

## History of Highland Hospitals

### Craig Phadrig 1969



In 1912, Dr Mackenzie, superintendent of Craig Dunain noted the need for separate accommodation for ‘feeble minded’ patients.<sup>i</sup> In 1938, the Inverness Joint Hospital Board agreed that a new build was required for ‘mental defectives’ but the Second World War intervened.<sup>1</sup> A 1950 review of Highland psychiatric services raised the issue<sup>2</sup> and, by then, visiting commissioners were ‘greatly perturbed’ by the number of ‘mentally deficient’<sup>iii</sup> patients housed at Craig Dunain. In 1951, there were 12 children below 12 years of age in this category and a further 12 below 18 years old. Children were growing up in a mental hospital.

Dr Whittet, medical superintendent, suggested using Kinmylies House as a temporary expedient<sup>3</sup> but it was not until 1965 that work started on a new Mental Deficiency Hospital with architects Alison and Hutchison and builder Alexander Hall.<sup>4</sup> Craig Phadrig (photo above) opened in 1969 on a 50-acre site with 229 beds<sup>iii</sup> and was officially opened the

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<sup>i</sup> Possibly due to the approaching Lunacy and Mental Deficiency Act of 1913.

<sup>ii</sup> Terminology and concepts have changed. They would now be described as having Additional Support Needs. Many would not be considered patients.

<sup>iii</sup> It was planned with the capacity to extend to 400 beds but this never happened.

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following year by Princess Alexandra. The cost was £1.2m. There were around 100 staff under Physician Superintendent William Wright.<sup>i</sup>

Patients stayed in ‘villas’ of 25 or 26 beds contained in single, 4 bed and 6 bed dormitories with shared kitchen. These were interconnected by ramped covered ways to overcome the problems caused by the steep site (see photograph on previous page). All buildings for patients were single storey for ease of access except the two storey administration block (top left in photograph) and staff accommodation (extreme top left) which consisted of a nurses’ home and staff flats. The physician superintendent, his depute, senior nursing officer, resident engineer and porter all had houses on site.<sup>5</sup>

The hospital’s facilities included an out-patients department, a physiotherapy department, an assembly hall, a school for up to 100 resident children<sup>ii</sup>, recreation facilities and later a large swimming pool costing £85,000, which encouraged swimmers of a very high standard. Other sports were encouraged and residents successfully represented their country at international games. Occupational therapy was of prime importance and the hospital had a working croft with a range of animals and workshops which, among other items, produced decorative concrete slabs.<sup>6</sup>

By modern standards there seems to have been an initial lack of community involvement and it took time to establish networks<sup>iii</sup> and partnerships, e.g. with charities and voluntary groups, which we now take for granted.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> Retired 1982 and succeeded by Dr TE Baeker.

<sup>ii</sup> Education Authorities did not have responsibility for all children until the 1970s but the local authority had established a Junior Occupational Centre in the Leachkin for ‘ineducable children’ in 1958 (Whittet 1964).

<sup>iii</sup> Local authority social work departments were not formed until 1968.

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However, the life of this long-awaited hospital was about to be curtailed. In the late 1970s and 1980s, there was a fairly profound and - from a historical perspective - rapid change in social policy which prioritised care in the community and social inclusion so that Craig Phadrig, like Craig Dunain, was no longer seen as necessarily the most suitable provision. Facilities were also developing elsewhere which reduced the need for resident patients. This included special schools and special units within mainstream schools from the late 1970s which accommodated the youngsters who had previously no local provision other than Craig Phadrig. In May 1988, beds were reduced from 200 to 180 and it closed in 2000 when New Craigs opened nearby.<sup>8</sup>

## References

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- <sup>1</sup> Aberdeen Journal 8 July 1938
- <sup>2</sup> Rodger, T Ferguson *Requirements of a Psychiatric Service for the Northern Region* Northern Region Health Board 1950
- <sup>3</sup> Northern Region Health Board General Purposes Committee 18 September 1958
- <sup>4</sup> Northern Region Health Board Minutes Volume 17 p132
- <sup>5</sup> Hall, D Polson The Northern Regional Health Board unknown publication c1972 George Maclean papers Highland Archive Service
- <sup>6</sup> *ibid*
- <sup>7</sup> Craig Phadrig Department of Health file National Records of Scotland
- <sup>8</sup> Highland Health Board Minutes 20 May 1988