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elucidation. The second part is a useful study in brief of the hospitals of the South West of England, and as such is concerned with matters of record. However, the volume as a whole provides a valuable updating of our knowledge of medieval hospitals.

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E J Dennison, *A cottage hospital grows up: the story of the Queen Victoria Hospital, East Grinstead*, 2nd rev. ed., London, Baxendale Press, 1996, pp. 304, illus., £15.00 (0-9520-933-91).

E J Dennison was a GP at the Queen Victoria Hospital from 1938 to 1977 and is similarly devoted to its history. This updated version of his book, first published in 1963, provides an institutional account of an unusual hospital with several histories. A cottage hospital existed at East Grinstead from 1863 to 1874. From 1888 a new hospital developed, via two relocations, into a modest 36 bed facility serving a local population of nearly 30,000 by 1939. The account is complemented with a photographic record, a succinct survey of early English cottage hospitals and examples from the 1863–4 hospital casebook. Donations of land, buildings and equipment are dutifully recorded, as is the early involvement of “workingmen’s organizations” in this part of England, and a strong sense of community effort is conveyed.

In September 1939 the Ministry of Health designated the hospital one of three national Maxillo-Facial Units for war casualties, initially RAF and Allied pilots. A specialist medical staff and temporary accommodation was provided, and Ministry funding and grants from the Canadian Government and British War Relief Society of America transformed the hospital into a 200 bed institution. This combination of a national centre for plastic surgery and jaw injuries with a local general hospital, each with their respective medical staffs, was maintained after the war. Little is

said of any consequent internal tensions, though relations with external authorities were occasionally strained. Thus there was some distancing from the voluntarist British Hospitals Association over Sussex regional funding, followed by a protracted argument with the NHS Regional Board over the use of moneys raised locally, largely before 1948, for a children’s ward.

Dennison offers new post-1963 material in a “non-political” light, but conveys the loss of local control and increasing anxiety for the hospital’s future during successive NHS reorganizations. The securing of Independent Trust status in October 1993 is presented as a lifeline which restored local initiative and was critical to the retention of facilities, with the hospital cast as “market leader” in regional services in the ubiquitous mission statement.

This is a valuable account, subject to three main criticisms. Detail on medical and other staffs contrasts with little information on local patients and their experience of the hospital. Comment on specialist-GP relations, given the unusual nature of the hospital and the author’s direct experiences, could have illuminated a recurring theme in medical history. Finally, although the expressed hopes for an assured future for the hospital are fully understood, indications of any price paid to date or some personal assessment by the author would surely not be inappropriate.

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Dorothy Atkinson, Mark Jackson and Jan Walmsley (eds), *Forgotten lives: exploring the history of learning disability*, Kidderminster, British Institute of Learning Disabilities, 1997, pp. xii, 144, illus., £18.95 (+£1.00 p&p) (paperback 1-87391-84-4). Distributed worldwide by: Plymbridge Distributors Ltd, Estover House, Plymouth, UK, OL6 7PZ.

The ten chapters in this book are based mainly on the contributions, by a multidisciplinary group of people, to the Open University seminar on the Social History of

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Learning Disability held in 1994. The thrust of the book is that oral, documentary and photographic resources are complementary strands in the history of learning disability. The period covered is mainly the twentieth century. Included is the autobiography of Mabel Cooper, produced with the help of Dorothy Atkinson. Although this is a very interesting human story, it would have been enhanced by a correlation with the histories of the institutions concerned. Mabel Cooper's contribution is analogous to a soldier's account of the horrors of trench warfare, but, like a soldier's description of the Battle of the Somme, it adds very little to the understanding of the overall strategy.

Rebecca Fido and Maggie Potts give an account of the harshness of conditions in some institutions. By contrast, Andrew Stevens describes how nurses in Colchester were ostracized by their colleagues whenever they broke the no-punishment code. Differing behaviours are described.

Drawing on the records of Sandlebridge (Cheshire), Mark Jackson demonstrates the value of photographs in the study of the development and maintenance of an institution, illustrating attitudes to the disabled and, at the same time, providing material for use in medical text books. The Sandlebridge photographs were taken in 1909 and 1911, and Jackson is rightly concerned to ensure that the right to confidentiality is preserved, while pointing out there are adequate conventions protecting anonymity. We are unlikely ever again to see such a spectacular breach of the codes as Sano's 1918 paper in the *Journal of Mental Science* in which he discussed William Pullen by name and gave full details of his autopsy.

Two chapters by Jan Walmsley, one on the history of learning disability in Bedfordshire and the other on the history of community care, are based on the records of Bedford Mental Deficiency Committee 1915–1946. They emphasize the value of local studies and indicate what can and cannot be gleaned from local records, listing Northamptonshire, Cheshire, Greater London, and Norfolk as

holding substantial archives. Dorothy Atkinson similarly describes material in Somerset County Records Office, in particular after 1913, when the county's "range of institutions and systems . . . put it high on the Board of Control's 'league table' of local authorities". The authors might also have mentioned Surrey County Records Office, which holds a substantial volume of material on the Royal Earlswood Asylum for Idiots, already used extensively by Lilian Zihni and David Wright for their unpublished PhD theses. The final contribution by Julia Sheppard lists the relevant resources available in the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine.

Overall the book contains very useful information, and it should stimulate further study of the history of learning disability.

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Leslie Morton and Robert J Moore, *A chronology of medicine and related sciences*, Aldershot, Scolar Press, 1997, pp. 784, £75.00 (1-85928-215-6).

For the past decade or so, my colleague John Heilbron and I have written a Commentary column for each year's first issue of *Nature*, light-heartedly discussing some of the scientific and medical anniversaries which might be remembered during the forthcoming year. Although we desultorily collect possible items for inclusion as they come to hand, we rely heavily on a series of old and new chronologies of science, medicine and technology. In checking our facts, we have become aware of the widely varying standards of this popular if flat-footed genre. Even such mundane matters as dates and the spelling of proper names are routinely incorrect; more subtle issues such as whether the key date is the idea, the experiment or observation, or the publication further complicate the chronological approach.

Interpretation will always be a question of judgement, but Morton and Moore score well on the accuracy scale. Leslie Morton was of course