The Maudsley at War
The Story of the Hospital during the Great War

Maudsley Long Gallery
Maudsley Hospital
Denmark Hill
London SE5 8AZ

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Mon–Sat 9am – 5pm

Free entry

www.slam.nhs.uk/longgallery

020 3228 2830
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The concept behind the Maudsley Hospital dates back to 1907 when it was envisioned as an innovative metropolitan centre for psychiatric treatment, teaching and research.

Henry Maudsley, an eminent psychiatrist of the time developed the idea in partnership with Frederick Mott, a pioneer biochemist and neuropathologist. The hospital was jointly funded by Maudsley and the London County Council and its construction was completed in late 1915.

Meanwhile the first winter of the Great War had affected the British Army with an unanticipated number of casualties. As the demand for hospital beds increased, the Army requisitioned many existing asylums. The Maudsley was occupied in 1916 before it could officially open. It became the neurological annex of the Fourth London Medical Division (King’s College Hospital).

During the war, the Maudsley was recognized as a pioneering centre for the treatment and research of psychiatric injuries, particularly of the newly diagnosed cases of shell shock. Under the influence of Frederick Mott, the hospital nurtured an atmosphere of optimism and recovery that would challenge existing psychiatric approaches.

This exhibition will explore the role and contributions of the Hospital during the First World War, until its return to the control of London County Council and eventual opening as the Maudsley Hospital in February 1923.
Henry Maudsley (1835-1918)

Henry Maudsley was an eminent Victorian psychiatrist and researcher of supernatural experiences, understood as disorders of the mind.

Maudsley had earned a considerable fortune from his private practice and in 1907, inspired by Mott, he offered the London County Council £30,000 (the current equivalent of £2,500,000) towards the costs of establishing a 'fitly equipped hospital for mental diseases'. The estimated building costs were £60,000 - eventually rising to £69,750 - and the remaining expenses were covered by the Council.
Sir Frederick Walker Mott (1853-1926)

Frederick Mott was an experienced biochemist, psychiatrist and sociologist, distinguished for his work in neuropathology and its relation to mental illness.

The Maudsley was the result of an early onset dream. Maudsley and Mott believed in the treatment of mental disorders offered in an institution freed from stigma, and distinct from the secluded lunatic asylums of the time. Mott and Maudsley had a vision of an urban centred hospital that integrated psychiatric teaching and research.

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PRIVYAITE AND CONFIDENTIAL.

Copy of statement read by Dr. Nott to the Special (Housing
and Treatment of Lunatics) Sub-Committee on the 13th July, 1907.

Proposed Hospital for the Care and Treatment of Acute
Recoverable cases of Mental Disease, with due Provision for
Clinical and Pathological Research.

The main object of this Institution will be the
due treatment of acute cases of mental disorder, with a
view, so far as possible, to prevent the necessity of sending
them to the County Asylums; to promote exact scientific research
into the causes of insanity and to acquire knowledge that shall
tend to its decrease and to the better treatment of the insane.
In order that such an institution may be established the Donor
offers to the London County Council the sum of £50,000 on the
following conditions:—

1. The Hospital to be for early and acute cases only.
2. The Hospital to have an out-patient department.
3. The Hospital to be equipped for 75 to 100 patients;
   50 to 75 pauper patients and the remainder paying patients.
4. The Hospital to be in a central position, and
   within three to four miles of Trafalgar Square.
5. Due provision to be made for clinical and
   pathological research. It is suggested that this would be
   accomplished most economically by the removal of the staff and
   equipment of the Claybury Laboratory to the new institution,
   if it should be so desired. It has been ascertained that
   the present building could be easily adapted to other purposes
   of the Claybury Asylum without much cost.
6. The Hospital, Laboratory and teaching side of the
   institute to be recognised as a school of the University of
Maudsley’s Bequest

General correspondence files concerning the Maudsley Hospital
Archival records 1907-1947

This is a reproduction of the statement read by Mott to the Special (Housing and Treatment of Lunatics) Sub-Committee on 16 July, 1907. The files detail Maudsley’s proposal for funding to the London County Council which was written in collaboration with Frederick Mott. The hospital was to be small, located within three miles of Trafalgar Square, with an out-patient department and facilities for teaching and research.

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Emil Kraepelin, psychiatrist (1856-1926)

Half-tone reproduction, 1926

Emil Kraepelin’s clinic in Germany inspired the idea of the Maudsley. It incorporated facilities for postgraduate training in psychiatry and neurology. Mott visited the clinic in 1907, after which Kraepelin wrote ‘an Englishman came to see me about opening a new mental hospital in London. It will come to nothing’. He would later acknowledge Mott’s contributions to British psychiatry.

© Wellcome Library, London - L0030730
Horace van Ruith (1839-1923)

105 Denmark Hill, c.1905

Watercolour - reproduction

In April 1911 a site was acquired on Denmark Hill, opposite the newly opened King’s College Hospital. Although slightly outside the stipulated radius from Trafalgar Square set in the original scheme, it was still located in a busy London suburb close to a railway station and on a tram route. 105 Denmark Hill was part of this site.

© Bethlem Museum of the Mind - LDBTH 2.17.31
William Charles Clifford Smith

*Building Plan, 1912*

Drawing– reproduction

In 1909 Mott suggested that W.C. Smith, the London County Council’s engineer, visit Kraepelin’s clinic for inspiration. Detailed plans were drafted in 1912 and the construction was authorised in the following year. In its overall design, the Maudsley resembled the clinic in Munich. The three-level building included a pathology laboratory, a postgraduate medical school, an out-patient department, a library, a dispensary, on-call bedrooms and administrative offices, among other facilities.

© Bethlem Museum of the Mind - YDP-01
By the end of 1914 wartime psychiatric casualties had multiplied, overwhelming the existing medical facilities. Many civilian hospitals were turned over to military use and some were developed as specialist units. In 1915 Mott suggested to Sir Alfred Keogh, director-general of army medical services, that the Maudsley could be used as an annex of the 4th London Medical Division for ‘the treatment of the more serious cases of war psychoneurosis and psychoses’.

© National Portrait Gallery, London – NPG x44175
The Maudsley Hospital was opened in January 1916 as a War Office specialist unit for the clearing, treatment and research into cases of shell shock. The image above shows one of the site’s façades with the sign reading ‘Maudsley Neurological Clearing Hospital’. The photograph below was taken where the current main reception of the Maudsley is today – not far from this gallery space. The officer’s wards were located upstairs.

© Bethlem Museum of the Mind
Mott had been Director of the London County Council's Pathological Laboratory at the Claybury Asylum in Essex since 1895. In 1916 he transferred the Laboratory to the Maudsley and took responsibility for the treatment of severe or intractable cases of shell shock. He also delivered open lectures to both civilian and mental health practitioners, and theoretical and practical sessions in the diagnosis and treatment of the war neuroses.

These two images are of the Pathological Laboratory at the Maudsley in 1918. Mott features in one of them, wearing his military uniform and looking out the window.

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Shell Shock

The horror experienced at the front lines had enormous repercussions upon soldiers’ mental health. The British Army reported over 80,000 cases of shell shock (a forerunner diagnosis to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder). The condition presented major difficulties in diagnosis and treatment. Common symptoms comprised fatigue, nightmares, sleep deprivation, palpitations and functional paralysis.

Physicians had the unenviable task of providing treatment whilst ensuring soldiers returned promptly to combat. However, 95% of cases never came back to military duty.

1. ‘A wounded soldier lies in a hospital bed, looking straight at the viewer. His head is propped up on a pillow, only his head and shoulders visible from underneath a blanket’
   by Eric Henri Kennington
   © Imperial War Museum - Art.IWM ART 5053
2. A visibly dazed British soldier, taken prisoner by the Germans, probably in April 1918
   © Imperial War Museum - ©IWM Q 24047

3. ‘Three wounded or injured British soldiers sit on a bench in the receiving room of a military hospital, awaiting medical treatment […]’
   by William Orpen (1917)
   © Imperial War Museum - Art.IWM ART 2952
4. ‘Sequence 43 ("Taking papers from...") - 'shell-shocked' British soldier’
© Imperial War Museum - Q 79508

5. ‘A full length depiction of a soldier, seemingly shell-shocked, standing in front of the edge of a dugout. […]’
© Imperial War Museum - Art.IWM ART 2376
6. ‘A scene of the platform at Dover railway station. Wounded soldiers are boarding a hospital train. A group of wounded stand in the foreground, to the right lie others on stretchers, one tended by a nurse […]’
by Sir John Lavery (1918)
© Imperial War Museum - Art.IWM ART 1273
Patients were first admitted to the Maudsley on the 6th January 1916. It was designated by the War Office a ‘neurological clearing hospital’.

Territorial Force Nursing Service personnel and volunteers operated the hospital. Under the overall command of Lieutenant Colonel Atwood Thorne, the Maudsley attracted a great number of doctors with research interests, who studied the war neuroses alongside Mott.

Patients arrived at the hospital by ambulance train, and temporary platforms were built to the west of Denmark Hill station to allow direct access to the hospital and the hutted accommodation constructed in Ruskin Park. By autumn 1917 the Royal Army Medical Corps begun to quarantine infectious cases in ambulance trains and they also applied this principle to psychological casualties. Severe cases of shell shock and psychosis were segregated in separate carriages and were left behind, to prevent them from ‘demoralizing the wounded and sick’.

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Most of the images in this exhibition belong to an album dated c.1918 containing what it might be the only remaining photographic records of the Maudsley Hospital during its military requisition between 1916-1919.

These photographs show staff members performing various duties within the hospital’s premises. Some of the individuals in the pictures have been identified, such as Lt Colonel Atwood Thorne, wearing a characteristic moustache; Captain Frederick Golla and Frederick Mott himself.

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An atmosphere of cure

Mott developed a distinctive approach to shell shock treatment and believed that those affected had an inherited vulnerability to mental illness. He believed that other elements, such as the environment, and soldiers’ personal experiences in combat, played a key role in the development of the disorder.

This perspective informed his ideas of treatment and at the Maudsley, Mott sought to create an ‘atmosphere of cure’ to divert the mind and to accelerate recovery’. He encouraged patients to engage in creative hobbies such as gardening, carpentry, writing and painting, as these could function as coping mechanisms and as ways of externalizing internal trauma. He also reinforced the idea of cultivating social life, keeping a balanced diet, getting enough repose and performing regular physical activities. He also aimed at removing impediments to recovery, including the fear of returning to the front-line.

By 1917 the hospital accommodated 185 soldiers and 18 officers with shell-shock, neurasthenia or acute mental disorder.
Room of Recovery, 1919

By Frederick Walter Mott

This image was an illustration by Frederick Mott for his book ‘War Neuroses and Shell Shock’ published in 1919. The image depicts an afflicted soldier before treatment, facing another soldier –possibly the same one- fully recovered and ready to go back to battle. The phrase ‘Abandon doubt and fear all ye that enter here’ describes Mott’s engaging approach to treatment where a safe ‘therapeutic’ environment supported patients’ recovery.

© Wellcome Library, London - L0023551
Beds and Repose

After their admission to the Maudsley, Mott recommended patients ‘quiet repose in single rooms’ for the most severe cases, combined with continuous warm baths ‘because of their calming properties’.

Initially the Hospital had six wards - two for assessment and four for treatment, 144 beds in all. By 1917, it had expanded to 450 beds for other ranks and 80 more for officers. The running costs per bed were £484, almost twice that of the larger asylums of the time.

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Food and Diet

Mott secured a daily allowance of 3,380 calories for servicemen treated at the Maudsley. He believed that through nourishing, digestible and easily assimilated food, soldiers would restore their general physical condition.

In 1917, he wrote:

‘Soldiers will put up with a good deal provided they have good and abundant food’

Patients also grew vegetables in the hospital grounds and constructed a poultry house to provide a ready supply of fresh produce.

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Diversion of the mind

Inside the hospital patients had access to communal areas such as the lounge pictured here, where they could interact and share their experiences of war. Socializing seems to have played a pivotal role in Mott’s approach to recovery. Mott saw no value in catharsis and recommended the ‘diversion of the mind … to avoid introspection and dwelling upon the terrible experiences’ that soldiers had gone through.

© Bethlem Museum of the Mind
As the War Office did not provide the hospital with funding, Mott persuaded Lady Henry Bentinck – pictured nearby - to fund the construction of a large, fully equipped workshop in the grounds at the Maudsley. There patients could have access to various manual activities, such as carpentry, cabinet-making and metal work, under the supervision of a first-rate instructor. Mott prescribed patients two hours of occupational therapy in the morning and considered these activities a form of treatment that could contribute to the diversion of convalescent patients’ minds. Manual activities also preceded discharge by providing evidence of a fit state achieved by soldiers.

Patients seemed to have received remuneration for the sales and commissions of articles produced at the carpenter’s workshop and Mott considered this reward to be essential for the success of treatment. Nevertheless, some
patients could not cope with the noise of the hammering and tapping at the carpenter’s workshop and had to be referred to other occupations, such as shoemaking or bookbinding.

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Lady Olivia Cavendish-Bentinck (1869-1939)

by Lady Ottoline Morrell, 1935

Lady Olivia, the wife of a Conservative politician of the time, not only funded the occupational workshop at the Maudsley but also visited it on repeated occasions, making sure the workshop was kept fully stocked. Mott thought that her presence also inspired and encouraged patients’ recovery.

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In 1918 one of the wards at the Maudsley was painted in apple-blossom pink and mauve. The paints promoted in the above advertisement were part of an experimental colour therapy treatment that aimed at the recovery of wounded soldiers. Mr. Howard Kemp-Prosser was one of the pioneers of ‘Colour Cure’ treatment for shell-shock and believed that the use of harmonious colour on patient’s surroundings could contribute to their recovery.
The Gymnasium

Mott believed that performing physical routines contributed with the rehabilitation of body function, particularly in those cases where shell shock symptoms were reflected in the body. He encouraged patients to exercise using parallel bars, climbing rope, nautical wheel, punching ball, skipping, basket and football.

He thought the gymnastic class had an emulative advantage and a challenging impact on the mind, as he thought that ‘seeing one man perform an exercise was to stimulate another to do better’

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The years to come

The Maudsley treated 12,400 cases of shell-shock between 1915 and 1919.

After the war, Mott continued publishing papers on shell-shock and the war neuroses. He was elected President of the Medico-Psychological Association but died in 1926 before taking up his post.

The ‘Neurological Clearing Hospital’ was demobilised when the war ended. In 1919 the Ministry of Pensions took over the administration of the Hospital, closing it in November 1920.

In 1923 the Maudsley returned to the control of the London County Council and finally reopened for civilian use. Treatment incorporated many of the
therapeutic techniques developed during the Great War. The atmosphere of
cure emphasized by Mott was especially promoted through exposure to
sunlight, the promotion of bodily health, occupational therapy and physical
exercise.

Although Henry Maudsley lived to see the hospital used during its military
occupancy, he died on 23 January 1918, without having seen the hospital fully
functioning as he and Mott envisioned back in 1907. Nevertheless, the
Maudsley lived up to its promise to become a leading mental health hospital in
London and an internationally renowned centre for research.

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Acknowledgments

The Maudsley Long Gallery was established in 2013 following a grant from Maudsley Charity. The gallery uses a reclaimed staff corridor that was previously locked and unused. The space is now open to everyone.

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Exhibition curators
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Richard Morley

Installation
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Peter Lloyd

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