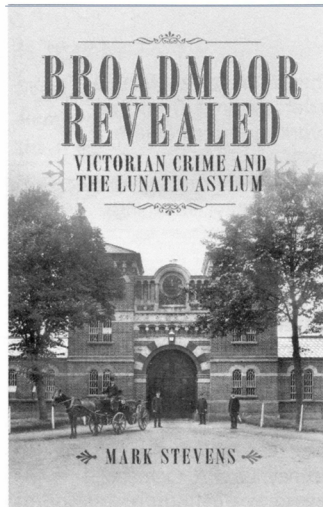


Book review

Edited by Allan Beveridge, Femi Oyeboode
and Rosalind Ramsay



**Broadmoor Revealed:
Victorian Crime
and the Lunatic Asylum**

By Mark Stevens.
Pen and Sword Books. 2013.
£15.99 (hb). 180 pp.
ISBN: 9781781593202

In May 2013, Broadmoor celebrated its 150th anniversary. Much maligned at times, it has nonetheless manifested durability and continued to perform a clinical and social function in the assessment and treatment of mentally disordered patients who pose a serious risk to others. The longevity of the reign of Queen Victoria and the rich Victorian heritage of industrial development set the scene for the opening of Broadmoor in 1863.

Mark Stevens is a senior archivist at the Public Records Office in Reading, some 15 miles from Broadmoor. He has described aspects of the hospital in Victorian times, which brings alive historical images of the institution. It was not the first British provision for the criminally insane. The Bethlem criminal wings had been opened in 1816; Fisherton House, a private asylum in Wiltshire, added some similar provision in 1849; and Dundrum in Dublin, Ireland, had opened in 1850, at a time when Ireland was part of a union with Britain.

Mark Stevens offers a masterful outline of some of Broadmoor's early patients, both the few whose names have become well known and some of those lost in the sands of time. In some instances, he has followed their lives after discharge. This has demonstrated their successful recovery and rehabilitation and ability to lead lives free of reoffending or danger to others. The irony of this is that it was achieved at a time before the availability of any form of specific treatment in use during the 20th century and today. Perhaps the lethality associated with these patients' mental illnesses was time limited, or maybe the environment in Broadmoor was somehow therapeutic, even without specific treatment. The psychiatrist of today may find something of intriguing interest here and even feel some humble modesty before assuming our modern methods are necessarily superior to those of our predecessors who pioneered our profession.

The reader will not need to be a forensic psychiatrist. Broadmoor, and now the high secure hospitals as a whole, forms a protective canopy allowing mainstream psychiatry to operate. The Victorians bequeathed us much of value and that, for all its faults, includes Broadmoor.

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doi: 10.1192/bjp.bp.113.134916

advances in psychiatric treatment

Editor:
Patricia Casey

Volume 19, Issue 6
November 2013
<http://apt.rcpsych.org>

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