

Chertsey Poor Law Union admission and discharge books



The Chertsey Workhouse was built in 1836 in Murray Road, Ottershaw, and an infirmary was added in 1894. A girls' receiving home was built alongside the boys' in 1912. Those admitted to the Workhouse were either the destitute or the sick and were admitted by either the Master of the Workhouse or medical personnel. The institution was renamed Murray House on 10 October 1930, and was formally handed over to the Surrey County Council Mental Hospitals Committee on 16 June 1932, to be jointly administered with Botleys Park as a mental institution, latterly known as Murray House Certified Institution for Mental Defectives. Unfortunately, most of the buildings have now been demolished.

The 14 admission and discharge registers held at **Surrey History Centre** for Chertsey Workhouse (refs: BG1/36/1-14) cover the period from April 1894 to July 1932 although there are gaps from October 1895 to March 1899, September 1900 to April 1901, October 1906 to July 1908 and May 1910 to July 1913. The records for the Chertsey Poor Law Union (collection ref: BG1/-) also include minutes of the Board of Guardians, 1835-1930; committee minutes of the Board of Guardians, 1880-1930; registers of births, 1866-1914; deaths, 1867-1931; an indoor relief list, 1929-1931; creed registers, 1903-1918; and vaccination registers, 1872-1889. The website www.workhouses.org.uk contains detailed general information on workhouse life such as the entering and leaving procedures, uniforms, rules, routine, diet, punishment, medical care etc.

The parishes covered by Chertsey Poor Law Union were Addlestone, Bagshot, Bisley, Byfleet, Chertsey, Chobham, Horsell, Lyne, Pyrford, Walton on Thames including Hersham, Weybridge, Windlesham and Thorpe.

In each printed register, the admissions are listed on the left-hand page and the discharges on the right-hand page and generally give the following information for admissions:

date of admission

surname

forenames

occupation

marital status

year or date of birth

parish from whence admitted

any relevant notes or comments for example, religion other than Church of England, children born in house (with times where shown) and inmates transferred from other institutions, magistrates' orders etc.

and for discharges:

date of discharge

surname

forenames

parish to which the inmate is discharged

reason for discharge (mainly at own request)

who the children were in the care of

deaths (with time where shown)

transfers to other institutions or into service or foster care

Kathryn and Philip Bennett, two of Surrey History Centre's volunteers, have faithfully transcribed the names and other details. The indexes do not include details of diet and age band categorisation of inmates, nor the instances when inmates were 'reclassified' in terms

of their age or diet (details of the categorisation scheme can be found on the website www.workhouses.org.uk).

Where a woman was single and gave birth, the register always recorded this fact. The Bennetts have not included this detail since it can be found against the mother's name when she was admitted.

However where it states 'wife of above' or 'child(ren) of above', they have included the actual names. They have noted that variant spellings can occur for the same name, so the viewer will need to look for variations in spelling because the transcribers cannot know which spelling is "correct". This can also be the case for dates of birth.

The Bennetts have used the following abbreviations in the indexes (please note that all inmates were Church of England unless an abbreviation has been used):

Bapt - Baptist

Brookwood M H – Brookwood Mental Hospital

C of R/C or R/Ch R – Church of Rome

C/o – Care of

Cong – Congregationalist

Diss - Dissenter

Hosp – Hospital

JP – Justice of the Peace

M – Married

Mags – Magistrates

MD – Mental Defective

Meth - Methodist

Non-con – Non-conformist

RC/Roman C/Roman Cath – Roman Catholic

Plym Bros – Plymouth Brethren

P Meth – Primitive Methodist

Pres - Presbyterian

S - Single

Sal/Salvat – Salvation Army

SCC – Surrey County Council

W – Widower

Wesl – Wesleyan

The details included in these registers illustrate the changing social pattern in English life over the period covered. For example, initially the majority of entries for occupation were for 'labourers', but later trades such as 'electrician' and 'engineer' appeared far more frequently. It would appear that with the gradual change from workhouse to mental institution came the introduction of inmates going out 'on leave'. While it appears that many of those categorised as 'MD' were young women, mainly in domestic service, Chertsey workhouse also provided care to transferees from Richmond and Guildford presumably while those institutions underwent building works.

Whilst every effort has been made to ensure that these transcriptions are correct, if any errors are found please do contact Surrey History Centre and we will make any appropriate corrections.

CDs of the index are also available for sale, price £5.00 each (plus £2.00 postage and handling) from Surrey History Centre, 130 Goldsworth Road, Woking, Surrey GU21 6ND. Please make cheques payable to "Surrey County Council".

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Filename	Description
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Chertsey Poor Law Union

Chertsey Poor Law Union admission and discharge books A-J

admission and discharge books

A-J

Chertsey Poor Law Union

Chertsey Poor Law Union admission and discharge books K-Z

admission and discharge books

K-Z