



Laverstock House Lunatic Asylum

Laverstock House was originally the seat of the Dyke family. By 1754 it was in operation as a lunatic asylum. It became well known and a leading one of its kind in the UK thanks mainly to William Finch M.D. He was in charge in the early 1800's and his ethos was to treat patients through kindness and reason. Rather than the more barbaric treatment used in other institutions. It was surrounded by acres of ground where the patients could walk and enjoy the scenery and fresh air.

It housed private patients, paupers who couldn't be sent to the workhouse because of their behaviour and criminals needing psychiatric care, although they never did house patients from the last category. Because of its reputation patients came from all over the UK to be treated.

A handbill from 1807 advertised the asylum as being a healthy eminence with many acres of garden and pleasure ground for the exercise and amusement of the patients.

Two patients were quite famous. One was Thomas Telford Campbell the 18 year old son of the Scottish poet Thomas Campbell. The other one was an aspiring suitor for the young Queen Victoria who was caught after he gained access to the Palace and was sent to Laverstock rather than prison.

In 1855 it was owned by Dr J Bushnan who wanted private patients only. But over the next 100 years and a different succession of owners the high standard of care disappeared and the asylum was no longer popular.

It was however enlarged in the 19th century, but eventually closed in 1955 when it went bankrupt.

It was then demolished and by 1966 there were 42 houses built in its place. The place where the house once stood is now Laverstock Park estate and the grounds are now Linden Close, Vanessa Avenue and Napier Crescent.

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