected in every newly constructed institution and making it an ideal model.

Further the five Commissioners argued the relocation of the asylum would have financial benefits. A new building would promote more cures, which would be further supported by employing more wardsmen. While the old hospital could be again used for invalids. If a new building was not to be considered then a whole range of alterations were required. The estimated cost of these changes was around £10,000. The five Commissioners felt that no time should be lost in investigating the two options.

The dissenting four Commissioners felt that the treatment regime at New Norfolk were being undermined by the living conditions. They felt more consideration was needed of the costs of reconstructing New Norfolk to bring it closer to the English model, and the actual costs of building a new asylum. A new asylum would take time to erect and money had to be spent on New Norfolk to make partial remedies to the problems. This had to be considered in any comparison of the costs. Thus the Commissioners were recommending further research before a decision was made. There seems to have been little direct response to the Joint Committee’s Report and changing any aspect of the buildings at New Norfolk was a ongoing process where the New Norfolk Commissioners each year sought to transform aspects of the Hospital.

## **Provisions for the Insane: 1859-1882**

The New Norfolk Commissioners in their Annual Reports to the Colonial Secretary reveal quite a bit of detail about the buildings and the sought after improvements to the Hospital, while reflecting the realities of trying to achieve the changes recommended by the Joint Committee and by themselves. It is possible through these reports to trace the modifications to the Hospital infrastructure.

In their first Report, dated December 31<sup>st</sup> 1859, the Commissioners found the grounds too small in extent. The whole space within the walls was 12 acres, while a six acre field across the road from the Asylum was cultivated by the patients. The Commissioners felt this should be included within the walls. To extend the grounds the Commissioners recommended the purchase of several private properties containing 20 acres in the immediate vicinity of the Hospital. This would link the Hospital to 64 acres of Crown Land. The buildings were in many parts defective both in capacity and construction.

The Commissioners felt that the Imperial Authorities were concerned with the possibility of escape in surrounding the establishment with high brick walls. A considerable portion of these had been removed. Some of the female cells were being converted into comfortable rooms. Hoping that this cost had been approved by the Parliament, they wished to continue the transformation of the female cells then the male division. However these alterations would reduce accommodation.

In their Report of December 31<sup>st</sup> 1860 the Commissioners indicated that alterations and improvements had been completed in the Female Division. These included improved lighting and ventilation to the detached refractory building. While the provision of a separate kitchen and store room for the women had been approved. A contract had been undertaken to extend the central building and work had begun. The extension included a spacious day room, large dormitory and several smaller sleeping apartments. When this extension was complete the original day room, which appears to have been a separate building in the front of the main building, was to be torn down along with "useless walls and fences" opening up the airing court. Major changes had occurred transforming the range of cells along the north side of the back yard used by the men. These had been converted into a series of sleeping rooms opening on to a corridor 150 ft. long and 12ft. wide. A verandah ran the

length of the block. This provided a major increase in day space for the men, reminiscent of the corridor wards of English asylums. The wall, which had divided the airing court in front of this building, was to be removed creating one yard that limited classification but made them more liveable. These alterations and the planned purchase of extra land had absorbed the £6,000 provided for in the Estimates.

The southern range of buildings that helped form the backyard similarly consisted of gloomy cells and the Commissioners wished to transform these as well. A new airing court opening off the South East corner of the front of the building and extending out to the fence and the detached cottage, giving a cheerful view of the scenery, was also planned for the patients of this building. This space was currently being used as a farm yard, and a new site for this would be required.

The Commissioners believed that the planned improvements would bring New Norfolk up to the standard of similar institutions in other colonies. Presumably they were including the recommendations of the Joint Committee in this comment. The physical changes to the Hospital had had a direct effect on the patients who were improved in conduct and demeanour and mechanical restraint was abolished.

Eighteen sixty one saw the continuation of efforts to transform New Norfolk into a curative and workable institution. The “detached and inconvenient Day Room” in the Female Division had been removed and the northern end of the main building had been extended out. This provided a new Day Room of 60ft. in length and 32ft. wide, a dormitory of 60ft. by 19ft., and six small sleeping rooms. A Matron’s cottage had been erected and the Correspondence gives an interesting insight into the provision of building materials. George Green was given permission to use all materials that were fit to be of use from the former mess room (day room), engine house and lumber yard. The material appears to have included brick, and the chosen site was the north west corner of the Female Division.

The separate kitchen in the Female Division had been built, along with a wash-house, laundry, drying, and store rooms. A lodge for the gate keeper had been built in the Male Division. While the old day room in the front had been removed and gravelled walks added. An area that had been a garden

(vegetable?) had been opened up as an airing court by the removal of dividing brick walls, giving a new open area of four acres for the patients to use, and in the words of Commissioners: “has improved and enlivened this, the most conspicuous, part of the Establishment.” But much more work was still needed, problems with the detached refractory building continued, it was unskillfully constructed, confined and the windows offered no view except that of a brick wall. This was having an irritating effect on the women and was to be the next priority. As there was insufficient room on the Hospital grounds to build a Superintendent’s Residence, the Commissioners had purchased the leased house currently being used by the Superintendent for £1,000, which included 3 acres of land.

To perfect the Hospital as a curative institution, the Commissioners requested funding for:

- . . . (1<sup>st</sup>) A large Room or Hall to be erected adjoining, and in architectural harmony with, the north wing of the original main Building, for the purposes of Divine Worship, as well as for musical and other entertainments, and for the use of both sexes.
- (2<sup>nd</sup>) A new Kitchen and Bakehouse to be built in like manner, adjoining the south wing; the present Kitchen then being converted into a Bath Room.

The Commissioners sought the relocation of the water closets, the removal of the farm yard, and the alterations to the buildings mentioned in their last report. More land was also needed. The estimate cost of these recommendations was £4,500. The Commissioners hastened to add that the improvements were entirely necessary for the comfort, health and cure of the patients and all additions were plain and economical in style.

Over December 1861 - January 1862 the Commissioners purchased 9 acres, 1 rod, 27 perches of Colonel Bell’s land which was near the Hospital and across Lachlan Rd from an existing paddock. It seems likely the land was intended for agricultural uses to supply the Hospital.

The Commissioners' Report for 1862 indicted that further alterations to the buildings of the Hospital: a verandah 202ft. long and 10ft. wide had been added to the main building in the Female Division increasing living space; a day room 49ft. long, 23ft. wide and 22ft. high had been added to the women's refractory building and a large airing court was to be attached to it, much improving conditions for the women. The Head Keeper's quarters had been converted for the use of the Idiot Boys. The narrow street dividing the Hospital grounds on the north side had been closed and a day room was being planned for the space.

Despite the Commissioners requests for further funding for building works in 1863 no money was forthcoming beyond a sum of £400 left over from the Public Buildings budget. This they used it to reconstruct the last of the wooden cells in the Female Division into ventilated, spacious and well-lit apartments. Much work remained to be done and in 1864 the Commissioners required funds for a separate cottage for the treatment of a better class of female patient; and a new kitchen and bakehouse; and the conversion of the existing one into a male bathhouse. The south side of the Male Yard still had wooden cells that needed transforming into apartments. The latrines needed re-arrangement and more land was needed for vegetable growing.

In support of the provision of a ladies cottage for paying patients, the Commissioners were able to report that the fees charged for the men were sufficient to cover costs, wear and tear, and still provide a profit of £150. The baths were so bad that many men could not be bathed regularly. The male patients labour was being used to the economic advantage of the colonial authorities in that they undertook all repairs, painting and colouring of the buildings. The farm and cow-sheds were abutting the Hospital wards and the Commissioners felt this area could be turned into another airing ground if a contiguous piece of land complete with a cottage (to house an underkeeper) was purchased.

The Commissioners faced real problems in bringing New Norfolk up to European standards as the existing Hospital provided very limited opportunities due to the design and layout of the hospital, and its basic deficiencies such as a workable bath house. The Hospital lacked the apparatus for hot and cold water as well as shower baths, there was not

proper accommodation for the keepers and female attendants, and only basic storage space for supplies. The new day rooms had provided some space for activities and the removal of interior walls which opened the grounds up must have had a significant effect of removing the prison-like qualities of the Hospital. The complete rebuilding of the Hospital would require the relocation of all the inmates, which seems to be not given any real consideration despite the recommendations of some of the Joint Committee Members in 1859. Obviously the most economical option was to re-organise the Hospital as an ongoing project. Though in 1865 the Commissioners indicated that funds were very insufficient and the money they thought had been given to build a new kitchen and convert the old one to a bathroom was not in fact sufficient causing further delays.

The Report for 1865 indicates that the new kitchen was finally underway, the old one was to be converted into a bathroom and lavatory, and the Commissioners again expressed the need for a ladies cottage. The need again brought home the fact that there was no other place for the treatment of the insane in the Tasmania, public or private. While friends and relatives knew the patient at New Norfolk would be treated with all care and kindness they were: “aware of the utter want of accommodation suitable to their tastes and habits.”. The cottage (£1,200) was finally approved in 1867, as was the purchase of a cottage with 10 acres of land for the Assistant Medical Officer. The new land allowed the removal of the barn yard and cow house to outside of the Hospital walls.

Work on the ladies cottage to be located near the north angle of the Hospital grounds, giving both privacy and a view, commenced in 1868 and was completed by the end of 1869. The farm buildings and dairy were moved to their new site on the south bank of the Lachlan Rivulet. The next priority for the Commissioners was separate accommodation for idiot boys who were incurable and not suitable for a Hospital for the Insane. A separate building was required for them in the grounds. This would also ease overcrowding in some of the wards. Major repairs were required to the original buildings and were awaiting approval. Economic conditions over 1871 saw the Assistant Medical Officer’s services dispensed with, and by default his cottage became the Idiot Boys Cottage. Through the labour of the male patients a new female

bathroom had finally been built. Something the Commissioners had long pressed on the attention of the Government.

In 1873 the New Norfolk Commissioners believed that the Hospital had now reached its utmost capacity to accommodate the insane but interestingly they did not ask for any additional buildings. It was not until 1877 that efforts were made to ease the overcrowded conditions at the Hospital.

The New Norfolk Commissioners Annual Reports for the late 1870s contain few requests for the building changes. In 1878 they noted the need for increased accommodation of the Gentlemen patients, and while plans had been prepared for a new dormitory in the female refractory ward and tenders called for, it had proceeded no further. A new female dormitory had been completed by July 1880, along with the installation of a new ventilation system (Tobin's) in 16 rooms of the Male Division. Despite recommendations the additional six rooms had not been added to the Gentlemen's Cottage. The funds were finally supplied in 1880.

In 1881-1882 the Commissioners were considering the addition of padded rooms for refractory and violent patients, and had received plans and descriptions of those in use at Colney Hatch Asylum. Another need was an appropriate store room as the current six rooms were separate rooms throughout the Hospital and thoroughly inconvenient. A new store was needed and the old rooms could be converted into a additional ward which was urgently required. It had been determined to convert the external garden into a pleasure ground for games such as cricket, croquet, lawn tennis and the similar. Dr. Macfarlane, the Superintendent of New Norfolk, felt that the gardens were too limited for the number of patients as much of the ground was used for forage cultivation. The Gentlemen's Cottage additions had been completed in December 1880 and consisted of six bedrooms and two sitting rooms, along with a new bathroom and lavatory. At this time the Hospital included a wardsmen's mess room in the front division. The Commissioners' Report of 1882-1883 indicates a growing pressure on accommodation which saw less separation of violent and quiet patients. Additional buildings were now needed urgently.

## **A New Lunatic Asylum Or Adaptation of New Norfolk?**

In 1882 a Royal Commission was appointed to consider the state of the lunatic asylums in Tasmania. The Commission was to consider the character of the buildings and surrounding grounds, the classification of patients, and the mode of treatment adopted; and to enquire into the means in use for the safe keeping of the insane and their successful treatment in Great Britain, Europe and the neighbouring colonies. The Commissioners interviewed 19 medical gentlemen, but found most knew little of the system of treatment in other places and the Commissioners were forced to rely on reports from overseas institutions and Dr. F. Norton Manning's Report on Lunatic Asylums made to the Government of New South Wales, which included information gathered on his tour of overseas institutions. The Minutes of Evidence provide another snapshot of New Norfolk as it was seen by those directly involved in its management.

### *The Site and Buildings of New Norfolk*

Dr. Macfarlane, the current Superintendent of New Norfolk, thought that overall the New Norfolk site was best and would not recommended its movement closer to Hobart as this would allow greater public intrusion and disturbance of the patients. A view supported by Dr. Coutie, the Assistant Medical Officer, who believed the site was healthy, with a good view, abundant water, and the grounds could be expanded. While Rev. W. Murray who gave services at New Norfolk, thought that patients were more excited after the visits of friends and relatives so some distance from the main town was advisable if it would decrease visits. Dr. Huston, the former Superintendent, echoed this view indicating the site was the best and a new asylum was not required. If placed near Hobart he believed the patients would be less able to go outside the walls due to a natural dread of the insane by people. Miss Laland, the Matron, offered a different view believing the asylum should be near Hobart. More entertainments would be accessible, there would be more intercourse with friends, and patients could go out to church and on outings.

Dr. Macfarlane found the buildings currently ill-arranged, he preferred the pavilion system. On the question of cottages he felt that the addition of

cottages to a pavilion system would be advantageous of the treatment for the sick and infirm, and for paying patients, providing comfort advantageous to their recoveries. But accommodation in cottages was expensive compared to the block system as more attendants were required. At the present time he thought about 70 patients could be better accommodated in cottages.

Dr. Macfarlane went on to described the Hospital as follows: "This asylum is located on an eminence. It is almost entirely surrounded by a brick wall, the exception being an airing court in the refractory division on the female side, which is partly surrounded by wooden walls. The buildings are brick"; "There are day rooms in both the male and female divisions of the Hospital. In the Male Division there is a tailor's shop, a shoemaker's shop, a painter's shop, a blacksmith's shop and a carpenter's shop. On the female side there is a large workroom which is also used as a dormitory.". This doubling up indicates the limitations of space and the more restricted day spaces available to the women. In terms of cubic feet per patient in the dormitories it was 500 c.ft, and in the hospital wards about 700 c. ft..

Of the present buildings Dr. Macfarlane thought that the Ladies Cottage could be retained but required thorough renovation, the Gentlemen's Cottage too with some alterations. Of the main buildings, with considerable alterations and repairs, the corridor and single rooms on the male side and the refractory division on the female side could be kept. The New Norfolk Commissioners had asked for £1344 to be put on the 1883 Parliamentary Estimates for repairs, but this had not occurred.

On being asked what he desired in a Pavilion asylum, Dr. Macfarlane indicated that there should be a central or administrative block consisting on the ground floor of the Superintendent's office, Assistant Medical Officer's office, the Storekeeper's office, the Dispensary, a small room for the messenger, and two waiting rooms for males and females visitors. The rooms above could be used for the quarters of the Assistant Medical Officer, Behind these, and on either side, but attached to them would be two long buildings, one to be used as a female workroom, and the other for stores, with cellars beneath. The fourth side of the quadrangle would have a central hall to be used as a recreation room, with two dining rooms, one on either side of the hall for men and women respectively. The quadrangle could be laid out as a

flower garden with a fountain. Behind the hall would be the kitchen, with a scullery and two brick ovens. The patient's pavilion blocks should be connected by verandahs, with each block having good bathing and lavatory provisions. The male and female blocks would be separated by the central block. In terms of the blocks themselves the ground floor should consist of a day room with the dormitory above. Each should have its own airing court. The sick should be provided with cottages, and there should be a small contagious ward on each side, lined with glazed bricks for easy cleaning.

The asylum overall should be of brick or stone with a slate roof, and fireproof throughout. The laundry should consist of a foul laundry, a washing room, drying room, ironing and issuing rooms. He felt the male workshops could be moved to the farm and the idiot's cottage enlarged. The airing courts should be planted with flowers and shrubs, and provided with seats and sun shades. Clearly Macfarlane was envisaging a new asylum on the New Norfolk site as he shifts from the ideal to direct changes within the one answer. He then indicates that this could be done economically by building a new block, then pulling down an old one transferring the patients as needs be. He believed each dormitory should have its own bath. The water closets consisted of wooden tubs which were emptied every morning. There was no separate provisions for Queen's pleasure patients or for the female idiots. While there was a male Idiot's Cottage, there were more male idiots kept in the Asylum in the front division.

Dr. Coutie was to give further evidence about the New Norfolk buildings. The Ladies and Gentlemen's Cottages, he felt, offered excellent accommodation. They were of brick with shingle roofs, and verandahs around three sides: "In these buildings the rooms opened off a wide passage or hall on each side, and are lofty, well lighted, and ventilated. The bedrooms contain one to four beds. The two front rooms in each cottage are used, one as a dining room, the other as a sitting room. There is also a bath-room, store-room, and a kitchen, in which all the cooking is done, connected with each building." Each had a garden. The male patient's building was divided into the Front and Back Divisions. "These are of one storey, on the block principle, and are built of brick with shingle roofs. The Front Division, irrespective of offices and stores, &c., contains seven dormitories, a day or dining-room, a

bath-room, and a boiler-room. The general kitchen is also situated here. The closets and urinals are placed to the south apart from the main buildings. The dormitories are of a convenient size, containing about ten patients each, well lighted and fairly ventilated. The windows open only a fixed distance; opposite to them on the outside there is a lamp, which is kept burning during the night, thus lighting up the wards." The baths were being put in proper order. The stores were really bad: "the kitchen is badly in want of repairs, and is poorly furnished with cooking appliances. The offices are inconvenient and badly furnished, and there are no waiting or reception rooms. In the Back Division the sleeping accommodation consists of dormitories and single rooms. The dormitories are of a moderate size, containing on average nine patients each." They were not in such good repair or suited to their purpose as those in the Front Division. "The single rooms in the corridor are large and well lighted, and are ventilated each by a window and Tobin's ventilators. The corridor is used as a dining-room." Repairs were needed to the closets and urinals. Coutie adds a glazier's and plumber's workshop to Macfarlane's list but notes they are all small. The Idiot's Cottage contained five rooms, of which 3 were sleeping rooms, one day room and a kitchen. The Female Division consisted of a main building, two storied, built of brick with a slate roof: "The upper flat contains dormitories of various sizes, a large one being also used as a needle-room. On the ground floor there are dormitories and single rooms, and a large day-room, which is used as a dining and recreation hall and chapel. A stage will be fitted up in this hall for theatrical performances, &c. All these rooms are lofty and fairly well ventilated." The Refractory Division was of one storey, consisted of a large dormitory, single rooms, and a day room. "The buildings are so arranged that a proper classification is impossible throughout the building. There are no proper conveniences connected with each ward, such as lavatories, closets, compartments for clothing, stores, &c., and the bath-rooms are neither sufficient nor complete."; "The laundries are also very deficient, there being a great want of suitable rooms and modern machinery, as well as proper drying-rooms and grounds."; "The sick wards, both on the male and female sides are contiguous to the dormitories,". The Male Division had two airing courts, one formed by the back division, this was supplied with sun shades and seats. The second was formed by the grounds not occupied

by the buildings and the gentlemen's ground. It was predominantly grass with several large trees. The Female Division had two airing courts, a large one laid with grass and with several large trees. Part of this was used for croquet and tennis. The other court was much smaller and had seats, two swings and sunshades, and a raised mound allowing a view of the surrounding country. The Ladies Cottage had a garden. A new recreation ground of about 5½ acres was being formed to the north of the Hospital.

In terms of improvements Dr. Coutie followed Dr. Macfarlane in recommending a mixture of pavilions and cottages. Pavilions could be made more homely, were well ventilated and easily extendable. Along with curtains for the ward windows, pictures for the walls, and ordinary house furniture, along with cutlery, and crockery in place of tinware and the use of fingers to eat food. A post mortem room, and a library were needed. Miss Laland, the Matron, indicated that there were no lavatories for the women to wash in, the toilet was a wooden tub. There were no wardrobes, and the patients worked and slept in the same rooms. There was no spaces for nurses who slept, ate and lived with the patients day and night. Miss Laland believed there should be a separate dining room and bedrooms for nurses, and proper work rooms. She favoured the erection of a new asylum for these reasons along with the pavilion design with separate day rooms and dormitories.

Mrs Bland, the Lady Superintendent, agreed with the doctors on the deficiencies of the building. New Norfolk was old and unsuited to its purpose, the building should be modern and suitable for the classification of the patients. Dr. Huston, who had been the Superintendent for 25 years outlined the same problems as Drs. Macfarlane and Coutie. The buildings were defective and classification was impossible to any degree and his recommendations as to what could be preserved followed their views. Interestingly Dr. Huston indicates that while a comprehensive plan had been drawn up of improvements in 1859, these and the suggestions of the New Norfolk Commissioners over the years had often not been followed with the only reason given by the Government was a want of funds, no further explanations were given .

*The Findings of the Royal of Commissioners*

The Commissioners found that the site of the New Norfolk Asylum was in many respects admirably suitable. It was healthy, had an excellent water supply, the drainage was good, and the surrounding scenery cheerful. But the Asylum was wanting. The Asylum: “enclosure itself is neither so attractive and pleasing in appearance as it should be, nor is it so extensive as it requires to be to afford scope for those amusements, recreations, and occupations which the medical faculty regard as desirable, if not necessary, for the mental improvement and recovery of the Insane.” The Female Refractory yard was surrounded by a high boarded fence, which a patient had scaled. The dreariest place was the backyard surrounded by buildings and more like a prison yard. The grounds consisted of about 48 acres: “Viz., 10½ acres on which the buildings stood, 5½ acres for recreation grounds, and about 31½ devoted to farm and grazing ground.” The cottage for 9 male idiots was located on the farm, separate from the Hospital. The farm provided some daily occupation for the patients.

The Royal Commissioners found the buildings at New Norfolk, with some exceptions, were of a very unsatisfactory character: “being in many respects ill-adapted for the purposes for which they are used.” The faults found by the Joint Committee of 1859 they felt continued and were intensified by the fact there were now 300 patients. The two cottages for paying patients were creditable buildings but required some more internal furnishings to make them homely. The Female Refractory Division was fairly suited to its purpose but required better lighting, alterations and repairs. The main building for females was less than could be desired but contained: “very good dayrooms and associated and single dormitories,” but required painting and repairs. On the male side the corridor and single rooms could be regarded as offering fair accommodation:

. . . which, however, could be improved by an extension and elevation of the corridor. All the rest of the accommodation for males is so inferior and unsuitable in character as to compel the assertion that the sooner the inmates are provided with other accommodation the better.

The dormitories were overcrowded and ill-ventilated. The laundry and kitchen arrangements needed work. There was a deficiency of proper store accommodation. There was no waiting and reception rooms which ought to be remedied. The Matron's Cottage was inconveniently situated, and may be utilised for a few patients or removed to make way for an extension of the refractory ward. No provision exists among the buildings for the residence of a Medical Officer. Both the Superintendent and the Assistant Medical Officer lived away from the Asylum. It was eminently desirable that one should live on the premises.

Most importantly the Royal Commissioners felt a strong conviction that the success of the treatment adopted at New Norfolk was very much hindered and lessened by the impossibility of properly classifying the patients:

It is vain to hope for either the necessary amount of comfort, or the speedy cure of the Insane unless the buildings are so arranged that the different forms and stages of insanity, and to some extent also the different classes of patients, can be separately treated.

The Royal Commissioners recommended the provision of at least two padded rooms as well. At New Norfolk further amusements could be added and more opportunities for employment.

Another need was the provision of Reception Houses at Hobart and Launceston where cases could be admitted for observation and treatment before full committal at New Norfolk. This option would be useful in cases of temporary insanity and less stressful for relatives. A possible site would be on general hospital grounds.

The Royal Commissioners having weighed the evidence for and against the retention of the site at New Norfolk, desired it should be retained but with the provision of considerably increased grounds. Quoting the overseas reports which recommended the minimum grounds should be at least 150 acres, they thought the grounds should be increased to no less than 100 acres. Accommodation for 100 further patients should be erected to offer

both accommodation and classification. These additions should take the form of a mixture of pavilions and cottages as this offered the best classification and comfort for the patients. While the cottage system was more expensive it offered greater comfort and speedier cures. These should be taken into consideration before cost on the grounds of humanity. Less costly accommodation could be undertaken for chronic and incurable cases.

The Royal Commissioners recommended the construction of pavilions to accommodate about twenty patients each, having a day-room on the ground floor and dormitory above, plus some cottages for six to twelve patients each. The new buildings should include administrative offices, waiting rooms and store accommodation.

### **New Norfolk 1883-1890**

The Board of Commissioners of New Norfolk had asked for the sum of £1423, 5s. to be added to the Estimates for 1883 for the urgent repairs that were needed to the buildings and fences at New Norfolk. Sadly in their Report for 1883 the Commissioners noted that the Royal Commissions Report had not been taken up and no funding provided for improving the accommodation at the Asylum. There were 16 male criminal lunatics at New Norfolk who they felt should be sent to the Cascades where there was room for them, and this would ease overcrowding at New Norfolk. The Commissioners again in their Annual Report for 1883 reinforced the poor condition of the buildings and the inappropriateness of the space available. The Idiots Cottage was unsuited to its purpose and was overcrowded.

In 1886 the newly appointed Official Visitors to New Norfolk published their first interim report offering their recommendations with regard to bringing New Norfolk up to modern standards. The Visitors were of the belief that those buildings: "condemned by the Experts as unfit for further use shall be removed. The Visitors requested the closure of Grey Street which ran to the south of the Asylum. One chain wide and two hundred feet in length this would provide new airing court for the new building No. 1. This was intended to accommodate sixty to seventy patients in twenty separate rooms, dormitories and day rooms, plus several airing courts - allowing classification to occur. They planned a separate and distinct enclosure to house all the

workshops, lumber stores, wood-sheds, engine-house &c. Adjoining this and separated only by a brick wall would be the steam laundry, drying house and drying-yard &c. The wall would prevent contact between the men and women. The mess and day room for male attendants would be centrally placed and distinct in itself, allowing them to quickly access all the male division. A new kitchen was planned along with a bakery and scullery, with the adjoining bathhouse sharing the water heating apparatus. The present kitchen would become a provision store. An administrative building would be located near the front entrance. The Assistant Medical Officer's quarters would be above the offices.

With regard to the original buildings which formed the centre quadrangle of the Asylum it was proposed to raise the walls three feet along with the verandah to improve light and ventilation. The walls were to be resurfaced inside and out. The present offices and workshops, boiler house and bathroom would be abolished allowing the space to be turned into associated dormitories of convenient size for fifty patients, with enough space for a receiving ward. The back yard buildings would be partly demolished, a new dayroom and mess room for fifty patients built, and the yard made into a garden. The 16 separate apartments along one side would be retained as they had few faults with one wall being demolished to make two rooms into a dormitory. A day room and attendant's room would be added along with baths.

The "new store" recently erected in the female division, which was inconveniently situated, they planned to turn into workrooms. The new store would be central to both divisions and would include a dispensary. The former drying room located adjacent to Humphrey-street would become the morgue and post-mortem room.

The refractory division for women being most imperfect and inadequate they decided to erect a new building capable of accommodating 44 patients with full means of classification and separation. It would be a smaller version of the new male block. Of the refractory block it was decided to improve and retain the separate apartments for more feeble and helpless patients.

A new distinct and separate home for idiots was planned and a design already chosen. The original location at the farm was greatly inconvenient and

required separate cooking and dining rooms. The new location on the grounds did away with this need.

The present Matron's Quarters was most secluded and in a cheerless place constantly exposed to the noise of patients. Hence they were to be relocated to a quieter area that offered a full view of the grounds for observation. The present quarters would become a nurse's home giving them a break from the patients.

The main and all other buildings required repair and were defective in their design and placement but were considered too valuable to remove. The inferior and imperfect laundry would be replaced by a steam laundry. The paying patients quarters needed little change. While all the grounds needed to be improved.

While involving a great expense, the goal was all important: "we feel the time has arrived when this institution must either be entirely re-constructed and equipped in accordance with modern views, or for ever abandoned; and bearing this constantly in mind, we have acted and advised up to the required standard, irrespective of cost,". Such an institution was to be a permanent institution in the Colony and must be constructed and maintained in accordance with modern dictates of modern philosophy. A new institution would cost far more. The Asylum as redesigned would house 340 to 350 patients.

To provide employment for both men and women, the Visitors recommended the purchase of additional land for farming and gardening. The steam laundry would free some women to work outside.

As before change was to be slow. By 1889 a new female building and the idiots cottage had been completed, while the new male building was opened in 1893. The block plan of 1888 while not indicative of room use does show how little New Norfolk had changed from the original Invalid Hospital and Hospital for the Insane. Despite modifications the original Willow Court and back square were retained intact. The main changes being the addition of a bath house in the back square, a larger kitchen, wash house and workshops off of the two squares. It was not until the twentieth century that significant additions were made to New Norfolk, which continues to operate as a

psychiatric hospital today. The original part of the hospital from the early nineteenth century remains as a heritage listed building but is no longer used.