

# Rampton State Institution.

## Descriptive Tour of the Buildings.

In the branch of social service has greater advances been made than in the method of dealing with abnormal members of society. The days when they were regarded only as people to be punished for acts that they had committed through misfortune rather than through intent has passed. A policy of reclamation has taken its place, and in special institutions they are cared for and trained to useful work, so that at any rate they can retain their self-respect. One of such places is the Rampton State Institution that occupies 185 acres of ground in the midst of a wide open plain, six miles to the south-east of Retford.

In March, 1920, the existing building was taken over by the Board of Control. Since that time considerable extensions have been made, and the Institution is still in the hands of the builders. It has accommodation for about 1,800 patients, and at present has a thousand inmates. Here from all over England and Wales are sent the troublesome and unmanageable. They come from other homes and institutions where there are not the means of treating them; they come from the police courts after being certified by a prison doctor as unsuitable for ordinary prison treatment; and they come from the hospitals, enfeebled by disease. In the last named category are several patients whose condition is the result of sleeping sickness.

### SELECTED STAFF.

At Rampton they are cared for and trained where possible in some occupation, by a selected and skilled staff of teachers, and the fact that 95 to 97 per cent. of the patients are working every day, moving about freely in the corridors and rooms and even in the grounds and are also taken for walks along the country roads, dispenses of the idea that there are any lunatics among them. Left in the outside world the abnormality of these patients would tend to mischief and perversity, and they would become a pest rather than a danger to society.

An opportunity of visiting the Institution was given to a representative of the "Sheffield Independent," who was taken on a tour of inspection by Dr. Rees-Thomas, the Medical Superintendent. A visit reveals what can be done by scientific methods in dealing with even the most difficult material. What strikes the visitor most is not only the organisation in itself, the discipline, the neatness and good order which prevail, but most important, of all, the contentment and happiness on the faces around. Dr. Rees-Thomas has made a special study of the work. That he has won the hearts of all his charges was evident by the cheery welcome which awaited him on the tour. Everybody had a smile and a bright "Good morning" for the doctor, and there was a pathos in the eagerness with which some of the patients pressed forward as if they were afraid that they would be overlooked in the greeting.

### OFF THE MAIN ROAD.

The Rampton State Institution lies away off the main roads in the stretch of flat country between Retford and the River Trent. It is approached from the road by two avenues, flanked by the neat houses of the staff. At the bottom of the main avenue, on each side, are the nurses' quarters, fine brick buildings, the one on the right hand just completed, in which the nurses live and sleep. Beyond this building on the right are the staff recreation rooms, and between these and the new nurses' block is a large swimming bath just approaching completion.

This has been built by the staff out of the profits of their own stores department. The stores adjoin the recreation rooms and are stocked to meet all the requirements of the staff. The Institution has also its own post office.

Facing the main avenue is the administrative block. Behind these are the old buildings, containing the kitchen, bakery, laundry, workshops, and the power house, and in a rough semi-circle further back lie some fifteen or so houses, all named after trees, where the younger patients live; the schools and the hospitals. There is a special children's section for young people under 16 years of age. A visit was paid first to the school rooms. Here, in separate departments, boys and girls were being taught. The standard of intelligence is, of course, far below that of the children in any ordinary elementary school and the work is correspondingly more difficult, but sympathetic and patient teaching does a good deal to awaken and inform the minds of these backward pupils, and they are very proud to display the progress they are making.

### NEATNESS AND ORDER.

Several of the residential villas were inspected. In some of these are separate bedrooms, while others have dormitories. Each patient has also a locker in which is kept the treasured private possessions, the gifts from home and friends. There is also a common sitting room where all may gather for recreation and simple games, and enjoy wireless programmes. All around is the same neatness and order. Patients were

cleaning and scrubbing, and showing their delight in keeping everything spotless. To keep them occupied is the great aim. It improves mental and bodily fitness and gives them an interest in life. Some of them have their hobbies, too. One patient was very anxious that our representative should see his room. Every square inch of the walls was covered with pictures cut from various illustrated papers, and he had shown a certain amount of taste in arranging them. He had also made a sham fireplace in the room. The work had filled his mind for many days and weeks and he had a just pride in it.

### WORKSHOP ACTIVITY.

The tour was continued through the workshops. The tinsmith's shop is fitted with both forge and lathe, and patients were busy turning out all manner of utensils in tin, well made and neatly finished. The work is principally repairing and replacing the tins used in the Institution. The brush-making department is another place of industry. Some ten thousand brushes a year are made. They are of all kinds, and among the biggest customers for these goods are the Admiralty. In another room upholstery, mattress and mat making, and French polishing were being done. Small furniture is also repaired in this department, and re-painting and enamelling is carried out.

All the shoes worn by the patients are made by themselves on the premises, even to the making of the uppers, and Rampton is probably the only Institution in the country where the work is done right through. The repairs are also done here. In the tailor's shop were turned out the garments which the patients wear. Each man or boy has two suits, corduroy for week-days, and tweed for Sundays. The women have a wide range of neat, pattern dresses which take away the monotony of uniform.

### CLOTH WEAVING DONE.

But not only are the dresses made here, but a good deal of the cloth is actually woven on the premises. Shirtings, blouse and apron materials and towelling were passing through the looms, and great rolls of it are in store for garment making. There is also a wood-working room. All these rooms are spacious, airy places. They are fitted with modern machinery and under the eyes of skilled instructors, and the quality of the work turned out shows good craftsmanship.

The women's section is no less busy and productive. All the stockings worn by the inmates are made and repaired. In other rooms may be seen the making and embroidering of garments for sale. Some of these are of silk with needlework designs of great beauty. Girls are engaged in turning out hand-made lace. Dainty and almost gossamer-like is some of this in its fineness, of graceful pattern and exquisite workmanship. Others are on leather work. All of this work is of the very finest quality, and it commands a ready sale in a good class market.

In the laundry are the latest appliances for the rapid washing and drying and finishing of the thousands of articles in daily use. In the bakery appetising loaves of bread and rolls and passing into and out of the large steam-heated ovens. In the great kitchen preparations were going forward for dinner for 1,200 people.

### BATHROOM PRIVACY.

Passing from the kitchen to another part of this block a bathing parade was met coming from the bathrooms, where a row of white enamelled baths, screened off into cubicles, enable each inmate to take a bath with the same ease and privacy that is obtained in the private house.

Beyond the bathrooms is the entertainments hall. This large room, with its arched roof and walls of glazed brown brick, is capable of seating 800 to 900 people. It serves a dual purpose. Two services are held every Sunday, and on certain nights of the week. A cinema show is given once a week, and there is also a weekly dance. Dramatic and other entertainments are also given. There is a choral society among the patients and frequent concerts are staged.

There are other activities among the inhabitants of this community. They have their Boy Scouts and their Girl Guides, and in one of the sitting rooms are proudly displayed replicas of the trophies they have won in competition with other similar organisations in the county. There are outdoor occupations too. Playing fields provide opportunities for sport, in which patients and staff play together. There are large gardens to attend, where fruit and vegetables for use in the Institution are grown.

On the southern border of the estate the hospitals, one for men and one for the women, are situated. On the south side of these light, cheerful rooms are covered balconies on to which beds may be wheeled when the weather is suitable. Both had a few patients, but they were mainly suffering from small accidents and temporary illness. The yearly death rate in the Institution is only 10 per 1,000 of the inhabitants.—"Sheffield Independent."