

Hospital and thank Dr Christine Dean for help with the manuscript.

References

- BADO, W. & WILLIAMS, C. J. (1984) Usefulness of letters from hospitals to general practitioners. *British Medical Journal*, **288**, 1813–1814.
- CRADDOCK, N. & CRADDOCK, B. (1989) Psychiatric discharge summaries: differing requirements of psychiatrists and general practitioners. *British Medical Journal*, **299**, 1382.
- PULLEN, I. M. & YELLOWLEES, A. J. (1985) Is communication improving between general practitioners and psychiatrists? *British Medical Journal*, **290**, 31–33.
- TULLOCH, A. J., FOWLER, G. H., McMULLAN, J. J. & SPENCE, J. M. (1975) Hospital discharge reports: content and design. *British Medical Journal*, **4**, 443–446.
- WILLIAMS, P. & WALLACE, B. B. (1974) General practitioners and psychiatrists – do they communicate? *British Medical Journal*, **1**, 505–507.

Psychiatric Bulletin (1990), **14**, 620–622

Sketches from the history of psychiatry

Useful or useless architecture? A dimension of the relationship between the Georgian schizophrenic James Tilly Matthews and his doctor, John Haslam

ROBERT HOWARD, Registrar, The Maudsley Hospital, Denmark Hill, London SE5 8AF

James Tilly Matthews, a paranoid schizophrenic admitted to Bethlem on 28 January 1797, was to become the most colourful and controversial inmate of the hospital in the years up to his death in 1815. Influential relatives and friends campaigned for his release and attempted to demonstrate his sanity, on two occasions, in 1797 and 1809, having him examined before high court judges. The hospital medical staff, in particular John Haslam, the apothecary (in post 1795–1816), were obliged to demonstrate repeatedly Matthews' continued insanity, and to this end his case was published (Haslam, 1810). Bethlem was under political pressure to continue Matthews' detention. His admission followed an attempt to disrupt a sitting of the House of Commons in December 1796, which occurred as the climax of a campaign of deluded lobbying during which he had made threats against the safety of senior politicians, including Lord Liverpool, the Home Secretary (Matthews, 1796). Under in-patient care, Matthews continued to express threats against the lives of the Royal Family, politicians, and the staff of Bethlem (Matthews, 1804). Transferred to the incurable ward in 1798, his continued detention was at the specific request of the Home Secretary, a fact revealed by Haslam at the 1809

hearing (Haslam, 1809). In May 1813, Matthews, having developed a spinal abscess, was transferred to a private madhouse in Hoxton, where it was felt country air might improve his medical condition. He died there in January 1815.

During Matthews' time as a patient, and even after his death, it was repeatedly alleged that Haslam had developed a personal animosity towards him, and that this had led to harsh treatment and unnecessarily prolonged detention. The testimony of relatives and friends at the 1809 hearing (Dunbar, 1809), and the House of Commons inquiry of 1815, show clearly that they held this opinion. More damning are the allegations made at the Commons Inquiry by the head keeper, James Simmonds, who reported that Matthews had been unnecessarily handcuffed and leglocked for two to three years because "he would not submit to the apothecary" (Simmonds, 1815). Whatever the nature of Haslam's treatment of Matthews, the evidence suggests that he held a low opinion of madmen in general, as when expressing his understandable concern that the House of Commons Inquiry which had led to his professional disgrace had based its questioning of him, and other hospital staff members, on a manuscript written by

Matthews “with that cunning and malevolence which often form striking features in the character of the insane” (Haslam, 1818).

The personal relationship between Haslam and Matthews has interested historians of psychiatry of the period (Leigh, 1961; Porter, 1988) and has even been described as a *folie à deux* (Porter, 1988). An aspect of their relationship, hitherto unexplored, is their shared fascination with architecture, and the circumstances that led to Matthews the lunatic achieving not inconsiderable success in the field, while Haslam’s efforts were, to his great annoyance, ignored.

The new Bethlem competition

By the end of the 18th century, the hospital building at Moorfields was recognised as structurally unsound, and considered too expensive to rebuild on its present site. A site was acquired at St George’s Fields in Lambeth, and between 27 June and 1 August 1810 *The Times* carried advertisements for a national competition, to be conducted anonymously, for a design for the new hospital. Entrants were identified by mottos which they wrote on their designs; for example competitor number 14 styled himself “Flibbertigibbet of mopping and moaning”. By January 1811, 33 designs had been delivered, and these were given to the surveyors of the hospital, George Dance and Samuel Cockerill, who chose the three with most merit. The winning designs were examined by the building committee before the prizes were announced. First prize of £200 was awarded on 18 February to W. Lockner, second prize of £100 to J. A. and G. S. Repton, and the third prize of £50 to John Ditcher for his design “Utility without ostentation”. Entrant number 5, his design entitled “The deuce take it!” was Matthews. Although the surveyors had been instructed to choose only three winning designs, on 18 April, two months after the award of the first prize, it was “Resolved that the building committee be authorized to expend a sum not exceeding £30 for the benefit and comfort of James Tilly Matthews a patient in Bethlem Hospital, and that he be informed that this donation is intended by the Court as some remuneration for his labour and ability in drawing a plan for the erection of the proposed new hospital in St George’s Fields”. Although it has been suggested that the award represented no more than a gesture by the hospital authorities to placate Matthews’ family (Allderidge, 1985), in relation to the sums awarded for the other three winners, £30 seems about right for a fourth prize. Matthews’ designs have been lost, but in a letter to John Poynder, Clerk to the hospital governors, on 4 February, he detailed the contents of the 46 pages of plans, requesting that they be given to his daughter Justina “to whom I make them a present of, and at whose desire I sent them in competition”.

Matthews’ plans were never used in the design of the Lambeth Bethlem, although an urban legend (Brunvand, 1981) grew up around his supposed involvement in the production of the new hospital. Mrs Piozzi, Dr Johnson’s friend, in a letter five years after Matthews’ death, wrote about him thus; “. . . he planned the new fine Bedlam Hospital, and requested a particular apartment for himself – conscious of his own infirmity. That he actually resides there much respected, and visited by the great mechanics who do nothing without consulting him” (Piozzi, 1820). O’Donoghue in his history of the hospital refers to Matthews as “The draughtsman of New Bethlem” (O’Donoghue, 1914).

Following the critical report of the House of Commons Committee on the state of madhouses in 1815, Haslam defended his own position with a published letter to the hospital governors (Haslam, 1818). In this he revealed that months before the announcement of the competition, he had taken a keen interest in the plans for the new hospital. “I became anxious that it might be constructed with all the advantages which modern art and extensive experience could supply – that it should be exempt from the numerous defects of the old building, and incorporate the conveniences and improvements which might be derived from similar institutions both in this country and abroad” (Haslam, 1818). Haslam explained later that he had, at great personal expense and trouble, procured a valuable mass of relevant information which he had placed at the disposal of the members of the building committee, and the architect J. Lewis. His ideas and advice were totally ignored, and he bitterly described the new building as “an ostentatious blazon of national degradation” (Haslam, 1818). Haslam had even applied himself to studying the best method of heating the new hospital, and delivered dire warnings to the governors when they adopted the use of a steam system. To Haslam’s apparent satisfaction this turned out to be a total failure, resulting in the waste of several thousand pounds.

Haslam was particularly vexed that while his carefully researched advice and plans were disregarded, a public competition should be held. He wrote angrily “. . . premiums were advertised for the best designs, speedily producing swarms of architectural whims and conceits.” (Haslam, 1818). The success of his patient, Matthews, in the competition must have seemed an ironic snub to Haslam’s architectural contributions. As if this wasn’t enough, Haslam learnt that the members of the Commons madhouse committee had taken Matthews out of the Hoxton madhouse, where he was supposedly held under tight security, for the day “to the new Bethlem, then un finished, in order to benefit from his architectural criticism on the building” (Haslam, 1818).

Useful Architecture

In October 1812 Matthews published from his cell in Bethlem the first two parts of what he intended as a comprehensive catalogue of new designs for houses “from the £50 cott to £200,000 mansion, mostly grounded on the Grecian, Roman, Gothic and plain styles of Architecture” (Matthews, 1812). In his introduction (“To the Public”), he begins with characteristic unaffected confidence thus: “Many strangers as well as my own friends having expressed their wishes that I should cause a series of my designs for public and private buildings to be engraved, I had determined to gratify them, when an eminent artist kindly offered to instruct me in the species of engraving necessary: I accepted his friendship, and being now an etcher of several weeks progress I shall offer such designs wholly etched by Myself, in Numbers, under the title *Useful Architecture*.” (Matthews, 1812).

Haslam was later to reveal that he had arranged for one of his friends to visit the hospital and teach Matthews engraving. Although *Useful Architecture* does not appear to have continued past its first two numbers, the designs within it were thought of merit. Sir John Soane requested a copy in 1826 from Haslam, who seems to have become Matthews’ posthumous agent! Haslam sent an accompanying letter: “Sir – after some search I have found the two numbers of the late Mr Matthews’ publication on Architectural subjects.”

That Matthews and Haslam shared a common interest in architecture appears to be a novel observation. Despite Matthews’ striking successes in an area where Haslam failed to gain recognition, Haslam continued to promote the training and interests of his patient, to the extent that even 15 years after Matthews’ death he was still supplying copies of *Useful Architecture* on request. The relationship between the two men was complex, but the evidence from their architectural interactions refutes the thesis that Haslam hated Matthews, or

regarded him as nothing more than a formidable troublemaker. The Matthews case played an important part in Haslam’s professional downfall, and the events leading to his dismissal, in 1816. Haslam’s treatment of Matthews contributes still to the negative image of him as a doctor (Porter, 1988) which continues to obscure the importance of his pioneering writings on mental illness.

References

- ALLDERIDGE, P. (1985) Bedlam: fact or fantasy? In *The Anatomy of Madness, volume 2, Institutions and Society* (eds. W. F. Bynum, R. Porter & M. Shepherd). London: Tavistock.
- BRUNVAND, I. H. (1981) *The Vanishing Hitchhiker: American Urban Legends and Their Meanings*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- DUNBAR, R. (1809) Deposition 29 November 1809, Bethlem Archives, Box 61(8).
- HASLAM, J. (1809) Deposition 30 November 1809, Bethlem Archives, Box 61(8).
- (1810) *Illustrations of Madness*. London: G. Hayden.
- (1818) *A Letter to the Governors of Bethlem Hospital*. London: Taylor & Hessey.
- LEIGH, D. (1961) *The Historical Development of British Psychiatry*. Volume 1, 18th and 19th centuries. Oxford: Pergamon.
- MATTHEWS, J. T. M. (1796) Letter to Lord Liverpool, 24 December. British Library, Add. MS. 38231, fo. 121.
- (1804) Letter to his subjects 20 March. Bethlem Archives, Box 61(8).
- (1812) *Useful Architecture*. London: S. Bass. (Copy in the Sir John Soane Museum).
- O’DONAGHUE, E. G. (1914) *The Story of Bethlem Hospital*. London: T. Fisher Unwin.
- PIOZZI Mrs (1820) Letter to Mrs Pennington, Dowry Square, Hot Wells, Bristol. 14 December. Princeton University Library.
- PORTER, R. (1988) *Introduction to Illustrations of Madness*. London: Routledge.
- SIMMONDS, J. (1815) Evidence before Committee on mad-houses in England, pp. 38–40. London: House of Commons.