

1857-8.

VICTORIA.

R E P O R T

ON THE

YARRA BEND LUNATIC ASYLUM

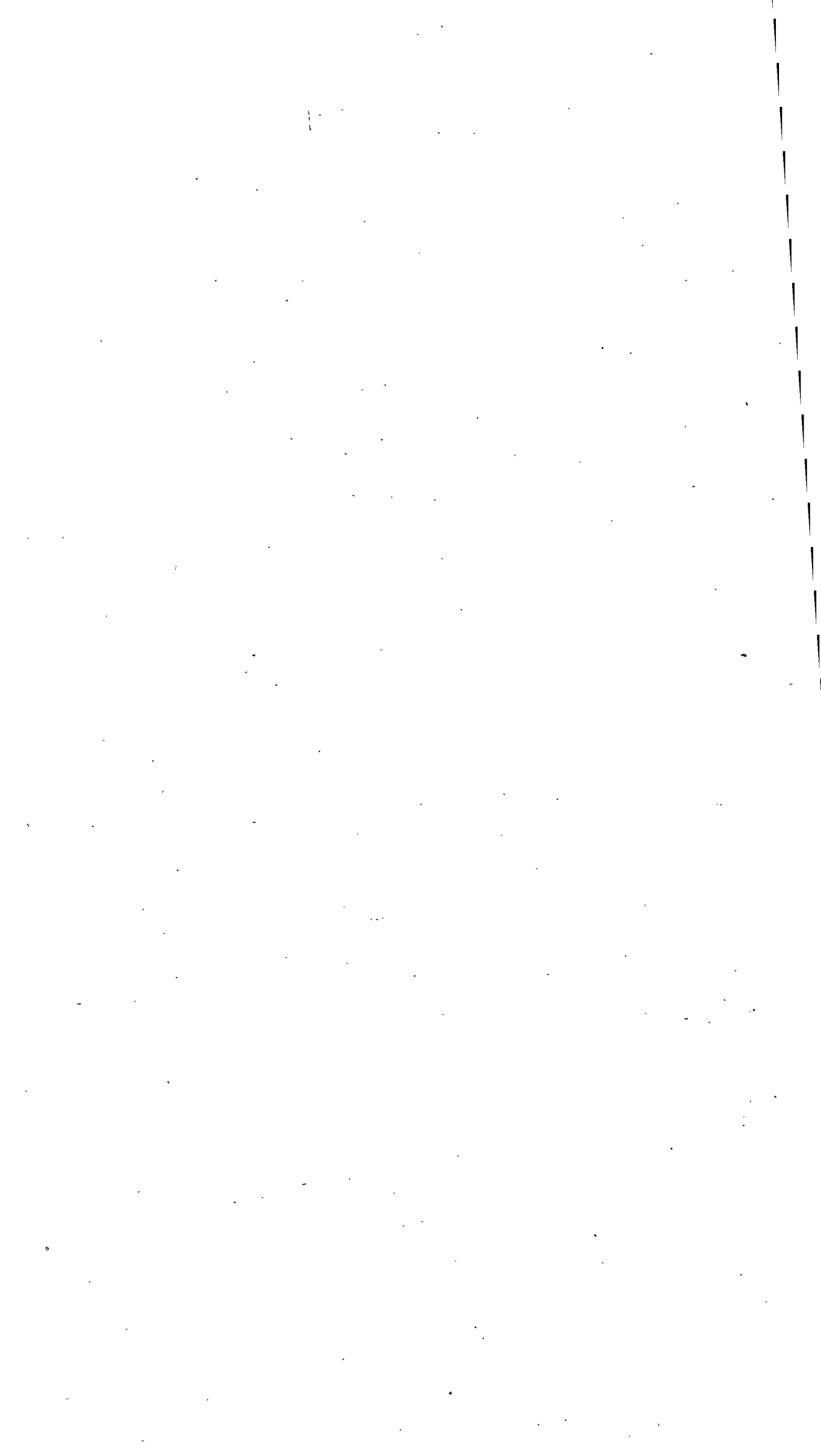
FOR

THE YEAR 1857.

PRESENTED TO BOTH HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY'S COMMAND.

By Authority:

JOHN FERRES, GOVERNMENT PRINTER, MELBOURN/



REPORT.

DURING the year 1857, the staff of the Yarra Bend Lunatic Asylum has been increased by the successive addition, from time to time, as the number of patients in the asylum increased, of eight attendants; a carpenter has also been appointed for the repairs necessary in an establishment where so many of the buildings are composed of wood. On the 31st December, the staff consisted of the surgeon-superintendent, steward, matron, gardener, cook, carter, carpenter, laundress, two assistant laundresses, twenty male and twelve female attendants.

SITE.

It was hoped, when the report for the year 1856 was made, that the site for the new asylum, which had been selected with great care, as being in every way suitable and entirely free from the serious objections to the present site stated in the last report, would have been adopted, and that a building in which the lunatics could be classified and treated in accordance with all the modern improved methods of managing the insane, would have made, by this time, considerable progress in erection. Unhappily this desirable result has not been obtained, the Legislative Assembly having refused to vote the sum necessary to proceed with the work.

The principal causes which, it is presumed, led to this result, were, the expense of erecting the new asylum, and the opposition on the part of the superintendent of the asylum, Dr. Bowie, to a removal from the present site. With regard to the first cause, the expense of erecting the new asylum, objections were made to the manner in which it was commenced, viz., by the erection of two very handsome and expensive lodges, designed for the occupation of the clerk of works and his assistant during the building of the asylum. There does not seem to have been any necessity for these houses; the time and money spent on them might have been much better employed in building a portion of the asylum for the reception of some of the lunatics with whom the gaols were then crowded, and their costly construction certainly gave the Assembly some ground for alarm as to the extent of the expenditure for the whole establishment.

In reference to the second cause, viz., the opposition of the superintendent to the change of site, it would at first sight appear difficult to account for this, the opinions of all modern writers of any authority, including the late Royal Commission of enquiry into the state of the Scotch asylums, in regard to the situation of such establishments, being unanimously in favor of an elevated position, with a commanding prospect, and the opinions of the great majority of the medical men in this colony, who have any knowledge of the treatment of lunatics, being decidedly against the present asylum, and in favor of a new one on an elevation similar to the proposed new site. The report of a board, consisting of the Honorable the Speaker to the late Legislative Council, Judge Barry, and the Chief Medical Officer, directed by the Governor to inspect the asylum in the year 1853, will probably account in some measure for the opposition of the superintendent. That report not only condemned the present asylum, and recommended the erection of a new one on a more appropriate site, but it also recommended that *a new superintendent, conversant with the latest improvements in lunatic asylums in England, should be brought out to superintend the erection of the new asylum and afterwards to conduct it*, thus seeming to aim at depriving Dr. Bowie of his situation, though in reality this was not the case, for before an asylum of the required description could be completed, it would be time that Dr. Bowie should be superannuated. There is little doubt but that this report had a considerable influence in the formation of Dr. Bowie's opinion; and, combined with his well known partiality for the spot where he has resided so long, and which he has, with much time and pains, surrounded with so many comforts, has induced him to believe the present establishment and the present site are much nearer perfection than any one else thinks they are.

Immediately after the refusal of the Legislative Assembly to sanction the proposed vote for the new asylum, a board, consisting of the Chief Medical Officer, the Inspector General of Penal Establishments, and John Gill, Esq., an architect not in the employment

of the Government, was directed to report as to what accommodation was required for lunatics in this colony, and whether the present buildings at Yarra Bend could be converted into any efficient asylum to meet such requirements. The report of the board as to the capabilities of the Yarra Bend was as follows:—

“The board are of opinion that, in their present state, none of these buildings are efficient for the accommodation of lunatics. The old stone buildings are built like gaols, the day rooms dark and gloomy, lighted only at one end by a barred window, situated too high for the inmates to look out of. The associated dormitories are similarly circumstanced, and the single cells are like those of a strong prison. The new stone buildings were avowedly built for a female gaol, for which they are well adapted, but not for the accommodation of lunatics. The wooden buildings have only one day room for one hundred and thirty lunatics, with a row of cells on one side of it, and wooden partitions on the other side and at each end. There are no windows in the walls of this room, which is lighted by a skylight from the roof. The remaining wooden buildings consist of cells lighted only through the doors or by perforated boards above the doors; no windows in them except in the females’ infirmary, a narrow corridor filled with beds, without a fireplace, and wholly unsuitable for such a purpose. The board can only look upon the wooden buildings as a temporary expedient in lieu of proper accommodation; in their present state they are simply insecure prisons, with the chance of the inmates being burned. The yards are mostly confined in extent, and ill adapted to the out-door recreation of the lunatics.

“The board look upon the whole establishment as a gloomy, cheerless, and insecure structure, wholly unfit for the reception and treatment of lunatics.

“The board are of opinion that by opening one side of each of the present stone buildings, and inserting additional windows, by increasing the extent of the yards, having them thoroughly levelled, drained, and covered with gravel, and by the erection of broad verandahs in each of them, these portions of the present asylum could be made available for the accommodation of about one hundred refractory and penal lunatics. The inclination of the ground, and want of space on the tongue of land where the present buildings are situated, would render it impossible to erect a structure *in connexion* with them which would answer the required purposes; but a short distance up the reserve there is plenty of room for new buildings, and there a complete asylum, capable of containing three hundred lunatics, might be erected.

“Mr. Gill estimates the cost of these alterations and buildings at about one hundred thousand pounds.”

This report was furnished to meet the wishes of the Assembly that the site of the asylum should not be changed. Afterwards a vote was taken for ten thousand pounds (£10,000) for such repairs and additions to the present asylum as would accommodate the lunatics crowded in the gaols. This sum has been expended to the best advantage in the necessary repairs of the buildings, and in the erection of a number of cottages of wood, and so constructed that they can be removed and made available for other purposes when a proper asylum shall be built. These cottages when finished will accommodate about one hundred lunatics, and relieve the gaols of the colony of those now confined in them: but at the best this is only a temporary expedient to meet the wishes of the Assembly, and it is to be hoped that body will cause such an enquiry to be made of persons competent to give opinions on the subject as will enable it to come to some satisfactory conclusion, and devise means for erecting such a suitable structure for the reception and treatment of the insane as will be in accordance with the spirit of the age and importance of this colony, instead of the miserable makeshift so accurately described in the above report.

BUILDINGS.

No change of any moment has been made in the buildings of the asylum during the year 1857; some additional accommodation has been provided by the extension of the tent for males, and the erection of a tent for female patients; two small stores have been built for the reception of the property of the lunatics and for condemned stores. The new cottages, and several large rooms for the amusement and recreation of the patients connected with them, a new stable, a dispensary, an office, a house for the dispenser, and some additions to the kitchen, are under contract to be completed by the 15th January, 1858.

OCCUPATION AND AMUSEMENT.

Occupation.

During 1857 an average number of one hundred and sixty-eight of the inmates of the asylum (one hundred and six males and sixty-two females) have been occupied about six hours daily, for twenty-six days in each month, in various ways; the males in cleaning and whitewashing the wards, clearing the grounds, gardening, wood cutting, cooking,

grooming, stoking, assisting the carpenter, sewing canvas, breaking and removing stone, making roads, fences, &c.

The following is a list of the work done, besides a considerable amount of repairs and alterations:—

NAME OF ARTICLE	Canvas Jackets.	Canvas Bags.	Canvas Caps.	Canvas Dresses.	Canvas Trousers.	Canvas Room.	Canvas Tent.	Coffins.	Draught Boards.	Notice Board.	Yards Road made.	Stretcher.	Wheelbarrows.	lbs. Vegetables raised in Garden.
NUMBER	25	16	67	17	11	1	1	28	6	1	1174	1	7	54,970

The females were employed in cleaning and whitewashing the yards, washing, ironing, and sewing. The following is a list of the work done by them:—

NAME OF ARTICLE	Cotton Caps.	Cotton Petticoats.	Cotton Drawers.	Cotton Dresses.	Cotton Chemises.	Table-cloths.	Jack-towels.	Hand-towels.	Sheets.	Pillow-slips.	Bed-ticks.	Pillow-ticks.	Flannel Vests.	Flannel Petticoats.	Flannel Chemises.	Canvas Dresses.	Canvas Caps.	Mending the wear and tear.—No. of Articles.
NUMBER ...	210	410	50	500	560	4	32	12	1370	800	325	193	102	484	84	2	33	8679

The ratio of the employed relatively to the average inmates of the asylum, for 1857, was 53 per cent. of male patients and 50 per cent. of females, or 52 per cent. of both sexes, an increase of 9 per cent. on the numbers employed in the year 1856.

The quantity of vegetables raised in the garden for the use of the patients is greater by 14,044 lbs. than that raised in the previous year. It is hoped that this portion of the rations of the lunatics (about 100,000 lbs. annually) will soon be altogether supplied from this source.

A plan for supplying milk to the asylum, in lieu of the present contract system, was submitted by the surgeon-superintendent. It was proposed that cows should be purchased, a dairy in connexion with the asylum established, and a married couple engaged to attend to it. The total expense of this arrangement for the first year was estimated at six hundred and eighty pounds (£680), which sum included the purchase of cows, the necessary utensils, &c. The expenses in subsequent years would not much exceed three hundred pounds annually. The outlay for milk under the contract of 1857 was four hundred and eighty-five pounds (£485), but one hundred and fifty pounds (£150) was received as rent for the paddock which would be required for the dairy, thus making the actual cost of milk three hundred and thirty-five pounds (£335). The plan would in some respects be attended with considerable advantages, such as affording diversity of employment for the lunatics, giving them a supply of fresh butter and ensuring pure milk. The Government, however, did not consider it advisable to incur any avoidable expenses till the question of site was finally determined, and the plan was rejected for the present.

The superintendent also made an application for the enclosure and cultivation of a portion of the paddock, in order to raise more vegetables for the patients and hay for the horses, at an estimated expense of about seventy pounds (£70). This application was laid before the Government, not however recommended by the head of the department, the board of visitors having expressed an opinion that a sufficient quantity of vegetables to supply the patients should have been raised in the present garden, without further cultivation for the purpose.

Amusement.

The amusements of the lunatics are decidedly on the increase. A considerable number of the patients frequently play cricket, foot-ball, skittles, and other out-door games, and about one hundred (100) others are taken out to walk by the attendants when the weather permits. In doors, the patients amuse themselves with various games, as hand-ball, draughts, cards, bagatelle, &c. A concert is got up once a week, concluding with a dance, the average attendance at which is about eighty (80) of both sexes.

The library contains a considerable number of useful and entertaining books, and many of the lunatics amuse themselves reading. But still there is great room for improvement, the number of lunatics in the asylum observed standing, sitting, and lying about without any employment or amusement being very great.

FOOD.

The food of the lunatics is abundant and of excellent quality, but the method of serving it at meals is rather rough; the superintendent, however, is gradually introducing a greater degree of refinement in this respect.

HEALTH.

The health of the lunatics is generally good and the mortality small, being only $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of the male lunatics in the asylum and a fraction more than 3 per cent. of the females; the relative mortality of the Yarra Bend with other asylums will be seen in a table (*Appendix No. 2*).

ADMISSIONS, DISCHARGES, ETC.

Appendix No. 3.

A table is appended hereto showing the relative admissions, discharges, &c., with other asylums in Europe. The admissions to the Yarra Bend during 1857, have been seventy-four (74) males and sixty-five (65) females, a smaller number than was admitted in 1856; this has not been owing to the decrease of lunacy in the colony, but simply to the want of accommodation at the asylum. The discharges were twenty-two (22) males and twenty-seven (27) females cured, and six (6) males and one (1) female taken from the asylum by their friends after being considerably improved, but not altogether cured; the discharges being in all fifty-six (56) patients, twenty-eight (28) of each sex. The numbers discharged in 1857 are less than those discharged in 1856 by 7 per cent. This result is in all probability owing to the constant accumulation of confirmed lunatics which obtains in all asylums. The deaths also are less than in the previous year, the per centage being a little more than 12 per cent. in 1856, and a little less than 9 per cent. in 1857.

ATTENDANTS.

The number of attendants in the asylum, on the 31st December, 1857, was twenty (20) males and twelve (12) females, being one (1) to every eleven (11) lunatics, a proportion perfectly sufficient for all purposes. The difficulty of getting attendants who possess the requisite qualities of diligence, intelligence, and good temper, still continues.

In order to encourage attendants to remain in the asylum, a modification has been made in the manner of paying them; instead of being paid a uniform rate of salary throughout, they are now taken on at a lower rate, the pay of the male attendants commencing at eighty-five pounds (£85) per annum, and increasing five pounds (£5) for every year's servitude till it reaches one hundred and twenty pounds (£120), and that of the females commencing at thirty-six pounds (£36) and increasing two pounds (£2) yearly till it reaches fifty pounds (£50).

RESTRAINT.

Restraint may be said to be abolished in the asylum. In the month of January there were ten (10) male and six (6) female patients restrained, principally in canvas dresses; in February, five (5) males and five (5) females; in March, five (5) males and four (4) females; in April, seven (7) males and three (3) females; in May, six (6) males and two (2) females; and in June there was no restraint; in July there was one case of temporary restraint; and during the last six months the only restraint that has been used was the confinement, by means of a canvas jacket, of one arm of a powerful lunatic who has been constantly endeavoring to escape; the restraint is used simply to prevent his succeeding in his object.

COST OF LUNATICS.

The following statement shows the cost of each lunatic in the asylum during 1857:—

	£	s.	d.
Salaries and Fees to Visitors	11	13	3
Provisions	18	15	3
Bedding and Clothing	9	13	5
Stores	1	5	1
Medicines and Medical Comforts	0	8	9
Light	0	6	9
Forage	0	9	0
Funerals, Books, and Incidental Expenses ...	0	5	10
	£42	19	4

being £7 2s. 10d. less than in the previous year.

PROPORTION OF LUNATICS TO POPULATION.

On the 31st December, 1856, there were three hundred and forty-nine (349) lunatics in the asylum, and in the various gaols and other places in the colony about one hundred (100) more, in all about four hundred and fifty (450). The population in December amounted to four hundred and fifty-seven thousand (457,000), which would give about one (1) lunatic to every thousand (1000) inhabitants of the colony, a slight increase in the number in the previous year.

BOARD OF VISITORS.

A board of visitors, consisting of the Chief Medical Officer (Chairman), John Thomas Smith, Esq., Dr. Eades, and Edward Barker, Esq., inspects the asylum once every month, and the three last-named individuals inspect it in rotation every week. The inspection is made at all hours, and without notice to the superintendent.

The attention bestowed by the visitors to the affairs of the asylum has been unremitting, and the suggestions they have made from time to time for the improvement of the establishment have been most valuable.

The attention of the board has been directed particularly to the cleanliness of the establishment, to the drainage, to the conduct of the attendants in their treatment of the patients, to improvements in the manner of serving the meals, and to the garden operations. The marked diminution which has taken place in the amount of restraint necessary, and the great increase which the superintendent has effected in the employment and amusement of the patients, are, in a great measure, owing to the suggestions of the board.

W. McCREA,
Chief Medical Officer.

APPENDIX No. 1.

NOSOLOGICAL RETURN of Diseases treated in the Yarra Bend Lunatic Asylum during the year 1857.

DISEASES.	Total number of Cases treated.	Average duration of each Case. Days.	Total number of Deaths.	Deaths per cent. of Cases of Disease.
ZYMOTIC DISEASES—				
Diarrhœa	5	17·20	3	60·
Dysentery	15	7·	3	20·
Dysentery and Diarrhœa	2	8·50	1	50·
Influenza	12	4·75	...	...
Irritative Fever	2	44·	...	...
Sub-acute Bronchitis	4	5·50	...	...
Phrenitis	2	16·00	1	50·
	42	9·69	8	19·05
SPORADIC DISEASES OF UNCERTAIN AND VARIABLE SEAT—				
General Debility	7	115·28	3	42·85
SPORADIC DISEASES OF SPECIAL SYSTEMS—				
Cerebral Congestion	12	4·16·	3	25·
General Paralysis	5	180·60	4	80·
Paralysis with Serous Apoplexy	4	87·50	4	100·
Serous Apoplexy with Paraplegia	1	54·	1	100·
Paraplegia	4	257·75	...	...
Epilepsy	5	35·80	2	40·
Epilepsy with Paralysis	1	2·	...	...
Chorea	1	30·	...	...
Hysteria	1	2·	...	...
Delirium Tremens	1	8·	...	...
	35	74·54	14	40·
RESPIRATORY ORGANS—				
Phthisis	3	57·66	2	66·66
ORGANS OF DIGESTION—				
Dyspepsia	2	213·	...	...
Cholic	4	1·50	...	...
Cholera	2	3·	...	...
Insane Abstinence	5	33·40	1	20·
Constipation	3	4·66	...	...
	16	38·68	1	6·25
ORGANS OF GENERATION—				
Paramenia	11	122·36	...	...
Childbirth	2	2·	...	...
	13	103·69	...	...
INTEGUMENTARY SYSTEM—				
Erysipelas	1	10·	...	...
Boils	8	7·50	...	...
Ulcers	5	138·60	...	...
Bed Sores	4	100·	...	...
Tinea Capitis	1	120·	...	...
Abscess	3	38·	...	...
	22	63·50	...	...
ORGANS OF LOCOMOTION—				
Rheumatism	2	43·50	...	...
TOTALS OF ALL DISEASES	140	53·19	28	20·

APPENDIX No. 2.

PER CENTAGE of Cures and Deaths in various Asylums compared with the Yarra Bend.

NAME OF ASYLUM.	Cures.	Deaths.
BETHLEHEM HOSPITAL—per centage on admissions for 10 years, 1846-55	54·19	6·37
BETHLEHEM HOSPITAL—per centage on admissions for 100 years, ending 31st December, 1855	43·05	8·27
BETHLEHEM HOSPITAL—per centage on admissions for 1856	52·35	5·82
ENGLISH ASYLUMS—per centage on admissions from their first establishment up to about 1845 ... ..	...	11·86
COUNTY ASYLUMS, FOR PAUPERS ONLY—per centage on admissions from their first establishment up to about 1845 ... ..	...	13·88
COUNTY ASYLUMS, FOR PAUPERS AND PRIVATE PATIENTS—per centage on admissions from their first establishment up to about 1845... ..	...	10·46
ASYLUMS FOR PATIENTS OF DIFFERENT CLASSES, SUPPORTED BY CONTRIBUTIONS—per centage on admissions from their first establishment up to about 1845.	...	8·93
(7) SCOTCH ASYLUMS—per centage on admissions from their first establishment up to about 1845 ... ..	...	7·52
(10) IRISH ASYLUMS—per centage on admissions from their first establishment up to about 1845 ... ..	...	8·7
ASYLUMS IN ENGLAND, HOLLAND, FRANCE, AND GERMANY—average results, per centage on admissions	39·74	10·
YARRA BEND ASYLUM—per centage on total number of patients in the Asylum during 1856	22·62	12·04
YARRA BEND ASYLUM—per centage on total number of patients in the Asylum during 1857	15·17	8·97
YARRA BEND ASYLUM—per centage on admissions during 1856	41·61	22·14
YARRA BEND ASYLUM—per centage on admissions during 1857	35·50	21·01

APPENDIX No. 3.

RETURN of the Number of Patients admitted from Gaols, Friends, and otherwise, for the year ending 31st December, 1857.

1857.	GAOLS.			FRIENDS.			OTHERWISE.			TOTAL.		
	Males	Females.	Total.	Males	Females.	Total.	Males	Females.	Total.	Males	Females.	Total.
10th Jan. to 31st Dec. ...	50	33	83	14	28	42	10	4	14	74	65	139