

Proposal for an asylum to be built at Llansannor – 1899

29/7/1899

NEW ASYLUM FOR CARDIFF. THE QUESTION OF SITES. INSPECTION OF LLANSANNOR COURT ESTATE. Members of the Cardiff New Asylum Committee visited Llansannor on Tuesday to inspect a site for the new asylum offered to the committee by Mr. D. T. Alexander on behalf of the owner, Sir Thomas Morel. The inspecting party consisted of the mayor (Sir Thomas Morel), Alderman D. Jones, Alderman J. Ramsdale, Councillor E. Thomas, the town-clerk (Mr. J. L. Wheatley), the borough engineer (Mr. W. Harpur), accompanied by Mr. J. Alexander and Mr. E. J. Jones, the mayor's architect. The deputation travelled by the Great Western Railway and Taff Vale Railway to Cowbridge, and, after a well-served luncheon at the Bear Hotel, drove to Llansannor, where, after visiting the site, they were entertained to tea by Mrs. Fox, who now resides at the Court, the Rev. Owen Jones, rector, being also of the company. This question of a site for the new lunatic asylum which Cardiff must build for itself is becoming pressing. The corporation have until March, 1904, to provide themselves with a new asylum, that being the date up to which the county authorities are bound to receive not more than 430 Cardiff patients at the normal rate. All Cardiff patients above that number have to be provided for at Bridgend. LLANSANNOR COURT ESTATE-THE PROPERTY OFFERED THE CORPORATION IS THE SHADED PORTION. at whatever price the county people have the conscience to charge—now they are attempting to get from Cardiff 31s. 6d. per head per week, while the normal charge is 8s. 2d., in face of the fact that they only charge 14s. for London patients. After March, 1904 if the new asylum is not in existence, Cardiff would be at the mercy of Glamorgan in regard to the whole 430. Therefore the necessity for expedition in settling a site and proceeding to build. Amongst the sites already considered is one at Radyr, five miles and a half from Cardiff, the property of Lord Windsor. This has been inspected and rejected by the Lunacy Commissioners, who have intimated that they will not inspect another site until the corporation have made up their minds and have obtained a provisional agreement as to purchase. This seems all correct so far as saving trouble to the Commissioners is concerned, but when it is recollected that the requirements of the Commissioners as to sites are particularly full and rigid, and that after the corporation have negotiated and secured "provisional agreements the Commissioners may reject the site, and thus cause a sacrifice of all the time and trouble expended, the arrangements of the Commissioners in the matter of economy of public time are not particularly well conceived. Following upon this intimation of the Commissioners, the corporation committee have inspected five other sites in addition to that at Llansannor. A piece of land situated at Aberthaw was offered to the committee, ample in size, but placed so close to the sea as to be quite unsuitable, in addition to which the owner, a local gentleman, asked the prohibitory price of £200 an acre, the price of building land. Another site is at Parc, a mile from Creigiau Station. This land lies well to the south, has a gravelly soil and 100 to 200 acres are available. A third proffered site is on Blackstone Farm, on the road between Barry and Rhoose. This affords the required area, but the trend of the land is to the north (the Commissioners stipulate for a south or south-easterly aspect), is very steep, and rather unsuitable for the buildings which would have to be erected. Still another site is at Tredwgan, near the Porthkerry Viaduct; but here the available land is scarcely up to the required area, and the price asked is considered too high. Lastly, there is a site at Lisvane, which lies well south, but is not large enough, and is cut up by a highway. The Commissioners stipulate that no site shall be less than 50 acres, and insist upon a provision of land at the rate of one acre to every ten patients. It is probable that by the time the period allowed Cardiff for the building of its new asylum (March, 1904) has elapsed the corporation will require accommodation for at least 600 patients, while it is judged expedient that in securing a site provision should be made for 1,200 patients, which is the limit of the numbers which the Commissioners allow in one institution. The Commissioners stipulate that a site shall have a plateau of sufficient area to accommodate the buildings, with a south or south-easterly aspect, of good subsoil, with adequate drainage, good water supply, and shall be, if possible, near a town which can supply gas or electricity and furnish recreation for the staff and

patients, as well as near to the main body of the population which the asylum serves, so as to facilitate friends of patients visiting the latter. Besides all this, the whole of the land must be within a ring fence, without a single public road or footpath intersecting it. In short, the requirements of the Commissioners are drawn on lines which seem to indicate a belief in the existence of sites which (as an alderman put it on Tuesday) in contour and character are only likely to be found in that "new earth" which will come after the Millennium. The Llansannor Court Estate has a total area of 409 acres. It has a stiff, gravelly soil, is sheltered on the north and east by high ridges, and on the west by lower land and plantations. On the northern side it has a section of land rising from 111ft. to 240ft. above Ordnance datum, sloping gently to the south, containing about 120 acres, and having no road or path within the boundary. The estate includes a large mansion and the Llansannor Parish Church, while there is also a quarry of building stone and a limekiln on the estate—a fact which would very considerably cheapen the cost of building the asylum. The section referred to would provide the plateau required by the Commissioners, while the remainder of the estate could be stocked and cultivated for the asylum or sold or leased. If the Llansannor site is acquired it would probably be necessary to purchase the whole of it, and after re-arranging one or two of the roads intersecting it, so as to secure a larger area for the asylum, dispose of the remainder. This would prove the most economical plan, for the price of the whole would be relatively much less than the price of a selected portion—the presence of a lunatic asylum does not appreciate lands immediately adjoining. The Llansannor Court Estate was purchased from Sir Joseph Spearman by Sir Thomas Morel two years ago, and, although no price has yet been named, it is probable the corporation could acquire it for very little more than was then paid for it, notwithstanding the fact that, as landed estates go it has proved a remunerative investment for Sir Thomas. It should be explained that the offer of the Llansannor site has been made on behalf of Sir Thomas following upon the request of members of the committee that the mayor should come to their aid in the difficulty as to a suitable site.

Note - this site was rejected in favour of Cardiff, and Whitchurch Hospital was developed instead.

