

## Rural health and illness in a Herefordshire village – Dr Kate Smedley

- The location of the parish of Preston-on-Wye. Images from Open Street Map (<https://www.openstreetmap.org/#map=13/52.06500/-2.86898>)
- Population information and statistics from <https://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10071999>
- Newspaper Clippings about the Herefordshire General Hospital Contributory Scheme:

[1928 advert](#), [1938 advert](#)

- Charles Renton's "The Story of Herefordshire's Hospitals" (1999) ISBN: 978-1873827215

Chapters:

1. A Hospital Service for Herefordshire
2. The Hereford General Infirmary – from inception to the Twentieth Century
3. Herefordshire General Hospital – from 1900 to the advent of the N.H.S.
4. Bromyard Cottage Hospital
5. Ross Dispensary and Cottage Hospital
6. Ledbury Cottage Hospital
7. Victoria Cottage Hospital, Kington
8. Leominster Cottage Hospital
9. The Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital
10. Madhouse to Mental Hospital – Hereford Lunatic Asylums
11. The Struggle Against Infectious Diseases
12. The County Hospital
13. One Family 1948-1959
14. Epilogue

Pages 10-13 describe the Cresswell Penny Fund and the evolution of the contributory scheme(s)

- The Ewyas Lacy Study Group website is a wonderful resource for studying south-west Herefordshire in particular, they have a wealth of information and archives and kindly allowed me to share their images of the Hereford General Hospital Contributory Scheme : <https://www.ewyaslacy.org.uk/>
- Hereford Archives and Record Centre Fir Tree Lane, Rotherwas, Hereford HR2 6LA (<https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/herefordshire-archive-records-centre>) holds the records for Hereford General Hospital, in particular collection AC4 contains the records of the contributory scheme. AC4/15 to AC/31 contain the County District Registers listing contributors by parish.
- The Hereford Journal detailing the suicide of the gentleman with a head tumour can be viewed at: <https://herefordshirehistory.org.uk/archive/herefordshire-in-the-great-war/first-world-war-newspapers/hereford-journal>, date Saturday August 11<sup>th</sup>, 1917.

The images used in relation to this story are from:

Science Museum Group. Birmingham General Hospital. 1987-1002/29 Science Museum Group Collection Online. Accessed 23 August 2024. <https://collection.sciencemuseumgroup.org.uk/objects/co122187/birmingham-general-hospital>.

Science Museum Group. Framed photographic print of x-ray taken by Russell Reynolds. Science Museum Group Collection Online. Accessed 24 August 2024. <https://collection.sciencemuseumgroup.org.uk/objects/co8430594/framed-photographic-print-of-x-ray-taken-by-russell-reynolds>

Science Museum Group. Photograph of a photograph of X-ray apparatus. A606960 Science Museum Group Collection Online. Accessed 25 August 2024. <https://collection.sciencemuseumgroup.org.uk/objects/co134694/photograph-of-a-photograph-of-x-ray-apparatus>.

More about Major Dr John Hall Edwards: <https://hekint.org/2020/06/23/john-francis-hall-edwards-a-radiology-pioneer/> and his blue plaque <https://openplaques.org/plaques/1568>

#### John Hughes References:

John, GRO Death Index, General Register Office, Reference: 1937, Q2, Hereford, Volume 06A Page 747 original General Register Office, Southport

Kington Times - page 8 - 13 February 1937 – image from Find My Past <https://www.findmypast.co.uk/image-share/8bd5da90-c5df-48bb-b69e-a8a3cbd35634?showBreadcrumbs=true>

#### Organisations and further information in relation to rural mental health:

“MPs express deep concern about gaps in rural mental health care” - 18 May 2023 , includes links to the government report into rural mental health <https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/52/environment-food-and-rural-affairs-committee/news/195283/mps-express-deep-concern-about-gaps-in-rural-mental-health-care/>

Rural Mental Health Matters - <https://www.ruralmentalhealthmatters.co.uk/>

The Farming Community Network - <https://fcn.org.uk/>

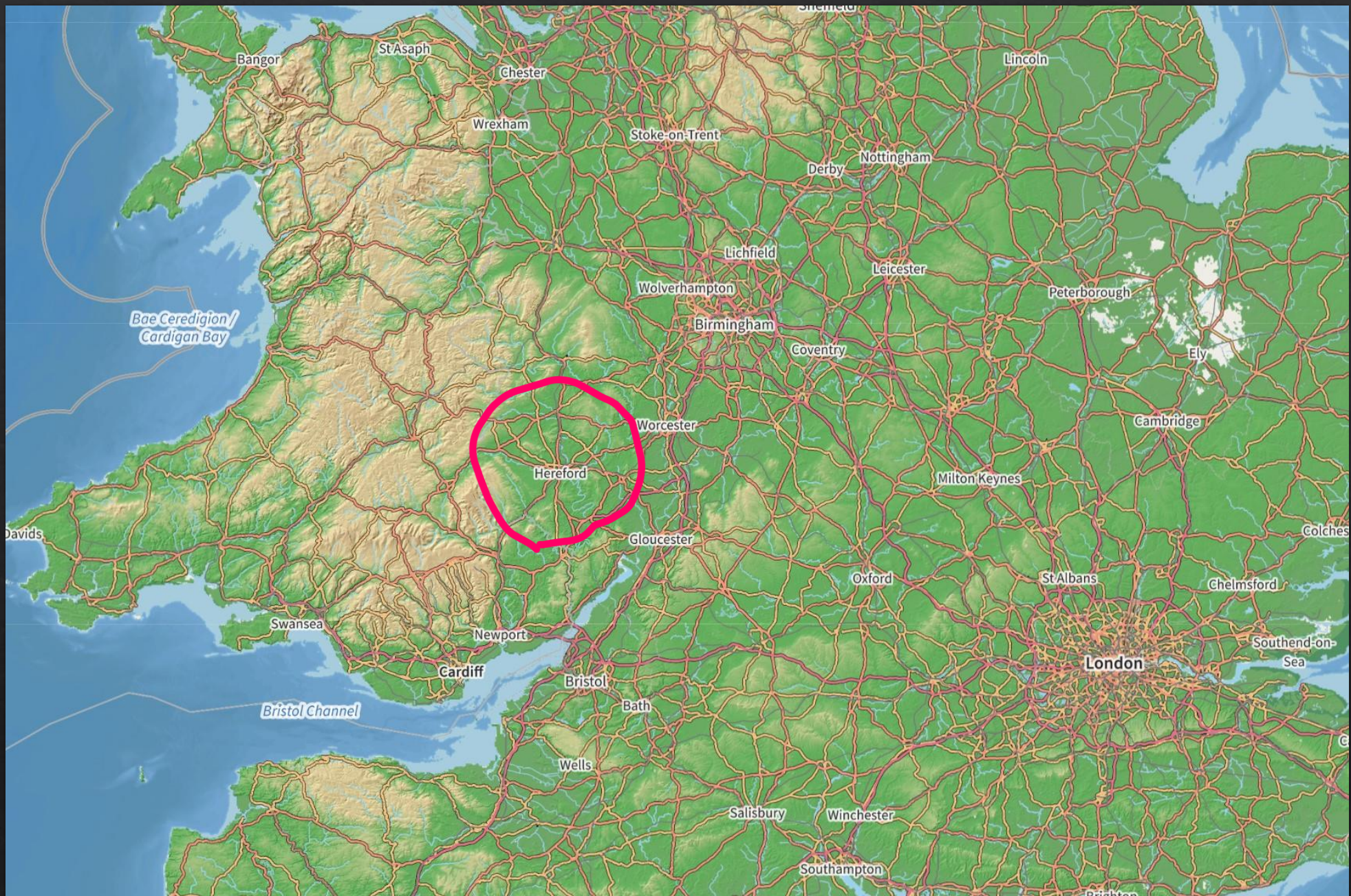
The Wellcome Collection has a large number of medical officers reports by year for many counties including Herefordshire <https://wellcomecollection.org/>

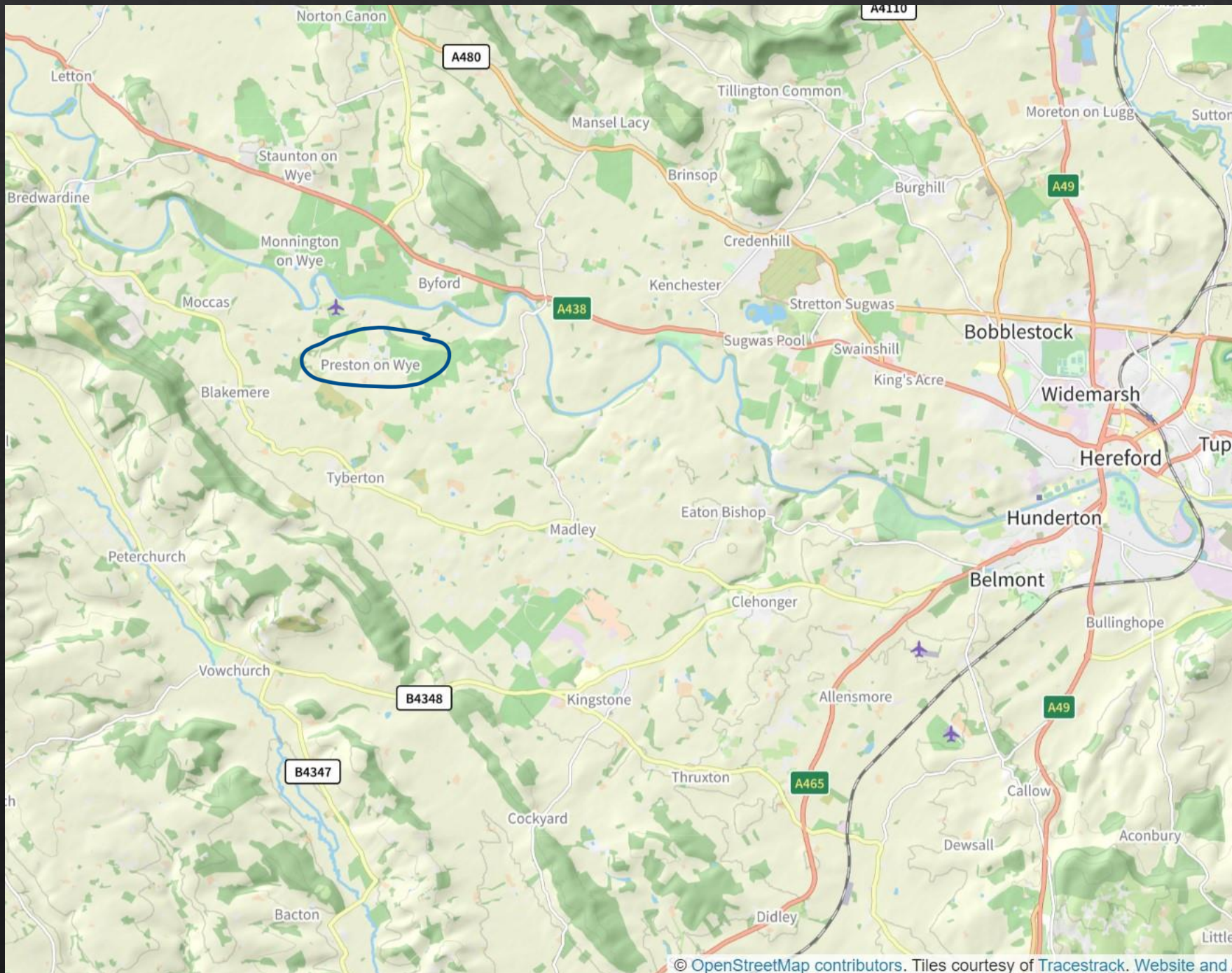
Dr Kate Smedley

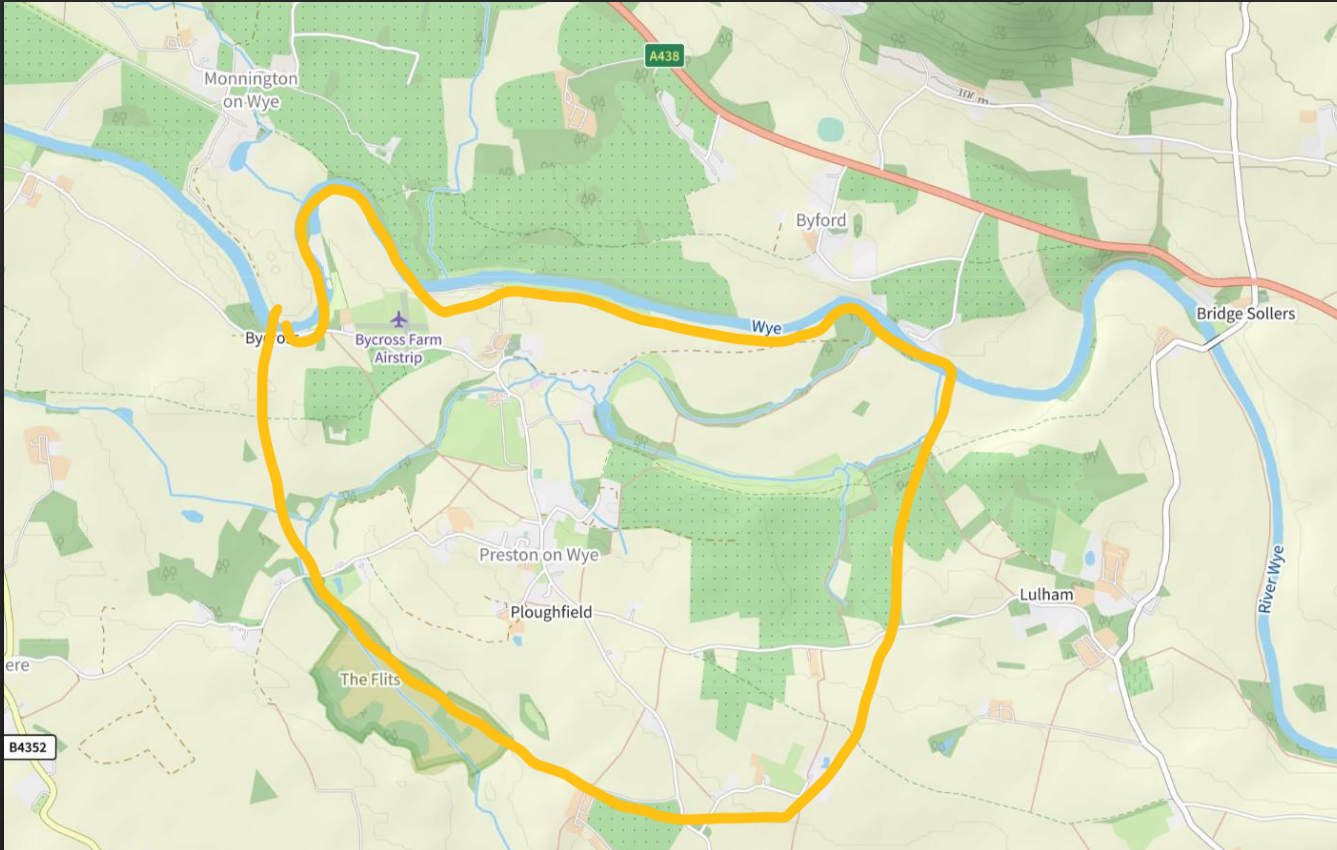
<https://peoplepastplaces.co.uk/>

# Rural health and illness in a Herefordshire village

Warning: Discussion of  
suicide and mental health







## Preston-on-Wye

Peak population  
284 (1871)

Between 1901  
and 1931  
200 – 175

2021 census  
190



# Preston-on-Wye 1911

- ◇ 48 households in the parish
- ◇ Almost everybody works on a farm (except carpenter, bootmaker, postman, sub-postmaster and vicar)
- ◇ 7 households where the head was a widow or widower (none of these live alone)
- ◇ 6 households with no children (and past child-bearing age)
- ◇ One couple who have been married 6 months
- ◇ 10 married couples reporting that a child has died



MEMBERSHIP EXCEEDS 10,000,  
COVERING ABOUT 30,000 PERSONS.  
ARE YOU ONE?

# Hereford General Hospital

## CONTRIBUTORY SCHEME.

**OBJECT**—To enable wage-earners and their dependents to receive free treatment at the Hospital—and to relieve members being asked to contribute towards maintenance at a time when they can least afford it.

**CONTRIBUTIONS**—3d. per week—to cover man, wife and family under 16 years of age, also dependents. All over 16 years to 19 years can be covered for additional 1d. per person.

**BENEFITS**—Including Surgical, Medical, Electrical, Massage, X-Rays and Convalescent.

"No Governor's Recommendation needed."

A note from your doctor ensures treatment.

Apply to the Hon. Secretary:

Miss M. R. HOLLOWAY, 44, Duke Street, Kington,

Or to the Secretary of the Hospital for Membership Forms.

*Each one of us should feel THE HOSPITAL to be a personal matter—OUR OWN—and take a share in it. If we do not want it to-day, we may to-morrow. If NEVER, we have the deep satisfaction of having HELPED OTHERS less fortunate.*

## HEREFORDSHIRE GENERAL HOSPITAL

### Why not become a Member of the Contributory Scheme

OBTAIN FREE HOSPITAL TREATMENT AND OTHER BENEFITS  
FOR YOURSELF AND YOUR DEPENDANTS !

The following are eligible for membership, if with income  
not exceeding limits stated :

|   | Contributions |        | Income<br>Limits<br>per<br>week |
|---|---------------|--------|---------------------------------|
|   | Weekly        | Yearly |                                 |
| Section (a) Persons (16 to 18) without Dependants ... | 1d.           | 4/-    | 24                              |
| Section (b) Persons (18 to 21) without Dependants ... | 2d.           | 8/-    | 24                              |
| Section (c) Persons (over 21) without Dependants ...  | 3d.           | 12/-   | 24                              |
| Section (d) Persons with one Dependant ...            | 3d.           | 12/-   | 25*                             |
| Section (e) Persons with more than one Dependant...   | 3d.           | 12/-   | 26*                             |

\* Joint income of husband and wife.

### *Don't Delay! Join Now!*

I wish to become a member of the Herefordshire General  
Hospital Contributory Scheme. Please send me full particulars

Address .....

Signed .....

Sign and send this form to the Secretary, Herefordshire General  
Hospital.

# Hereford General Hospital Contributory Scheme

- ◊ Replaced the earlier Cresswell Penny Fund
- ◊ Proposed in 1926
- ◊ Open to people who earned less than £260 p.a.
- ◊ A committee and 54 secretaries ran the scheme
- ◊ There were occasional conferences for the secretaries and sign-up drives
- ◊ Entitled members and their dependents (wife and children under 16) care as in-patient or outpatient



THE Story of  
Herefordshire's  
Hospitals



Charles  
Renton



## EMERGENCY CLINICS.

### Hon. Physicians :

Monday at 12—DR. WALKER.  
Wednesday at 12—DR. BULMAN.  
Saturday at 12—DR. STRANGE.

### Hon. Surgeons :

Monday at 11—MR. MOIR BROWN.  
Wednesday at 11—MR. SCHOLEFIELD.  
Saturday at 11—MR. L. OWEN.

### Ear, Nose and Throat Department :

Wednesday at 2 p.m.—MR. J. B. CAVENAGH.

### X-Ray and Deep Therapy Departments :

(Radiologist in charge—MR. MELROSE).

Mondays and Thursdays at 9-30 a.m.

Treatments by appointment.

Patients requiring X-Ray Examination by Barium Investigation are seen on Mondays and Thursdays at 9-30 a.m. but appointments should be made in advance.

### Pathological Department :

(Pathologist—DR. STEWART).

Rate of Contribution to be paid per week, 1d., 2d., 3d.

ARREARS BROUGHT FORWARD £ 1943.

| Sat    | Date   | Sub. | Collector's Initials | Date   | Sub. | Collector's Initials |
|--------|--------|------|----------------------|--------|------|----------------------|
| 1      | Jan. 2 |      |                      | Apr. 3 |      |                      |
|        | " 9    |      |                      | " 10   |      |                      |
|        | " 16   |      |                      | " 17   |      |                      |
|        | " 23   |      |                      | " 24   |      |                      |
|        | " 30   |      |                      | May 1  |      |                      |
| Feb. 6 |        |      |                      | " 8    |      |                      |
| " 13   |        |      |                      | " 15   |      |                      |
| " 20   |        |      |                      | " 22   |      |                      |
| " 27   |        |      |                      | " 29   |      |                      |
| Mar. 6 |        |      |                      | June 5 |      |                      |
| " 13   |        |      |                      | " 12   |      |                      |
| " 20   |        |      |                      | " 19   |      |                      |
| " 27   |        |      |                      | " 26   |      |                      |
| TOTAL  |        |      |                      | TOTAL  |      |                      |

1942-43-44.

## CONTRIBUTORY SCHEME CARD

(Contributions must be paid in advance).

DISTRICT Michaelchurch Escley

MEMBERSHIP No. 42

Please make a note of this number in case this card should be lost. If lost, will the finder kindly return to :—

HEREFORDSHIRE GENERAL HOSPITAL  
HEREFORD

When in need of treatment bring this card with you, together with a letter from your Doctor.

| Date    | Sub. | Collector's Initials | Date   | Sub. | Collector's Initials |
|---------|------|----------------------|--------|------|----------------------|
| July 3  |      |                      | Oct. 3 |      |                      |
| " 10    |      |                      | " 9    |      |                      |
| " 17    |      |                      | " 16   |      |                      |
| " 24    |      |                      | " 23   |      |                      |
| " 31    |      |                      | " 30   |      |                      |
| Aug. 7  |      |                      | Nov. 6 |      |                      |
| " 14    |      |                      | " 13   |      |                      |
| " 21    |      |                      | " 20   |      |                      |
| " 28    |      |                      | " 27   |      |                      |
| Sept. 4 |      |                      | Dec. 4 |      |                      |
| " 11    |      |                      | " 11   |      |                      |
| " 18    |      |                      | " 18   |      |                      |
| " 25    |      |                      | " 25   |      |                      |
| TOTAL   |      |                      | TOTAL  |      |                      |

# Member Card

Image courtesy of Ewyas Lacy Study Group

<https://www.ewyaslacy.org.uk/>

## HEREFORDSHIRE GENERAL HOSPITAL CONTRIBUTORY SCHEME.

### Rules and Conditions of Membership.

1.—The object of the Scheme is to provide persons of moderate means in times of sickness or injury with free treatment for themselves and their families in the general wards of the Hospital, and with free out-patient treatment and other benefits, on payment of a small weekly or yearly contribution : and to provide the Hospital with a steady annual income to meet the cost.

2.—The Scheme shall be managed by a Committee (appointed by the Council), who shall have the power to amend the Rules and Conditions as they deem necessary, and whose decisions in all matters arising under them shall be final.

3.—The term "Dependants" shall mean the Member's wife (or husband), his children (under 16), and other relatives ordinarily resident with and wholly dependent upon him.

4.—The following, subject to their income being within the prescribed limits, shall be eligible as Members, and shall pay contributions, in advance, as stated :—

|   | Contributions, Limits. | Income Weekly, Yearly, per Wk. |
|---|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| (a) Persons (16 to 18), without Dependants ... .. | 1d.                    | 4/- £4                         |
| (b) Persons (18 to 21), without Dependants ... .. | 2d.                    | 8/- £4                         |
| (c) Persons (over 21), without Dependants ... ..  | 3d.                    | 12/- £4                        |
| (d) Persons with one Dependant ... ..             | 3d.                    | 12/- £5*                       |
| (e) Persons with more than one Dependant ... ..   | 3d.                    | 12/- £6*                       |

\*(Joint income of husband and wife).

### Benefits.

5.—Members and their Dependants shall be entitled, after a qualifying period of three months from the date of joining, to the following benefits :—

The maintenance and treatment ordinarily provided in the general wards of the Hospital under the Laws and By-laws and ordinary out-patient treatment, excluding Deep Therapy, Maternity Cases, and Cases for which local authorities have accepted responsibility.

Similar maintenance and Treatment at other Hospitals, when circumstances make it impossible for the patient to be conveyed to the Hospital.

Maintenance at a convalescent home, up to 21/- a week for a period not exceeding four weeks, when recommended by the Hon. Medical Staff.

6.—Upon an increase of income beyond the prescribed limits, membership shall cease at the end of the current year. The Committee reserve the right to enquire into a Member's circumstances at any time.

7.—Application for Membership shall be made upon the prescribed form, which may be obtained from the Local Secretary, or at the Hospital. No application shall be accepted when the applicant (or a Dependant) is in immediate need of treatment.

8.—A Member in arrears in his contributions, and his Dependants, shall not be admitted for treatment until his arrears have been made good, except in the case of accident or serious emergency, and if more than eight weeks in arrears, until a further period of four weeks has elapsed. If more than twelve weeks in arrears, failing an explanation satisfactory to the Committee, his membership shall cease, but he may rejoin as a new Member. Upon rejoining a second time the qualifying period shall be six months.

9.—A Member applying for benefits for himself or his Dependants, except in the case of accident or serious emergency, shall present his membership card, together with a letter or certificate from a medical practitioner.

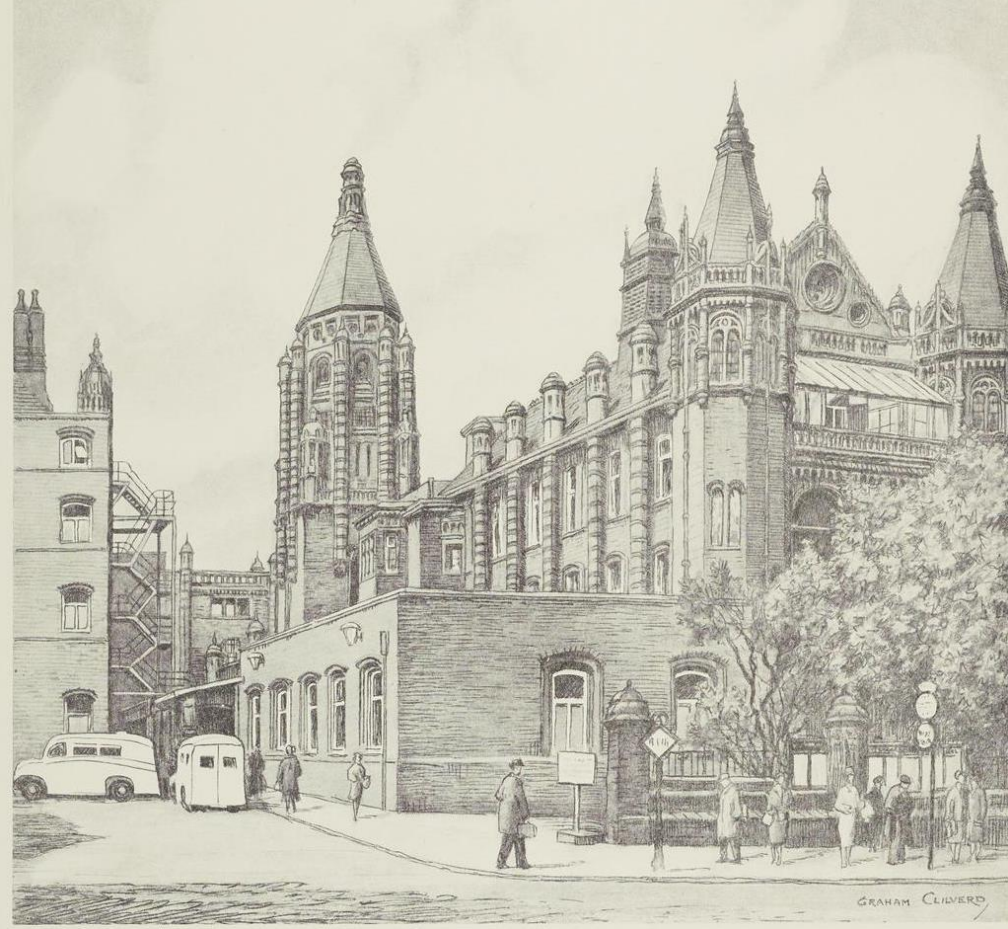
10.—Members and their Dependants shall be admitted into Hospital in the order of urgency of the cases, as accommodation may be available. The Committee undertake no contractual liability, expressed or implied, to provide accommodation.

|    | A        | B              | C                   | D     | E                          | F                     | G                     | H   | I                  |
|----|----------|----------------|---------------------|-------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---|--------------------|
| 1  | Mem. No  | Name (surname) | Forename or initial | Title | Date of Joining (earliest) | Later date of joining | Later date of joining | Transfers Etc.                                | Further remarks    |
| 2  | 1        | Stephens       | B. R.               | Mr    | 28/03/1934                 |                       |                       |   |                    |
| 3  | 2        | Crump          | E.                  | Mr    | 17/04/1934                 | 01-Jan                |                       |   |                    |
| 4  | 3        | Crump          | G.                  | Mr    | 17/04/1934                 | 01/01/1935            |                       |   |                    |
| 5  | 4        | Crump          | W.                  | Mr    | 17/04/1934                 | 01/01/1935            |                       |   |                    |
| 6  | 5        | Williams       | S.                  | Mrs   | 01/05/1934                 |                       |                       | Pay Direct                                    |                    |
| 7  | 6        | Townsend       | T.                  | Mr    | 03/01/1927                 | 18/09/1937            |                       |   |                    |
| 8  | 7        | Pugh           | T. E.               | Mr    | 12/05/1934                 |                       |                       | Trans to Blakemere 20/7/3?                    |                    |
| 9  | 8        | Townsend       | E. V.               | Mr    | 02/06/1934                 |                       |                       | Cancelled 12.35 (crossed through)             |                    |
| 10 | 9        | Kearne         | J.                  | Mr    | 07/07/1934                 |                       |                       | Pay Direct (crossed through)                  |                    |
| 11 | 10       | Roberts        | Mary                | Miss  | 06/08/1934                 | 01/01/1935            | 03/05/1938            |   |                    |
| 12 | 11       | Knight         | A.                  | Miss  | 01/01/1935                 |                       |                       | Cancelled 3/5/37                              |                    |
| 13 | 12       | Bartlett       | G?                  | Mr    | 01/01/1935                 |                       |                       | Cancelled 5/7/38                              |                    |
| 14 | 13       | Edwards        | J.                  | Mr    | 21/02/1927                 |                       |                       | Cancelled 5/7/38                              |                    |
| 15 | 14       | Edwards        | G.                  | Mr    | 01/02/1937                 |                       |                       |   |                    |
| 16 | 15       | Edwards        | G.                  | Mr    | 01/02/1937                 |                       |                       |   |                    |
| 61 | Townsend | G.             | Miss                |       | 20/01/1932                 |                       |                       | Cancelled 5/7/38                              | married            |
| 17 | 17       | Matthews       | W.J.                |       | 01/02/1937                 |                       |                       | Cancelled 12/35                               |                    |
| 18 | 18       | Williams       | A.                  | Mrs   | 01/03/1935                 |                       |                       | Cancelled 5/3/35                              |                    |
| 19 | 19       | Matthews       | I.G.                | Mr    | 31/03/1927                 | 26/01/1937            |                       | Cancelled 5/3/36 (Crossed through) Pay Direct | rejoined           |
| 20 | 20       | Matthews       | V.M.                | Miss  | 31/03/2027                 |                       |                       | Cancelled 12/35                               |                    |
| 21 | 21       | Hayward        | L.                  | Mrs   | 01/01/1935                 | 01/01/1938            |                       | Trans to Sarnesfield 5/11/38                  |                    |
| 22 | 22       | James          |                     | Mrs   | 01/01/1935                 | 01/01/1938            |                       | Trans to Sarnesfield 5/11/38                  |                    |
| 23 | 23       | Crump          | L.                  | Mr    | 22/03/1935                 |                       |                       |   |                    |
| 24 | 24       | Owen           |                     | Mrs   | 23/03/1935                 | 05/02/1938            |                       | Trans to Hope-u-Dinmore                       |                    |
| 25 | 25       | Stevens        | W.J.                | Mr    | 13/02/1931                 |                       |                       |   |                    |
| 26 | 26       | Young          | C.                  | Mr    | 26/01/1928                 |                       |                       | Cancelled 10/3/39                             | Left for Hereford? |
| 27 | 27       | Townsend       | G.                  | Mr    | 26/01/1928                 |                       |                       | Cancelled 5/7/38                              | deceased           |
| 28 | 28       | Crump          | A.                  | Mr    | 17/03/1935                 |                       |                       |   |                    |
| 29 | 29       | Mason          | A.P.                | Mr    | 23/03/1935                 |                       |                       | Cancelled 5/7/38                              |                    |
| 30 | 30       | Spry           | F.G.                | Mr    | 01/04/1935                 |                       |                       | Cancelled 5/7/38                              |                    |
| 31 | 31       | Dale           | K.E.                | Miss  | 26/03/1936                 |                       |                       |   |                    |
| 32 | 32       | Jones          | E.                  | Mrs   | 17/03/1936                 |                       |                       | Trans to Blakemere 10/2/37                    |                    |
| 33 | 33       | Townsend       | R.                  | Miss  | 03/02/1937                 |                       |                       | Pay Direct (crossed through)                  |                    |

**SHOCKING SUICIDE AT PRESTON-  
ON-WYE.**

**A TUMOUR IN THE SKULL.**

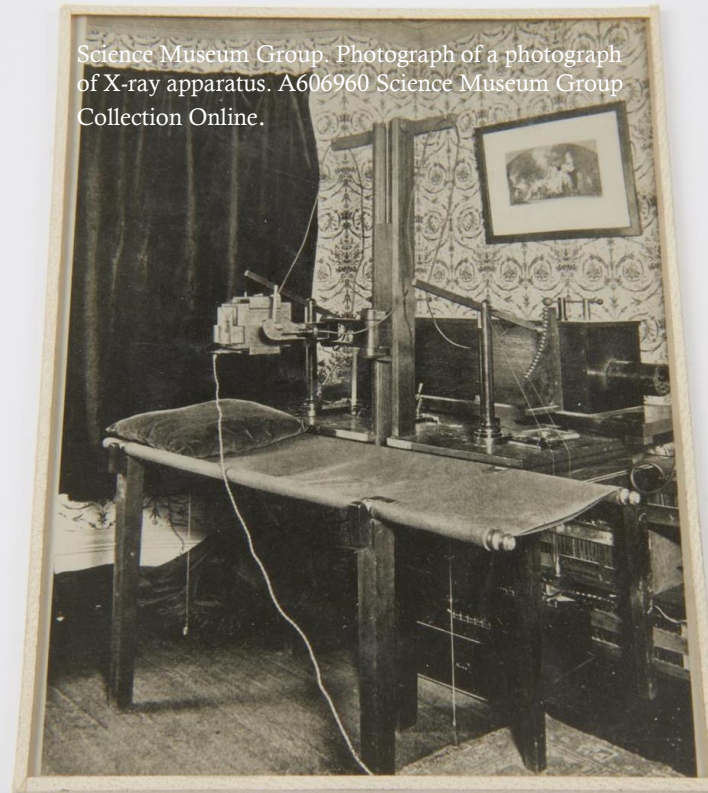
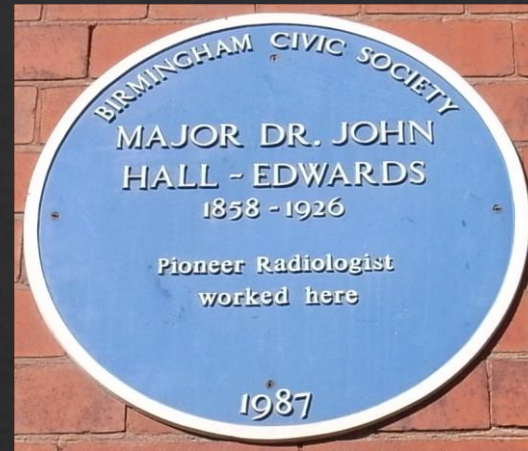
Science Museum Group. Birmingham General Hospital. 1987-1002/29  
Science Museum Group Collection Online.



“...For some time he had suffered from an affection of the head, and had been to Birmingham in the expectation of being operated upon, but it was not thought advisable to carry it out. He was under local treatment until a few weeks ago...”

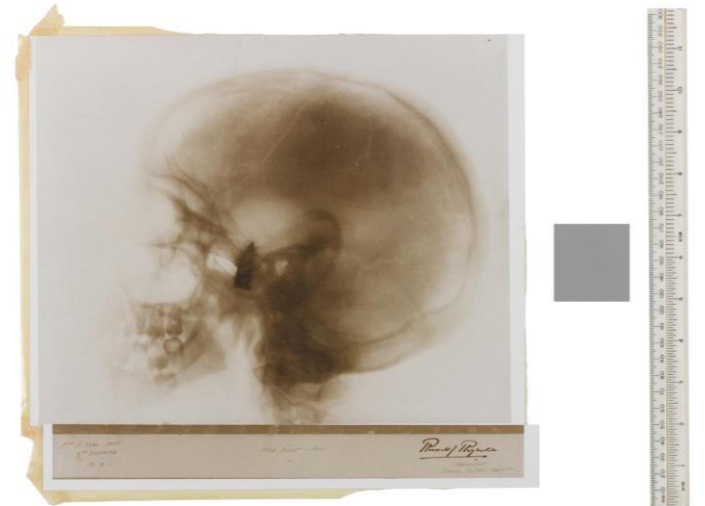
“Dr Steed, of Staunton-on-Wye, said he had attended the deceased just before he went to Birmingham, and it was by his advice that he went there. He was suffering from a tumour just inside the skull. Witness did not know he had come home, and had not heard from the hospital.”

“Mr R. E. Snead, of Lower House, in whose employ deceased had been for 14 years, said [he] was a strong man, but nervous. About twelve months ago deceased fancied that something – a little dust perhaps – had got in his eye, and the pain got worse, and he said he had pains from the front to the back of his head. Deceased consulted Dr. Steed and through was sent to Birmingham Hospital seven weeks ago. Witness went to see him at the hospital, and one of the nurses told him that [he] had been under the X rays three times, but the plates taken by the doctors were not satisfactory and they were to put him under the rays the following day.”



Science Museum Group. Photograph of a photograph of X-ray apparatus. A606960 Science Museum Group Collection Online.

Science Museum Group. Framed photographic print of x-ray taken by Russell Reynolds. 2015-73 Science Museum Group Collection Online.



## **Three Herefordshire Tragedies.**

**ACCIDENTAL SHOOTING OF A BROTHER.**

**Sad Affair at Kimbolton.**

**SHOCKING SUICIDE AT PRESTON-ON-WYE.**

“...[his wife] said that he had been suffering for some months past, and had been patient. He returned on Thursday, the 2<sup>nd</sup> inst., and was not any better.

The Coroner: Why had they not kept him there?

Witness: He did not tell me but said that he wanted to come home, and he was very depressed. He did not say what the doctors had told him and he walked about most of the time...”

“Mr George Townsend, a juryman, said that he fetched [him] home from Hereford, where he had stayed the night, and [he] said he was very bad. He also said “I’m done for.” There was a great difference in him from the time when he (Mr Townsend) took him to Hereford when he went to Birmingham.”

Hereford. Deceased had said to witness, “I am bad. I am done for,” and had cried.

On Tuesday evening witness was called to the deceased’s cottage and found the body lying on the floor in the back kitchen on its right side. The gun produced was under the body..”

# John Hughes (1860-1937)



At an inquest upon an elderly man, John Hughes, of Preston-on-Wye, and formerly cemetery keeper at Pontycwmmoc, Brigend, a verdict of "Suicide while of unsound mind" was recorded. Evidence was to the effect that Hughes was seen sitting in a chaff-house at Preston-on-Wye, obviously very ill, and Dr. E. W. Malcolmson, of Staunton-on-Wye, said that Hughes admitted to him that he had taken nearly a tea-spoonful of weedkiller.

Kington Times - page 8 - 13 February 1937 – image from Find My Past

Enrol  
February  
Hereford  
County and  
City Mental  
Hospital  
Burghill Rd

|   |                 |         |                    |
|---|-----------------|---------|--------------------|
| 9 | Hughes, Mr John | 10-6-32 | Cancelled 11-12-34 |
|---|-----------------|---------|--------------------|

Hereford General Hospital Contributory Scheme Records (AC4/18) held at Hereford Archives and Record Centre

Arsenic poisoning  
Committed suicide  
while of unsound  
mind.  
P. 14.



## Rural mental health – then & now?

- ◊ In a community where everyone knows each other a fear of judgement for seeking help or sharing feelings may be barrier
- ◊ Lack of access to services and rural isolation
- ◊ Not wanting to be a burden or a financial drain on family (applying agricultural principles of “culling” to themselves?)

## Acknowledgments

- ◊ Herefordshire Archives and Record Office particularly for their help finding the Hereford General Infirmary Contributory Scheme volumes that related to Preston-on-Wye
- ◊ Herefordshire Family History Society for welcoming me onto their committee so warmly
- ◊ All About That Place for allowing me to talk

Dr Kate Smedley

Thank you for listening

<https://peoplepastplaces.co.uk/>