The Children of Craig y Nos

Last updated: 10 April 2008

Craig y Nos is best known as the home of opera singer Adelina Patti. But between 1920 and 1960 it was used as a TB sanatorium. No records remain of the hundreds of children who passed through Craig y Nos during this period. Ann Shaw, originally from Crickhowell, was a patient there and intends to write a book about the sanatorium... The Children of Craig y Nos:

- Read about a book charting the hospital's history...
- Read about the new exhibition of photographs...
- Take a look at a selection of photographs...

Article written by Ann Shaw.

"Do you see that window? That's where the bars were. I used to slide between them to break into the library. I was the only one thin enough to pinch books.'

My husband is aghast.

We were visiting Craig-y-nos Castle, the first time for over 50 years.

Curiosity had brought me back, maybe seeking some kind of closure, to see the place where I spent 4 years as a child with TB.

Today it's an hotel specialising in weddings and paranormal events with the derelict children's wards used as a base for ghostly investigations.

Just as I am about to leave, a member of staff, who had shown me around the dilapidated parts of the castle, not open to the public, says:'

Do you know there are no records of the time it was used as a children's hospital. It seems these were all destroyed in the mid 1960's.'

She said that from time to time ex-patients turn up. Like the 60 year old man the previous week.

On returning to my home, now in Scotland, I did a search on Google. Sure enough. There are no records of this period.

It is as if this bleak part of Welsh social history has been quietly erased from the history books.
So it got me thinking about the lost children of Craig-y-nos. Surely we too have a story to tell?

Part of me says: 'Why dig up the past? why resurrect memories best buried and forgotten? the bad old days are over. TB is no longer a killer. There are miracle drugs.'

Yet I sense a need for closure, not just for myself but for all the people who are still alive, and their families too, for TB affected the whole community not just physically but socially, and emotionally. It was the disease which was never spoken about except in hushed whispers.

A few years ago I was visiting my father in a residential home in Crickhowell and a 90 year old woman said: 'Who are you?'.

'Ann...Ty-Llangenny'.

I reverted to the Welsh rural practise of identifying myself by name and the farm I come from:

Without a moments hesitation she replied: 'You are the one that was very ill...'

We have long memories in Wales.

As a child I kept a diary. And forgot about it for over 40 years. it remained buried at the bottom of an old suitcase. The other day after visiting Craig-y-nos I opened it and found this account of life on the balcony during winter.

' We have started making ice lollipops. Checked the balcony thermometer. It reads 28F. Show it to Miss White ( our teacher) and tell her we are cold. She slaps my face and says not to be rude.'

My experiences were not unique. There were hundreds, maybe thousands of children with similar stories.

It was called a hospital but in reality it had all the hallmarks of a prison - for sick children. Isolated from the rest of Wales it had all the appearances of an impenetrable fortress. Once inside children were not allowed out. Average length of stay was around 2 to 3 years.

On arrival you were stripped of all possessions, clothes and toys apart from the absolute minimum. ( I remember my dolls being taken away from me and the nurse laughing because I still had dolls at 9 years of age).

Visitors were allowed one weekend between 2-4pm once a month. All parcels were opened and searched for food. All parents' bags were searched before being allowed into the building.
Uneaten hospital food was returned for the next meal. And so the list goes on....

I was one of those patients from 1950 - 1954. I was lucky, if one can use the word luck in such circumstances, for the introduction of the lifesaving drugs streptomycin and PAS had just arrived.

Now I am researching a book, a memorial to those who lived, and died, within the walls of Craig-y-nos between 1920-1960.

'The Children of Craig-y-nos' will be an e-book, a multimedia experience online, seeking out new ways of storytelling using photos, audio, video and links to relevant sites, and of course the written word.

And I have set up a weblog site to kick-start the project."

Article written by Ann Shaw

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**Sue Wilson, Sydney Australia**

Very interesting project- I recently watched a programme on ABC tv about a farm set up in Molong in Australia for children brought out from the UK to have the chance of a better life in Australia after WW11. The abuses there were kept secret for so long, but for many a chance at healing the memories has begun.

Fri Dec 4 11:26:37 2009

**Grand daughter of emily Dukesburry-Butler of Carma**

My grand mother Emily was rushed to Graig yr Nos just before the beginning of the war. She was not pleased when I informed her of my wish to become a nurse; as she had experienced a lot of distress both from the separation from her family, and at the reported crule treatment by some of the nurses and doctors during her stay. Her treatment was a lot of fresh air and excersise. As a very young child I remember asking her what the triangular scars were on the side of her chest, she explained that it was her treatment, a large triangular needle was past through the space in between her ribs, air was then paste into the space between the rib cage and lungs which deflated her lung to rest it. This was antibiotics were used to treat TB. The most moving story was told to me when I was a lot older, she would weep when she remembered how her friend died, sometime violently and distressingly by heamorraging and respiratory distress. I can not imagine how frightening it must have been. I have been a nurse for 20 years and I try not to forget that when you are ill your are not in control, you may be scared and as nurses we still have a lot to learn about patients experience.

Thu Oct 22 09:58:55 2009

**Wynne Davies**

Although this comment isn't directly related to the period when Craig y Nos was a TB hospital, I have very vivid memories of visiting Craig y Nos as a 10 yr old in 1966/1967 to visit my mother's uncle Johnnie. Although my sister and I weren't allowed in to visit (we stayed in the car with my father while my mother went in to visit her uncle), I have vivid memories of seeing a child's face at one of the
windows whenever we drove away from the car park. Does anyone know if Craig y Nos became a geriatric hospital during the 60s as I seem to recall it was always full of elderly people whenever we visited my mother’s uncle? Mon Sep 7 14:25:29 2009

Brobborough, Wirral
Many thanks for all your work in putting The Children of Craig together. My mum was there in 1931 for nearly a year. You have encouraged me to record my mum’s story before it’s too late, she is now in a nursing home at the grand age of 88. Many thanks.Roger Jones (son) Tue Jul 28 16:53:23 2009

Sophie from Wales
I’ve been to Craig y Nos for a wedding and my cousin took a photo and when they came through there was a black and white one with with a little boy on it a few months later, we watched most haunted and Craig y Nos was on it. It said that a little boy had been pushed out of an upstairs window Sun May 3 19:38:28 2009

Ann Shaw, Scotland
Information is still coming in about this project as people try to fit together their own missing pieces of history. This, I am sure, will continue online for some time to come. Nevertheless the book "Children of Craig-y-nos" which I co-authored with medical historian Dr Carole Reeves is finished and it will be launched on May 1st at Craig-y-nos Castle. After that it will also be available from selected booksellers, Amazon.com and as an electronic book, a PDF file, downloaded free. It is published by Wellcome Trust Centre for the History of Medicine, University College London with help from the Welsh Big Lottery fund.

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Sun Mar 29 18:15:33 2009

Byron Sambrook
Reading through the comments of past patients brings it all back... cruelty? no, unless you call having your toe nails cut so low that they bled for days, or asking for a bedpan at night and being refused when necessity needed a collection of newspapers etc and the results of diarrhoea being thrown over the balcony and a brown stain on the tarpaulin in the AM. Also the rhododendron bushes being covered with the results. No wonder the bushes were done away with.!
Thu Mar 19 09:57:04 2009

Sonia Thomas
hello, does anyone have any information about an 11 year old girl called Francis who had a 2 year old brother called Jack who both died of tb in Craig yr Nos.
Sun Mar 8 17:22:21 2009

Sydney John Yeates
I am trying to find information on my Father Sydney John Yeates who was at the sanatorium in the 1940's (I think). I would love to find more information on how long he was there etc. Can anyone advise me please? Many thanks Graham Yeates
Fri Feb 6 09:23:34 2009

Kathryn Lester, Skewen
I myself was not a patient but my mother was Aileen Bell unsure of what year but i presume it was after 1956 as i will
always remember her stories that herself an her brother John had to share a bed as he was a young boy about 3 yrs old and herself about 7. She told me of bad memories, like having to make sure her brother was good otherwise she would get into trouble, from the nurses as she should be looking/watching him (which she always resented him for but he saly died in his teens and this always haunted her), but she also told me of the beautiful gardens and views, and of the frien ds mae at the time as it was like one big family. My mother was trying to find friends from this time but was unsuccessful as she has recenly died but i feel that i should pass on these memories of hers as the time in the hospital forever played on her mind good and bad.
Thu Dec 11 10:21:38 2008

Alyson From Aberdare
I'm Trying to find a childhood friend of my mothers. The lady's name is Lynette Jenkins last known to be living in Portishead. I wanted to find out if it is the same Lynette Jenkins that has commented here. My Mum's name is Lynda McGovern nee Rees, and grew up in Cwmdare, Aberdare. I would love to be able to get in touch .
Sun Nov 9 21:00:06 2008

Carol Hughes nee Davies Skewen
The nursing staff at craig y nos treated us the best they could but the place was not the best to treat children in the rules were hard to keep i remember the best ones auntie maggie, sister morgan, nurse glenys davies. I was often tied to my bed i can remember once i was on bed rest i called a nurse who was in the ward to say i wanted to go to the toilet she ignored me so i got out of bed ran to the toilet for this the nurse caught me and gave me a good shaking and i had restrainers put on to stop me getting out of bed. I was 6 years old at the time i was also in sully hospital that was like a luxury hotel compared to craig y nos but credit must be given to the young nurses, many people would not come near us. TB was something to fear then i went to the exhibition in swansea museum and i found people wanting to know more because there are no records and they even gave me a hug which is a far cry from the 1950s.
Thu Aug 21 09:27:20 2008

byron sambrook
further to your query. boys were not allowed out as far as i remember,though i have a faint recollection of viewing the hospital from down by the river. i think we had some form of education but it could'nt have amounted to much.myself and a boy from Maesteg called david shickle were sent to highland moors in llandrindod wells,we did'nt last long it was like a reform school (we had been spoilt at craigynos) and the first time we had visitors we both begged them to go home. which we did a week later.
Mon Aug 4 08:27:08 2008

Ann Shaw from Scotland
Susan, I would love to see your original letters. It would offer a rare insight into daily life inside a childrens sanatorium from a child's point of view. If you are interested perhaps you could contact me through my blog listed on the right of this page?

Ann Shaw from Scotland
John,Regarding Highland Moor...you might be interested to know that Dr Carole Reeves, the medical historian I am working with on this project is currently doing research in
the National Library of Wales and she tells me that she has found out a lot of information on Highland Moor. We will be putting it up on my blog (see the links on the right hand side) in the course of the next week or so.
Thu Jul 31 13:42:45 2008

Susan Baker, Bath
I still have all the letters I wrote to my parents during my stay in Craig y Nos. They all begin with "I am well and happy". I often wondered why this was until I read a comment by Carol Hughes above. I also remember being held down to the bed with restraints, being freezing cold, no visitors and eating cold tripe when it was returned the next day.
Mon Jul 21 12:21:00 2008

John Bowen, Southampton
Would love to hear from anybody who was at highland moors in the fifties, and to hear feedback of their experiences at the hospital[long hot walks along the river ithon] no drinks,severe staff [who seemed heartless from a childs perspective] injections in the"BUM" most evennings!!
Fri Jul 18 08:55:30 2008

Susan Baker from Bath
I was then Susan Driver and in Craig y Nos from about 1954 for a few years. Does anyone remember me?

Trevor Hoskins Cwmbran
I was a patient at Craig-y-nos from 1946 -1947. I would be interested in reading this book...
Fri Jul 4 09:28:08 2008

Ann Shaw from Scotland
Roy Harry, a former child patient at Craig-y-nos officially opened "The Children of Craig-y-nos" photographic exhibition yesterday ( July 1st) in Swansea museum. It will run for two months.
He made a very moving speech which reduced one museum official to tears.
Among the guests at the opening were a former nurse, Valerie Brent and an ex-child patient, Pamela Hamer, whom she had helped nurse in the 1940s.
Wed Jul 2 11:36:45 2008

John Ellis
I think Cynthia Coultas may be my cousin who I have not seen for years and would love to contact her. Any info would be appreciated
Fri May 23 16:09:30 2008

Margaret E Vicars nee Rhodes from Leeds
I was in Marguerite Memorial Hosp. at Thorpe Arch from 1941 to 1944 I am also in touch with a friend who was in at the same time . Matron Downs was a very strict disciplinarian & some of the nurses could be very hard & two of them whose names I can remember were cruel , considering we were helpless children . I have photographs of the hospital & some of the patients . Felicity Lane Fox was the secretary when I was there & I have the letter to my parents telling them to come & take me home in Sept. 1944. I am dissapointed to find ther is no history of the hospital on the internet that I can find.
Tue Apr 29 17:19:49 2008
Harry Dodgson, Sydney, Australia
I noted the entry by Cynthia Coultas who is writing a book about Thorp Arch Hospital. I was a patient in that Hospital from 1935 until 1943. Together with other ex-patients we are setting up a blog site. The site is still under construction if Cynthia would like to contact me via this site.
Mon Apr 28 09:25:54 2008

ann Shaw from Scotland
We have been given a grant from the Welsh Heritage Lottery fund to publish the book "Children of Craig-y-nos". This will be the first ever collective account in the world of children and adults memories of life inside a TB sanatorium.
Wed Apr 2 13:04:14 2008

Carol Hughes nee Davies
I was a patient at Craig y Nos there were 15 of us on the ward but I only had 1 friend, Olwen Price. I did go back to Craig y Nos to visit her after I left sneaking in a box of chocolates for her. I now see a name here in Washington DC I do hope it is her and I would love to know she is ok after all these years the last time I saw olwen was 1954.
Wed Mar 26 09:10:49 2008

Yvonne Galert from cumbria
I was there in 1959-60 with Polio and TB in my hip, I remember MHH with good memories, they were all so kind, being wheeled out onto the balcony was my greatest memory, also the schooling we had, they also taught me to walk again and I remember the swimming pool where I had exercises to do, plus the rabbits etc, I had as a pet whilst there. if anyone was around in this era I would love to hear from them??

Rowland Jagger
I was a patient at Marguerite Hepton Hospital for children in 1950 for about one year at the age of seven years suffering with what my parents were told was TB hip. This was a horrible time for me and I still have vivid memories of the harsh and cruel treatment I received at the hand of some of the nursing staff.
Sun Mar 23 11:21:33 2008

Yvonne Farrer nee Galert from Cumbria
I was in Marguerite hepton hospital thorpe arch in 1960 for a year and recived a golden jubilee silver spoon, I wonder if anyone remembers me, I was only 6 years old and has osteomylitus in the leg? everyone was very kind I don't remember any cruelty at all.
Thu Mar 13 09:14:20 2008

Cynthia Coultas. Somerset
Thank you Ann for the opportunity to read peoples comments of their long term care half a century ago. I am working on a book about the Marguerite Hepton Hospital Thorp Arch where I was a nurse between 1956-7. I was very sorry to read of the unfortunate experiences of some of the young patients, although I do of course fully appreciate the psychological trauma that these people must have experienced. Thank you again. Your efforts have spurred me on with the hard work involved in this project, as you will realise.
Mon Jan 14 14:30:29 2008

Olwen Price Washington, DC
Is this the Olwen you were looking for?
Wed Nov 21 16:01:00 2007

**Ann Shaw from Scotland**
Since I started this project I have had over 1,000 photographs sent in by ex-patients from Craig-y-nos. Surprisingly few are duplicates. We have already had one exhibition in Ystradgynlais and we have another one opening this week in Brecon Library on Friday November 23rd. It will contain 40 new photos seen for the first time by the general public. Dr Carole Reeves, the Outreach Historian from The Wellcome Centre for the History of Medicine, University College London, I am working with, will officially open the exhibition. It will run until mid-December.

Mon Nov 19 08:10:38 2007

**Christime Hummerstone Berkshire**
My father Richard Edwards who came from Aberbargeod told me that he went to a hospital in Brecon when he was young as he had TB. He was born in 1911 but I am not sure when he was ill. He did not talk about it very much so reading about it all has been very interesting. Carry on the good work Ann.

Sun Nov 11 18:12:10 2007

**Deborah Oxley, Knaresborough**
I have been delving into my family's history and knew nothing of the children with TB in these hospitals until today. My relatives (Lily and Winnie Bendelow) were in the Marguerite Hepton at Thorp Arch. Winnie had her lung removed there, and, like you, feel there should be a record of this time. I wish you well with your book and feel it would be worth extending to include Thorp Arch, especially as there seems to be a link with children being moved from the one hospital to the other. Keep on, Ann.

Sun Nov 4 19:16:59 2007

**Linda Merritt**
I am also interested in the life of children in hospital in the 1950s although not in this particular area. I have heard several heartbreaking stories and I too believe there is a book waiting to be written. Thank you for the opportunity to see other stories.


**Sharon, Ystalyfera**
My mother used to be a nurse there when it was a TB Hospital but I'm not sure of the year, my mum's name at the time was Miss Cissie Myers. I'm her youngest daughter and I would love to know all about the history of the castle, I went down there to look around but I don't see it as it is now. All I can see is as it was all them years ago as a TB hospital and everytime i go past it i say to my husband there's my mum's home. My mum has died now but when we were younger she used to talk about the hospital and now she has passed away i would love to get to know more about the background of it and maybe even find a book about it. But I see that you have named some of the nurses but some you haven't, I was just hoping anybody would have remembered my mum. I would really appreciate it if you know of my mother or if you would know of anybody that would of remembered her as a nurse there. As this would mean so much to me. I loved my mum so much and everytime we go past the castle I can imagine seeing my mum standing by the entrance. When my husband and i went inside to look around i went into the theatre and i just stood there and cried, i felt so moved and touched i could...
feel the presence of my mum there. I would love to know more about and maybe even get a glimpse of a photo of her when she was there.

Fri Oct 5 15:52:43 2007

**Royden Stead from Clydach Near Abergavenny**
I was at Craig y Nos for about 2 years from 1940 to 1942. I was 2 years old when I was admitted and my family lived too far away and couldn't afford to visit. My father made the journey as often as he could by pushbike!! Apparently I used to greet him with "I don't know my daddy". I remember feeling like a stranger when I eventually went home. Some years ago I met a lady who had been a nurse at the sanitorium, unfortunately I don't remember her name. She asked me if I was one of the poor children or the rich ones. I told her that I had been one of the poor ones! Her response was "Don't worry we tried to look after you and bring small presents for you".

Mon Sep 10 11:02:01 2007

**Hilary Jones, Swansea**
My Grandmother died of TB at Craig yr Nos around 1935. Annie Mary Lloyd. She had to be taken away from her 3 children who were only about 8,10, and 12 who never saw her again. She died after being there for about 3 years. She was only in her early 30s. It must have been hell for her. Does anybody have any information about her? Or photographs dating from this time.

Mon Sep 10 08:08:55 2007

**Catherine Smith, Pontardawe**
I recently had the pleasure to stay at Craig y Nos with some friends and family to take part in a ghost tour. It is such a beautiful castle with so much history but also sad for the children that died there. I would like to go back as I feel there is so much more history to this worth knowing. It was humbling reading these comments of people who were at the castle either working or residents.

Thu Sep 6 15:00:45 2007

**Pamela Hamer, Swansea**
I was in Craig-y-Nos from 1947 to 1950 on a plaster bed out on the balcony. Some nurses were lovely, the one I liked the best was aunty Maggy. Some were strict, and my parcels were opened and items removed. I remember having my nose held because I didn't like my medication. And my lovely hair cut off up to my ears I was very upset. I remember Dr Huppard She looked like a man and she asked my parents if she could adopt me. I was nervous when she came on her rounds. I remember my friends Shirley Osbourne and Joan Hubbard, I will never forget them. I couldn't wait to leave that hospital. But I was only a child at the time.

Thu Aug 30 09:15:33 2007

**Jane Freeland, Southampton**
I was a spinal TB patient for about 5 years (1943 to 1948), first briefly in Wales (my parents called it Cowbridge - it was near Cardiff), and then in Yorkshire, at the Marguerite Hepton Orthopedic Hospital at Thorp Arch, near Wetherby, Yorkshire, for the rest of the time. Eventually, surgical techniques and the magical streptomycin enabled me to recovery fully. I'm now 67, and like you I feel there's a story to be explored. Like you, too, I've found it almost impossible to find records of people involved. In the case of 'my' Yorkshire hospital even the building has vanished under new bui! It houses. I was thrilled to hear that people at the
Wellcome Trust are interested in your idea for a book, and sorry to read some of the negative reactions to your desire to approach the topic. It seems to me that those of us who survived lived through an important part of medical history - quite an achievement - and can help to highlight forgotten bits of it.

Mon Jul 23 17:10:17 2007

**Ann Shaw from Scotland**

There will be a Patients Reunion at Craig-y-nos Castle on Sunday September 9th and this will tie in with an exhibition of patients photos opening on the Friday before at the Ystradgylais Miners Welfare Club. This follows the enormous response I have had since I first started my blog. Have received over 400 photographs from ex-patients. Meanwhile Dr Reeves, Outreach Historian with The Wellcome Trust Centre for the History of Medicine, UCL, has agreed to co-author my book putting it all into a medical historical perspective, for which I am very grateful.

Wed Jul 11 16:30:38 2007

**Ann Shaw from Scotland**

Martin, I can fully understand how as a child you found Craig-y-nos Castle an enchanting place to stay with your aunt, the matron. After all Adelina Patti chose it because of its magical, mysterious qualities. However, if you were a child patient there you might have felt differently about it. If you read Allan Morgan’s account in my blog today...you will see a very different picture to the one you remembered though you were both there around the same time, and probably the same age. Ann

Fri May 11 12:57:35 2007

**Martin Valler, London**

During the 1950s my favourite aunt was Matron of the hospital and for a 10 year period I was very fortunate to spend my summer holidays there every year and some Christmases. My memories are of the happiest time in my childhood in Adelina Pattis Home Sweet Home and lovely gardens. Christmas especially was a big occasion with a concert in the Theatre with Father Christmas giving presents to all the children individually. By coincidence I almost lost my life there with a burst appendix which my Aunt diagnosed. I remember Sister Powell from Mountain Ash, Richards the head porter and dear Edgar Davies the head gardner who lived in a cottage by the Cribarth. I spent many happy hours with him and his staff in the kitchen garden which is now the Country Park car park. I return to the valley every year sometimes with my sister and her daughter. We stand by the concrete deer at the top of the terrace and the intervening years fall away. As much as I appreciate the comments of Ann Shaw I feel beauty or ugliness is in the eyes of the beholder. Craig-y-Nos provided then the best and only therapy for TB which was clean fresh air. Treatment was long term but death statistics were not due to any lack of care by the hospital staff.

Wed May 9 09:48:45 2007

**Debbie Evans Ystalyfera**

This is a wonderful insight to peoples memories. I am too young to remember the TB hospital but My Mamgu was a patient there, and used to go to respite a couple of times a year and sadly died there in 1985. I myself spent a few days there with a chest infection at the age of 17 & I found it scary, later on when the castle was changed to a restraurant I was the cook. My memories of the snow falling and being able to sit by the roaring log fire are so different to the
memories of the children of the castle. My Father who is from Abercraive has retold many stories of the Hospital, and I am looking forward to reading & learning more about the years people spent there.
Thu Apr 26 14:20:11 2007

Geraint Morgan, Llandod
My gran was there, and I think she has dug out a bunch of old photos from her time there for either this book or some similar project. She was a much older patient though, in her 20s. Had to make arrangements for treatment when she was on her honeymoon in Aberystwyth.
Wed Apr 25 14:56:46 2007

Carol Hughes, nee Davies from Skewen
I was small when i was at craig y nos from 1951 to 1954 but i remember my time there we were expected to eat food. If we wasted it we would get it back later in the day letters in and out wee censored they all started dear mam and dad i am well and happy if i got a parcel from home some items were removed sweets and soap i never saw these when i could get out of bed i use to wander so i remember if i went too far i would get a harness put on me to keep me in bed for a few hours or our beds were pulled out in the middle of the ward in disgrace they said so docto! r huppard would see we had done wrong. I had 1 friend olwen price but we lost touch after going home i would love to know how she is It was cruel but i did go back to craig y nos 2 years ago it brought back everything my missing years. It would be nice if they arranged a patients day once a year where we could all go if possible and remember our past our friends who went through the same as us.
Tue Mar 6 13:57:01 2007

Tony Hibbert Gloucestershire
Regarding the term "cruelty" I was not referring to comments made by Ann, but the very sensational comment made by the first contributor from Scotland . Good luck to Ann with her book - it is a great true story and hopefully we will hear both sides(staff and patients).I did look at your blog Ann and it was good to see some familiar faces particularly Glenys Davies who bought me Xmas presents for years when I was a young lad.She is a very good friend of our family and was an extremely dedicated nurse. Dr Huppert was a very abrasive & abrupt character but please bear in mind she had difficulties with the English language! Regarding your friend from the sixties - take her to see the theatre.( prison indeed!) Please bear in mind it was a beautiful mansion when Adelina Patti was in residence and it was always going to be difficult to convert to a hospital.
Fri Mar 2 10:23:10 2007

Rebecca, South wales
I admit i dont know that much about the history of craig y nos as a hospital but, you are all telling ann how she is wrong to say that the staff were "cruel"...but ann hasn't once, as she pointed out. It is you who have used the word cruel who are the only ones to have done so. Ann told her story but never said it was cruel. You were the ones to bring up that word.

Ann Shaw, Scotland
Tony, I do not use the word "cruel" anywhere in my original story. That is other peoples interpretation of events. All I am doing is trying to put the record straight, to fill in missing historical and medical gaps, and it is a complicated story. I
am telling the story from the children's point of view. Adults and "outsiders" may have a different perspective. A recurring theme from the ex-patients I have spoken to so far is that as a result of the experience they: "lost their childhood" "felt a loner" "makes you self-reliant, independent but also emotionally vulnerable." "The Children of Craig-y-nos" is a story that needs to be told, painful though some parts of it may be. You may like to check my daily weblog to see the photos and stories that are rolling in daily from ex-patients.

Wed Feb 21 09:34:10 2007

Tony Hibbert, Gloucestershire

Ann, I feel very sorry for you because you have got it so wrong. Obviously the experience you had of leaving home and being "imprisoned" at Craigynos at an early age has left a scar (and understandably so), but I think you are being very unkind in some of your remarks about the staff and doctors. I was born and bred in Craig-y-nos and my family has had close links with the castle since the days of Adelina Patti. My grandfather was her Head Gardener for 30yrs. My father was an engineer at the hospital all his life and both my mother and aunt dedicated a large part of their lives to nursing patients! with TB at Craig-y-nos. My mother who is now 91 yrs of age started at Craigynos when she was 17 yrs of age and was still nursing there in 1963. I cannot imagine my mother or my aunt being "cruel" in any way. Their whole life has been devoted to looking after others who were less fortunate than themselves. I think you should be grateful that you survived at Craigynos until the introduction of lifesaving drugs. There were people risking their own lives to keep you alive! As a child (similar age to yourself) I knew most of the staff as being extremely kind and compassionate and I do take exception to some of your remarks.


Ann Shaw from Scotland

Just back in Scotland after week doing research in Wales and I would like to say a big "thank you" to all the people who have contacted me - phone calls, mobile, letters and of course all those who came to Craig-y-nos on the Sunday, Monday and Tuesday. It was great to see everyone! So many stories to tell and memories (and photos) to share. I will be in touch with everyone but I have more than 50 to contact so please bear with me. For many people it was the first opportunity to talk about their time in Craig-y-nos. Many phone calls started with: "This is the first time in 50 years! I have spoken about it...."

Mon Jan 29 15:00:35 2007

Ann Shaw from Scotland

Hi John (in Canada), Were you out on the balcony during the snow of 1947? Do you have many memories of your time there? It would be lovely if you were to share them with us.

Wed Jan 17 15:17:25 2007

Ann Shaw from Scotland

I am going to be at Craig-y-nos from next Sunday (January 21) for a few days in order to meet ex-patients and staff. You are most welcome to attend. I shall be in the main bar from Sunday and Monday from 2-5pm. I am sure we will all have a lot to talk about.


Hilary Williams, Brecon

Ann, as far as I am concerned, you have already done so
much damage with your comments about cruelty etc, as well as pandering to the "Ghost watchers" at Craigynos, with your video clip on You Tube, that I will not be assisting you with your project. I cannot trust your assertion that you will be fair and not sensational. I'm out! I fully endorse Roy Harry’s words.

Wed Jan 17 09:39:35 2007

Roy Harry
I have been hoping to make contact with male patients who were in Craig y Nos between 1944 and 1946. I need help from anyone who remembers the man who used to cut our hair. I see John Price was there in 1947, hi John, I left in 1946, you may have arrived too late to help with the barber enquiry, not that you would have wanted a hair cut when on the balcony in the snows of 47. You may be able to help with another of my memories. I would often leave ward 1A and go out on to the balcony to talk to the patients, I made friends with one in particular, his name was Peter, I wonder if he was still there when you arrived? You may find this hard to believe John, but today I spoke to someone who knew nurse Dinah Kemys.

Fri Jan 12 17:46:30 2007

Ann Shaw, Scotland
Hi Roy, I am sorry if you think I am trying to paint a gloomy picture of Craig-y-nos in order to write a sensational book. This is far from the case. My intention is that this should be a collaborative on-line effort.


Ann, you are obviously determined to paint a bleak picture of Craig Y Nos, of course you are entitled to your opinion, but strict rules were made and enforced for very good reasons and should not be interpreted as cruelty. I am concerned that some of your childhood memories may be sensationalised for the sake of a book. The truth is the story of Craig Y Nos and the T.B years is an amazing story of courage, sadness, dedication, and an ongoing struggle against a horrible killer disease for which at the time there was no cure. However, the story should definitely be told. There are many surviving patients and staff in this area who could help you, but, I have not met one yet who talks of cruelty, prison and impenetrable fortresses.

Wed Jan 10 09:30:26 2007

Roy Harry, Afan Valley
Ann, you are obviously determined to paint a bleak picture of Craig Y Nos, of course you are entitled to your opinion, but strict rules were made and enforced for very good reasons and should not be interpreted as cruelty. I am concerned that some of your childhood memories may be sensationalised for the sake of a book. The truth is the story of Craig Y Nos and the T.B years is an amazing story of courage, sadness, dedication, and an ongoing struggle against a horrible killer disease for which at the time there was no cure. However, the story should definitely be told. There are many surviving patients and staff in this area who could help you, but, I have not met one yet who talks of cruelty, prison and impenetrable fortresses.

Wed Jan 10 09:30:26 2007

John Price from Edmonton, AB, Canada
Both myself and my little sister Anne were at Craig-y-nos, me first, on the balcony during the snows of 1947, then Anne a few months later. Here is a secret I have kept for 60 years, I was in love with Bridie Thomas! My favorite nurse was Nurse Chemis? The matron was not very nice and took all our treasures regularly. We took part in a Tommy Trouble radio broadcast as well, remember My Old Man's a Dustman? I was sent to Highland Moors to convalesce. Clive Rowlands was there at the same time. All of the nurses there were nice. Sad part, my mother died while I was there. It was 2 weeks before my tenth birthday. I have had two visits to see Craig-y-nos and so much has gone, even "Jimmy the Ghost"

Tue Jan 9 09:35:10 2007

Ann Shaw from Scotland
I would love to see the letters you have. They may be the only historical record of that time still in existence. I am going to be in Wales for a week from January 20th and
would love to meet up with you. Could you e-mail me at:annshaw@mac.com If you are agreeable I would like to photocopy them. They are the kind of documents that should be archived in some museum. Maybe The Wellcome Medical Trust can advise.

Mon Jan 8 16:57:22 2007

Ann Shaw from Scotland
Hi Roy, Re the ex nurse...she may remember me under my maiden name of Rumsey (the one from the farm). Also I was there for over 4 years which was unusual.. Most patients were there for 2/3 years.
Fri Jan 5 17:51:29 2007

Roy Harry, Afan Valley.
To Lynette, Portishead. I am in contact with an ex Craig y Nos nurse, who recalls bringing in hair ribbons for the girls on her ward. She might remember you, but does not recognise your surname.
Thu Jan 4 10:01:46 2007

Lynette Jenkins, Portishead, Somerset
I was a 'balcony' patient in 1953-55 but I can't remember any of the bad times. If I was good I was allowed to watch television with the doctors' daughters on a Sunday, believe me, to be able to watch Muffin the Mule I was positively angelic! I remember two nurses, one nice, one not so. The nice one used to bring me hair ribbons. Funny but I haven't thought about the place in years, thank you for jogging my memory.
Tue Dec 19 09:37:39 2006

Hilary Williams
Hi Ann, There is a contributor on the South Wales site of BBC Wales (Roger Wyn Beynon of Ammanford) who has memories of Craig-y-Nos, from 49 to 55. He seemed to have some good memories
Tue Dec 19 09:30:39 2006

Hilary Williams, Brecon
I appreciate the hardship, both emotionally and psychologically, which you suffered during your time at Craig y nos. I hope, however, that you will appreciate the context of the time when you had TB. There was no cure and isolation, fresh air and good food were the only treatments, until the drugs and then vaccine came along. Further more, there were very dedicated staff at the hospital, even though they were strict, as was the case everywhere in those days. The children had wonderful Christmases, with plays and concerts etc. They were educated, with an in house school. There were wonderful resident doctors who were totally dedicated to their patients. If you go onto "Powys archives" site, you will find that they have the school records for Craig y nos - Adelina Patti Hospital School, Ystradgynlais: L 1947-72 (BE/PS/3. Please do not make your e-book into one long rant, since there are staff as well as ex-patients, who I know would be very upset if this e-book is too biased. You are more likely to get support from people, like myself, who can give lots of help, if you genuinely wish to give a true picture of the time. Please take these comments in the spirit in which they are meant, ie an agreement that it is high time a fair study of the treatment of the TB children of craig y nos was made.
Mon Dec 18 09:54:56 2006

John S. Batts
Ann: I have some letters written from Craig-y-nos in 1930
by a cousin of my father. The writer did not last very long at
the sanatorium and died there aged 29. If you would like to
see these -- and I think you should --I think it could be
arranged. The project sounds very worthwhile, if a bit
depressing.
Fri Dec 15 15:27:21 2006

**Karen Howard, Scotland.**
Despite not having had TB, I found this article very moving.
In fact I'm still crying about the cruelty. I would like to
congratulate Ann on her courage in tackling such an emotive
project. On the artistic front, this sounds like a very exciting
ground breaking project. Cann't wait for the next episode.
Wed Dec 13 14:34:51 2006
In April 2008 Outreach Historian, Dr Carole Reeves, described the new book about the tuberculosis patients in the Adelina Patti Hospital, better known as Craig-y-nos Castle:

"We are thrilled that "Awards for All Wales" has recognised the importance of this community project by awarding the Wellcome Trust Centre for the History of Medicine, University College London, £5000.00 to create a print on demand book which will also be freely available as a downloadable pdf file from the Centre's website.

The book, entitled 'The Children of Craig-y-nos' will be a permanent memorial to ex-patients and staff, and an important medical and social history of tuberculosis in South Wales. Because the sanatorium records have been destroyed, we are re-constructing forty years of missing Welsh history.

The book will also be the first ever collective history of patient and staff experiences in a tuberculosis sanatorium. The Adelina Patti Hospital (Craig-y-nos Castle) served for nearly forty years (1922-1959) as a tuberculosis sanatorium mainly for children and young women at a time when the incidence and death rate of TB in the industrial areas of South Wales were higher than anywhere else in Britain. The project was begun by artist and writer, Ann Shaw, herself an ex-patient, who will be co-authoring the book with me.

Ann says:" Many people had never spoken about their childhood experiences before and they say they have found it cathartic to be able to talk and write about it for the first time. For children it was a traumatic experience though older teenagers and young adults coped better with the sanatorium regime."

The Craig-y-nos project has come a long way since December 2006 when Ann began her search for patients who shared her childhood memories of this castle-hospital perched on the edge of the Brecon Beacons National Park.

It is not only re-uniting people who shared their formative years in the sanatorium but is opening a community dialogue about the impact of tuberculosis on families in the Swansea valley.

The project has collected over a thousand photographs, memorabilia, and seventy-five oral history interviews. There have been two well-attended photographic exhibitions in Ystradgynlais and Brecon, and a 2008 summer exhibition will be held at Swansea Museum.

An online exhibition is available (see links on the right of this
and a patient/staff reunion at Craig-y-nos Castle in September 2007 was attended by 120 people, some of whom are actively involved in the project and are passing on their experiences to schools and local interest groups as well as collecting further interviews and memorabilia.

Information pours in on a daily basis and the Craig-y-nos blog (see links on the right of this page) and now has over 600 pages of text, images, podcasts and videos. The project will make available an important educational and heritage resource created by the people who experienced it.

In July 2008, I will be presenting the project at the Oral History Society annual conference."

Article by Dr. Carol Reeves

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**Jean Bann (was Thompson) from Hazel Grove**
I had TB in 1957 and spent a year at the hospital. I have some photo's which I will find and scan for you. I would be very interested in the book, where can I find it?
Sun Nov 29 17:18:05 2009

**Valerie Brown, Builth Wells**
I am interested in obtaining a copy of this book as a present for my brother, Derek Vickery, who was a patient at Craig-y-nos about 1938 till 1941. Any help would be appreciated.
Thu Sep 17 11:00:08 2009

**Jean Smith, Southampton Hampshire**
I was a patient at Craig-y-nos Castle when I was 6 years old and my memories were not happy ones. It was only when I was looking at the old photos I realised what a traumatic time it had been for me. We had to accept what happened to us without question and I do not remember being shown any concern for the fact that I had been taken from my family and sent to this place which seemed like a prison. I do not think I would be able to re-visit it.
Sun Jul 26 09:04:13 2009

**Vernon Pugh Flintshire**
I was at Highland Moors 1938 1940. I would like to know more about the book.
Mon Feb 23 14:48:56 2009

**Josie Callaghan from Llanelli**
i have been to craig y nos for the ghost hunt i have been with friends a few times where i have fallen in love with the castle. i am so interested in the book i would love to read it but i dont know where i can buy it from. the castle is so beutiful and has so much history.
Sun Oct 12 16:58:51 2008

**Terry Hunt, Newport, Gwent**
I am an ex patient and would be interested in this book.
Mon Sep 8 09:45:05 2008

**David Pearce of Preston Lancashire**
Was interested to read about Dr Ivor Williams who worked at Craig y Nos and then moved to Kensington Hospital St. Brides on the Pembrokeshire Coast. Would be interested to hear of anyone who was an ex patient at Kensington Hospital where I spent five years with a TB HIP.
Wed Aug 20 09:08:25 2008
Children of Craig-y-nos exhibition

Outreach Historian, Dr Carole Reeves, describes an exhibition of photographs of children and young women who were patients in the Adelina Patti Hospital, better known as Craig-y-nos Castle:

- **Read about Ann Shaw’s experience...**
- **Take a look at a selection of photographs...**

"The first ever exhibition of photographs of children and young women who were patients in the Adelina Patti Hospital will open at The Welfare Hall, Ystradgynlais, Brecon Road, Swansea on Friday 7 September until Saturday 29 September 2007.

The exhibition has been organised by Ann Shaw, herself an ex-patient (1950-1954). To coincide with the exhibition, a reunion of patients and staff will take place on Sunday 9 September 2007 at 12 noon at Craig-y-nos Castle, Brecon Road, Pen-y-cae, Powys SA9 1GL.

It was less than a year ago that Ann began her search for information about the Hospital, which served as a tuberculosis sanatorium from 1922 to 1959.

After discovering that all the patient records had been destroyed, she submitted an entry to the BBC Mid-Wales community history site, and placed small articles in the Brecon and Radnor Express and the South Wales Evening Post, hoping that they might draw out information to piece together the missing decades.

Says Ann, 'Little did I know I was about to tap into the collective memory of a whole community, of people with stories waiting to be told, many of whom had never spoken of their experiences before, some painful, some happy but all with their own unique tales of their time isolated from their families and the rest of the world in this secluded sanatorium on the edge of the Brecon Beacons.

E-mails arrived from New Zealand, Australia, Canada and the UK, along with a flood of letters and phone calls. I have been deluged with photographs, approaching 600, tiny scraps of history, some barely more than 2”x 2", faded but clearly treasured.'

About 60 photographs have been selected for the exhibition, which will also be online so take a look at the websites listed to the right on this page.

The exhibition is part of an oral history project in which Ann is supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, Sleeping Giant Foundation and the Wellcome Trust Centre for the History of Medicine, University College London.
We are recording the memories of many of the people you will see in the photographs. It will be the first ever collective account by patients and staff of life inside a tuberculosis sanatorium and is therefore a unique heritage project.

The time period, from the 1920s to the 1950s, is also crucial because of the tremendous activity by medical professionals and other groups to understand the nature of tuberculosis, who was most likely to catch it, how to diagnose it, and how to treat it.

Although tuberculosis was known to be an infectious disease caused by a microscopic organism (Mycobacterium tuberculosis), the real treatment breakthrough came in 1947 when the first effective medicine, an antibiotic called streptomycin, became available in Britain. The children of Craig-y-nos were among the first to receive this new 'wonder' drug.

The photographs, taken between 50 and 85 years ago, give us a unique insight into life inside a tuberculosis sanatorium. They do not offer a pictorial record of day-to-day events because the people who took them were, first and foremost, recording their happiest moments.

Photography is all about happy memories, after all. We do not see the sadness, pain, disappointment and fear that many of these children and young adults experienced during months, often years, inside the walls of Craig-y-nos.

What the pictures do reveal, in a most evocative way, is a youthful stoicism and zest for life at a time when TB in the industrial areas of south Wales claimed the lives of 12 young men and 17 young women a year in every community of 6000 people.

Hundreds more, like the children of Craig-y-nos, were deprived by chronic ill health of education, work and family life.

For 37 years, Craig-y-nos provided the pure, invigorating air swirling around balconies open to the elements that was considered beneficial, even curative, in patients with tuberculosis.

Its situation amongst pinewoods in a magnificent rural environment on the edge of the Brecon Beacons in the Upper Swansea Valley, provides the backdrop to many of the photographs in this remarkable exhibition.

Ann Shaw and I will be co-authoring a book entitled The Children of Craig-y-nos, which will tell the story of the sanatorium for the first time and pays tribute to those who made it possible. As Ann says, 'We made it, hundreds didn’t.'

**Article by Dr Carole Reeves, Outreach Historian at the Wellcome Trust Centre for the History of Medicine**

- Find out how the exhibition has fared...

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**your comments**

**John Bowen**
I was at highland moors, I was very young and had some
cruel memories of abandonment, home being in newport, not seeing parents for long periods, trying very hard to find some patient records to no avail! Have visited place recently and found flashbacks quite harrowing!
Fri Jul 18 08:55:54 2008

K. Owen, Merthyr Tydfil.
My memories are of Highland Moors sanatorium in 1951 to 1952. I was a patient there from early 1951 to late 1952. I still recall it being traumatic but obviously life saving. I have only ever met one person who was there the same time as me. He was an announcer on Carmarthen Railway station in the early 60's.
Wed Apr 30 09:27:10 2008

Ann Shaw from Scotland
Thank you Terry for your contribution. I am so glad to have had the chance to meet you on Sunday at the Patients Reunion and do hope that the day helped to "lay some ghosts".
Wed Sep 12 12:40:24 2007

Terry Hunt, Newport, South Wales
I listened to Ann yesterday on Radio Wales and was really upset as the memories came back (they do now as I write this). I was a patient in 1947/8 and like Ann I tried to find the records with no success. My family lived in Swansea at the time of my illness. I refused to go near Craig y Nos until I was in my forties and took up hillwalking. My memories are similar to others writing on this website. The beds on the balcony, the "harnesses" also known as straitjackets, having our sweets taken off us by staff - at a time of rationing. I don't remember it being a happy place but a very lonely place and thought always that my parents abandoned me there. Telling them what was happening to me and being called a liar. In the 1940's parents trusted all authority figures more than their own kids. I am not surprised that the records have been destroyed along with records of other children's institutions. I hope to be there on Sunday but will certainly find it upsetting... Best of Luck to Ann and all those who survived and the families of those who did not.
Fri Sep 7 10:53:19 2007
The Lost Children of Craig y Nos

Last updated: 10 September 2007

Craig y Nos is best known as the home of opera singer Adelina Patti. But between 1920 and 1960 it was used as a TB sanatorium. No records remain of the hundreds of children who passed through Craig y Nos during this period. Ann Shaw, originally from Crickhowell, was a patient and has collected photographs for an exhibition. Take a look at a selection of the photos:

- Find out more about Craig y Nos...

Some of the boys on the balcony (circa 1951)

your comments

Bill Newman, Sussex
In 1952 at the age of 6 I spent 10 months at Highland Moor Llandrindod Wells. This dreadful experience has left a most profound affect on my life. I remember the most extraordinary details in particular the monthly visits by my mother. Perhaps older children could cope but I was the second youngest there. Number 49!! Thank God these dreadful places have gone. I would be most interested and disturbed to read your work.
Wed May 13 08:58:22 2009

Sonia Betch Mathews, Swansea
I was a child aged 10 and stayed at Craig-y-nos for 2 and half years in the 1950s. I had TB on my lungs. I remember a girl named Joan who had stayed at the hospital the same time as me, I could only have visits once a month and all the girls on the wards would share sweets we were like family,
Tue Apr 14 09:48:45 2009

related www links

Ann Shaw - Craig y Nos blog
Children of Craig y Nos website
wayne hughes Swansea
My father was a patient at Graig y Nos in the 1930s he was later moved to Highland Moor in Llandrindod Wells for 18 months. His sister insists he never had TB but why else would he have spent well over 2 years in different locations around Wales?
Thu Oct 2 09:59:20 2008

Peter Mundy from Mountain Ash
Patient about 1958 3-4 years old
Fri Dec 7 09:50:04 2007

Ann Shaw from Scotland
I was a patient in Craig-y-nos from March 1950 -March 1954, most of the time on the girls balcony which was above the boys balcony and we used to drop messages to the boys on pieces of string. Now I am writing a book about the "Children of Craig-y-nos" and collecting stories from all those who were there as TB patients both as children and young adults. I am also wanting to make contact with ex staff members too. I can be contacted through the web-site: www.childrenofcraigynos.com This project is supported by The Wellcome Trust Centre for the History of Medicine, University College London and I am working with their medical historian Dr Carole Reeves.

The BBC is not responsible for the content of external websites

Thu Sep 13 13:51:02 2007
The Lost Children of Craig y Nos

Last updated: 10 September 2007

Craig y Nos is best known as the home of opera singer Adelina Patti. But between 1920 and 1960 it was used as a TB sanatorium. No records remain of the hundreds of children who passed through Craig y Nos during this period. Ann Shaw, originally from Crickhowell, was a patient and has collected photographs for an exhibition. Take a look at a selection of the photos:

- **Find out more about Craig y Nos...**

![Bus trip to Swansea during the late 1940s](image-url)
The Lost Children of Craig y Nos

Last updated: 10 September 2007

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- **Find out more about Craig y Nos...**

Nurse Glenys Davies and a clown with some of the babies in the Glass Conservatory (circa 1940s)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11
The Lost Children of Craig y Nos

Last updated: 10 September 2007

Craig y Nos is best known as the home of opera singer Adelina Patti. But between 1920 and 1960 it was used as a TB sanatorium. No records remain of the hundreds of children who passed through Craig y Nos during this period. Ann Shaw, originally from Crickhowell, was a patient and has collected photographs for an exhibition. Take a look at a selection of the photos:

- Find out more about Craig y Nos...

Coronation, 1953. Teenagers on Ward 2 balcony with some of the paper decorations

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11
The Lost Children of Craig y Nos

Last updated: 10 September 2007

Craig y Nos is best known as the home of opera singer Adelina Patti. But between 1920 and 1960 it was used as a TB sanatorium. No records remain of the hundreds of children who passed through Craig y Nos during this period. Ann Shaw, originally from Crickhowell, was a patient and has collected photographs for an exhibition. Take a look at a selection of the photos:

- Find out more about Craig y Nos...

This is the earliest known photograph of old Craig-y-nos Castle taken in 1880. It was built around 1842-43 by Rice Davies Powell, and sold to Morgan Morgan and he sold it to Madame Patti who enlarged it.
Craig y Nos is best known as the home of opera singer Adelina Patti. But between 1920 and 1960 it was used as a TB sanatorium. No records remain of the hundreds of children who passed through Craig y Nos during this period. Ann Shaw, originally from Crickhowell, was a patient and has collected photographs for an exhibition. Take a look at a selection of the photos:

- **Find out more about Craig y Nos...**

Nurse Glenys Davies, a very popular member of staff, in playful mood.
The Lost Children of Craig y Nos

Last updated: 10 September 2007

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- Find out more about Craig y Nos...

Two young women, Marian and Jean, help to build up their strength by sawing wood (circa 1954)
The Lost Children of Craig y Nos

Last updated: 10 September 2007

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- Find out more about Craig y Nos...

Show a leg! These teenage girls enjoy partying on the balcony of Ward 2. By 1956 the widespread introduction of drugs meant that TB was no longer a killer disease, and this is reflected in the higher morale amongst patients.
The Lost Children of Craig y Nos

Last updated: 10 September 2007

Craig y Nos is best known as the home of opera singer Adelina Patti. But between 1920 and 1960 it was used as a TB sanatorium. No records remain of the hundreds of children who passed through Craig y Nos during this period. Ann Shaw, originally from Crickhowell, was a patient and has collected photographs for an exhibition. Take a look at a selection of the photos:

- Find out more about Craig y Nos...
Karen Howard, an artist and psychologist, reviews the Craig y Nos photographic exhibition developed by Ann Shaw:

- Read about Ann Shaw’s experience...
- Take a look at a selection of photographs...

"This project demonstrates how artists can involve people and contribute to society by having a clear vision, being motivated, with the drive to keep going, following up all contacts, and using media appropriately. Thus leading to recognition and appreciation.

This exhibition of photographs is the tip of an extraordinary iceberg. It documents aspects of the lives of the children and their nurses.

Some of the children have died, but the overwhelming response to the call for people to get in touch, and the attendance at the exhibition, the opening and the reunion is an accolade to those children's ability to weather both the physical and psychological storms of having 'the illness you didn't mention' TB.

The exhibition includes photographs of the hospital (previously the home of Adeline Patty, the opera singer), children who were patients, nurses, visitors, and even some of the animals who lived in the grounds.

The hospital was a long way from anywhere, making visiting a major achievement for family members. The photographs reflect the pleasure brought to the children by the dedicated staff, but do not reflect the trauma of young children separated from their families, sometimes for years.

The iceberg started with the desire of one of those children, Ann Shaw, to investigate and document life for the children at Craig-y-nos.

It has up to now involved finding and interviewing people or their relatives, producing a daily blog of the interviews, directing the development of both the on-line exhibition and the first actual exhibition held at Ystradgynlais Miners Welfare and Community Hall.

The success of the project depends on involvement but the likely people could have been scattered to the winds. So the major challenge was to find people who had been in Craig-y-nos, or who had an interest.

Newspaper articles, picked up by the BBC Wales website, picked up by the Welcome Trust and Sleeping Giant.
Foundation, all provided publicity outlets, each with a different audience.

Contacts have come both from the local area, and from all over the world. This international dimension to the project is complemented by individual involvement and the recreation of that sense of community.

The project gained momentum, one contact leading to another, (often known as the snowball technique) with opportunities for finding other people emerging, connections being made between people who were at Craig-y-nos, talking and meeting for the first time in 50+ years, often talking for the first time of their experience and through this, beginning to work through what must have been a traumatic period of their lives.

Both the actual and on-line exhibitions show how low and high tech can be combined and used in such a way as to be totally appropriate for the style of the venue and both audiences possible physical limitations such as eyesight and likely level of technical knowledge.

Although, as the project has progressed, many people have given invaluable help through funding, interviewing, digitising photographs and organising exhibitions, the driving force behind the project has been Ann Shaw, artist/writer.

She had the original idea, the motivation and the courage to persist, despite advice to drop the project. Technical Computer assistance was provided by Malcolm Shaw.

Ann has now been invited to produce additional exhibitions and is planning a print on demand book.”

Review by Karen Howard

• Read about the development of the exhibition...