

# THE HORTON CHAPEL PROJECT

Research presented by Georgia Kitty Harris

**Georgia Kitty Harris** is a London-based artist who studied at the Royal College of Art. Working from found photographs, her practice of portraiture is a study on recreating the moment that photograph was taken.

After joining a bespoke research workshop, run by Surrey History Centre for The Horton Chapel Project volunteers, Georgia explored the archives to view original portrait photography from medical case files.

The three subjects in this first work - patients from The Manor Asylum in Epsom - have been painstakingly portrayed in graphite and are accompanied by Georgia's research notes.



"Not Improved, 1899"

This is Henry Firminger.

He was admitted to Manor Hospital on 27th November 1899 at the age of 19. He was a single labourer and his previous abode was listed as St. Marylebone Workhouse.

He was described as: *"an epileptic with severe fits at intervals. Before his fits he has headaches and feels dull and stupid. He becomes sullen and bad tempered and threatens what he will do to the people who put him away when he gets out. Apparently has little self-control."*

Another comment listed his fits as, *"of a type likely to lead to permanent insanity."* He managed to escape on two occasions. Once on 5th June 1900 he escaped from a working party and walked all the way to London before returning of his own accord the following morning. I couldn't see the date of the second escape as the paper was damaged but it happened at 7:25 pm. He forced a window in the dormitory annex and was captured the next day at 9:45 am and brought back to the asylum.

He was eventually transferred to Colney Hatch Asylum but I don't know what date that was.



"Not Improved 1902"

This is Jenny Solley.

She was admitted to Manor Hospital 11th July 1902 aged 25. She was single and worked as a domestic servant. Her previous abode was Paddington Workhouse. The workhouse attendant made the comment that she would get up out of bed at night and throw things about the ward. This was said to be her first attack and had lasted one month, she was diagnosed with acute melancholia.

A description of her mental state was: *"vacant in appearance, silly in conversation - laughs fatuously without cause. Highly delusional - states that she has been spiritually married, that she thinks the world is coming to an end and that everything is so strange. She thinks she is neither in heaven or earth, but between the two. Reactions to questions slow - memory somewhat impaired."*

After a few months she decided she was on earth now and was no longer married and throughout the year and up to April 1903 the reports on her progress were that she was improving and working well in the kitchens. Unfortunately, the next entry in May stated that her original delusions were back, and from then on she began to decline. They noted that she was abusive and restless and *"refuses to have her hair done up."* She said that pains in her head were caused by electricity and threatened to kick and slap staff, believing them to be wrongfully detaining her. She also threw a book in church at the chaplain.

Her physical health remained good and she was working in the needleroom when the last entry was put in. On 25th July 1904 she was discharged, relieved to the care of friends, despite still retaining all her previous ideas and hallucinations.





*"Not Improved 1899"*

This is Elizabeth Harris.

She was admitted to Manor Hospital 21st August 1899 aged 72.

She was a widowed housekeeper and was diagnosed with chronic mania. Although she came to Epsom in 1899 her original reception order was dated 17th September 1877, so I don't know if that means she had been bounced around from different asylums since then.

The description of her mental state said: *"She hears voices and is delusional. Says Mr Arnaud came here with her. He is here. She heard his voice this morning calling to her, and saying he was waiting for her. The Duke of Cambridge has given her her freedom."*

Research is still in progress.