

MENSTON 2025 HERITAGE GROUP

Wharfedale Children's Hospital.

Recollections from Alison Dennison, Shipley resident in June 2023:

My husband and I decided to move up to Yorkshire from Surrey in 1978, so that we could afford to buy a house and, eventually, to have children. The idea was that I would get a teaching job (I had been head of Science at a Middle school for 6 years) and on the strength of that, we could get a mortgage and buy a house.

The post of general and science teacher for the middle school age group at Wharfedale Children's Hospital from September 1978 was advertised in the Times Educational Supplement. I applied at the beginning of May and got the job.

Depending on the ages and abilities of the children who were in the hospital at the time, I might have any number between 1 and 12 children in my class, aged from around 9 to around 13. I did learn an enormous amount about individual educational needs and differentiated methods of teaching, which stood me in good stead for the rest of my teaching career.

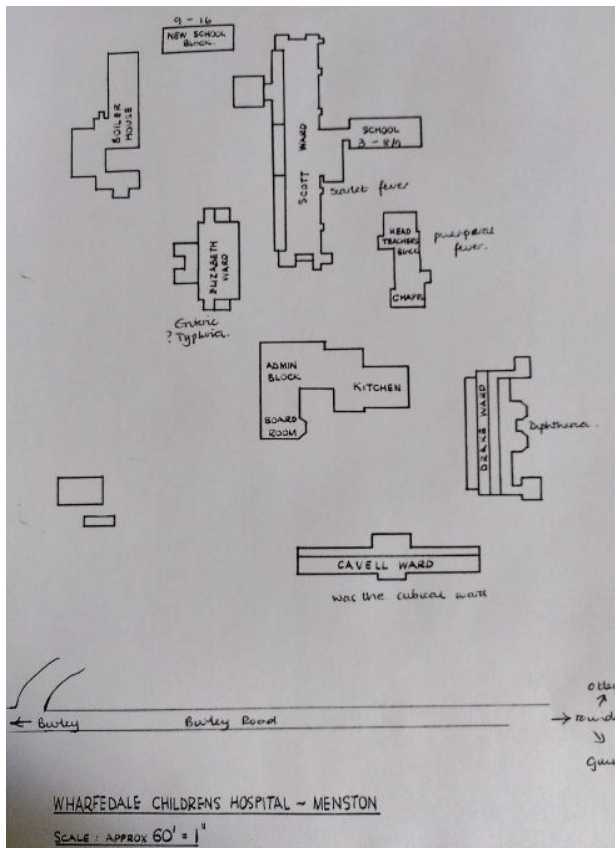
It was in 1984 that we were told that the hospital itself was to close, so there would be no more need for a school. There was

no discussion with the school that I remember as it appeared to be a Health Service decision. We were also told to find ourselves new teaching posts into which we would be redeployed at our current salary levels. As the hospital school was classed as a “Special School” that did mean that we had enhanced salaries so that was of great benefit.

I was lucky enough to get a post of Head of Science at a Bradford Middle School from January 1985 and for the next 15 years, until Bradford closed its Middle Schools, I was very happy and fulfilled there, adding, firstly, Special Needs Coordinator to the Science and then changing that to Curriculum, Learning and Assessment Coordinator. Teaching Science was always my first love though.

I think the Children’s Hospital finally closed sometime in 1985 but prior to that a project was undertaken to record its history and this is set out below:-

The History of the Hospital - an introduction to a teaching and learning unit for children who were patients in the early 80s,



The Wharfedale Union Joint Isolation Hospital(WUIH) committee first met together to discuss the building of a hospital in 1897 and in 1900 the 12 acre site in Menston was bought. The hospital was to be an isolation hospital (sometimes called a fever hospital) to which patients with infectious diseases were to be brought.

The hospital would serve quite a wide area of West Yorkshire including Ilkley, Otley, Baildon, Guiseley , Rawdon,

Yeadon and Horsforth.

The first matron, Miss Brown, was appointed in 1901 and the first medical officer was Dr Hyslop who was a general practitioner in Menston.

The foundation stone on Drake Ward read:

“This stone was laid by Councillor Thompson Marshall, Chairman
1907-1914”

but we know from the admission register that the first patients were, in fact, admitted in 1904 so other wards must have been built first. The main infectious diseases were scarlet fever, diphtheria and enteric or typhoid fever. There was a separate ward for each of these illnesses and a ward for people with septicaemia (blood poisoning, often a problem occurring after childbirth in those days; sometimes called childhood or puerperal fever). Later in 1930, a fifth ward, called the

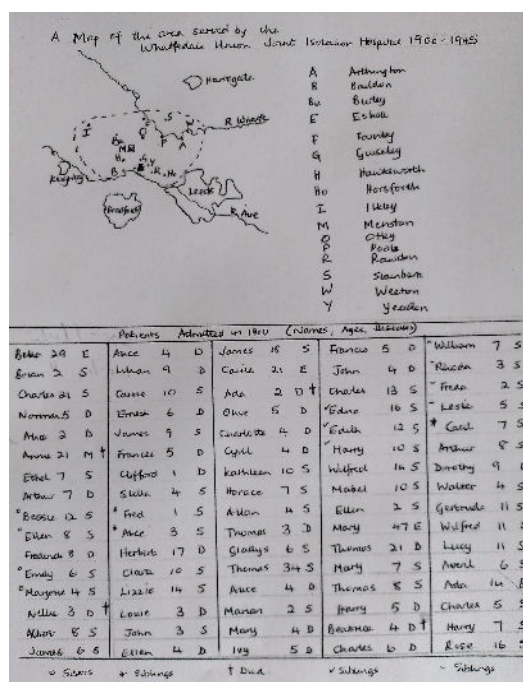
cubical ward , was built for nursing patients with other infectious diseases.

In 1945, the National Health Service took over the hospital and it became a long stay children’s hospital.

The ward names were changed to the names of children’s heroes, but because all the blankets had symbols on (for example, D for the Diphtheria ward) the new names had to start with the same letter as the old names.

Ward names before 1948	Ward names after 1948
Cubical	Cavell
Diphtheria	Drake
Enteric	Elizabeth
Scarlet Fever	Scott

The puerperal fever ward became the head teacher’s block because a school has to be started to teach the children who were in hospital for a long time.



At first, many of the children had heart diseases and chest illnesses and had to stay in bed for long periods. This meant that they were taught on the wards, but gradually the children’s problems and illnesses changed and today all the children are able to leave the ward and come into the school classrooms for their lessons, except when they are very poorly.