



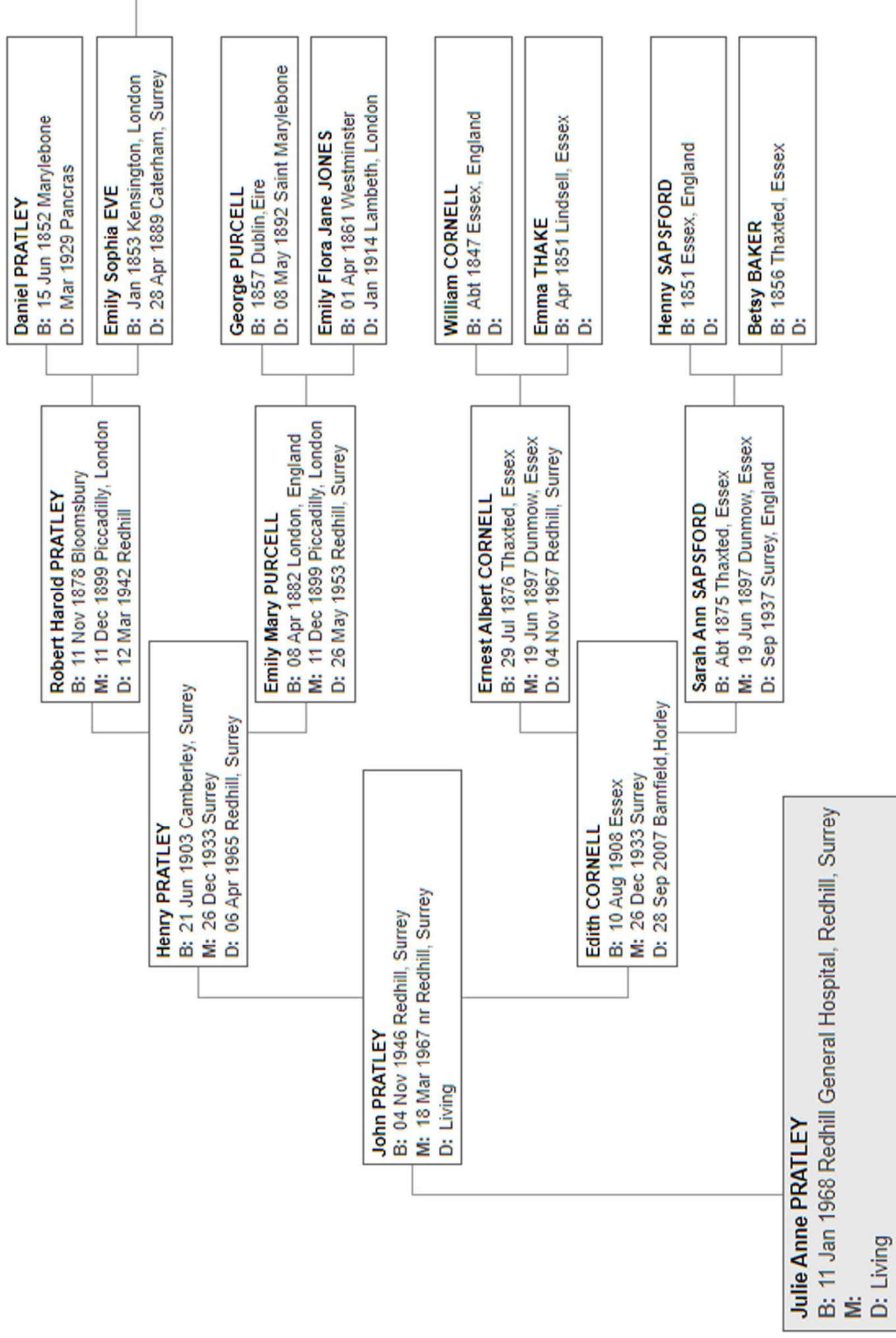
Eloise Davidson
Major Project Development

Proposal

One night in September 2020, after the worst months of my life, I opened my laptop and began frantically searching for a way to disappear; looking for a place to run away to. I typed a note to my loved ones explaining, formed a plan and started to pack my bags, I did not know where I was going but I knew I no longer wanted to be where I was, to be living the life I was living. Eventually, discovering no place that felt like somewhere I would find relief, I decided to sleep. By morning, I knew that packing my bags and simply leaving my life behind was simply not an option. However, the desire to disappear remained.

In the following weeks, I went to visit my mother and she told me the story of my great great great Grandmother, Emily Sophia Pratley. Emily Pratley was born in January 1853 in Kensington, London. Emily had faced many hardships throughout her life and in 1888, suffered debility through lack of nourishment and paralysis and was admitted to St Pancras Workhouse Infirmary and was later transferred to The Imbeciles Asylum, Caterham. Over the following year, medical records detail the horrific condition that the stroke left Emily in and tell us over the following months the only words she uttered were “I am going to die”, she eventually passed away in April 1889. Those who died at Caterham Asylum whose bodies were not claimed by their families were buried in unmarked graves in the grounds of the buildings. Emily has no grave and there are no photos of her; If it were not for my mother’s research, we would not know that Emily ever existed. For all intents and purposes, Emily had disappeared.

Emily’s story created a juxtaposition against my own feelings, I wanted to disappear, but Emily had, and I was devastated for her. Disappearance has been a theme I have explored throughout my practice and I have decided I want to explore my own feelings about disappearance through a piece of work that aims to rediscover and memorialize the story of Emily.



The Life of Emily Sophia Pratley

Emily Sophia Pratley was born in January 1853 to James Pratley, a Butcher and Mary Ann Speller in Kensington, London. In 1855, while Emily's mother was pregnant with her third child her father, James left leaving the family destitute. The family were then admitted to Shoreditch Union Workhouse where Mary gave birth to Emily's younger sister, Elizabeth Eve who died a year later. The family were then transferred to the Chelmsford Workhouse as it was considered that the fathers home parish should be the one to take responsibility for the family during the time period. In 1861 aged just 8, records then show Emily as working in service in London.

In 1874, Emily is shown to of given birth to a daughter named Emily Eve in St Marylebone Workhouse which dies shortly after birth. A few days later, Emily marries Daniel Pratley, a cabman and they go on to have seven children: Esther Sophia, Robert Harold, Bertha Mary, Helen Cecillia, Maud Elizabeth, Florence Kate, and Herbert John.

In August 1885, Daniel is attacked at work and suffers a severe head injury. The following year, a newspaper reports that Daniel is arrested and charged with being drunk during his employment and is imposed a fine of 10 shillings, or in default of payment to be imprisoned for seven days. During this time, Emily is shown as working a laundry woman, a newspaper article reports she "had been the breadwinner, slaving over a mangle to get her children a crust of bread". In August 1888, Emily was admitted to the St Pancras workhouse infirmary suffering debility through lack of nourishment and paralysis. Emily is then transferred to the Insane ward of the Workhouse, records sighting "her mind having given way". At the same time, the police discover the children neglected in Daniel's care as detailed in news articles on the following page, following this the children are admitted to the workhouse and Daniel is imprisoned with four months hard labour.

Their son Herbert then dies in St Pancras Workhouse on 20th September 1888. Less than a month later on 18th October, Emily is transferred to the Metropolitan Asylum in Caterham, Surrey. Her case records detail the horrific and gruesome circumstances she lived in. Emily died on the 28th of April 1889 aged just 36 in the asylum, with her death certificate citing her cause of death as exhaustion of Dementia and Paralysis. Emily was likely buried in an unmarked grave on the site of the asylum.

MARLBOROUGH-STREET.

Dudley Sandhurst Mansfield, 25, financial agent, was charged with assaulting *Daniel Pratley*, a cabdriver, of *Church-street*.—The prosecutor said that at twelve o'clock on Wednesday night the prisoner hailed him at the corner of *Endell-street* and *Long-acre*, and ordered him to drive to *North-terrace*, *Alexandra-square*. In *Piccadilly* he stopped him, alighted, and walked away without paying his fare, and on asking him for the money the prisoner said that he had paid him already, and that if he continued to annoy him he would pay him in another way. He then raised his stick and struck him over the hat, and upon telling him not to be so foolish, but to pay the fare and let him go, he again raised his stick and struck him four or five blows over the head and face, cutting his lips and nose.—The prisoner said that he resided at No. 3, *Church-place*, *Piccadilly*, and could not have ordered the cabman to drive to *North-terrace*. He stopped the cab at the top of the passage leading down to *Church-place* and paid the man 1s. fare, but the cabman re-demanded the fare and prevented him from going into his home. He might have been a little the worse for drink, and he supposed he struck the cabman because some of the crowd who had congregated shoved him about.—Mr. Newton ordered the prisoner to retire with the cabman and make him some reparation, and on their reappearing in court, the magistrate was informed that the prisoner had offered to pay 10s., with which the prosecutor was satisfied; and an officer was sent to his residence in *Church-place* to see that the money was paid.

NEGLECTING TO MAINTAIN CHILDREN.

Daniel Pratley, aged 37, a cab-driver, of 18, *Old Compton-street*, *Soho*, was charged on a warrant, at the *Clerkenwell Police-court*, on Saturday, for neglecting to maintain his six children, whereby they had become chargeable to the *Guardians of St. Pancras*. *John Cochrane*, assistant relieving-officer, proved the chargeability since the 17th of December last. Prisoner was remanded.

SHOCKING NEGLECT OF CHILDREN.

At the Olerkenwell police-court, on Saturday, **Daniel Pratley**, aged 35, of Middlesex-street, St. Pancras, cab-driver, was charged with neglecting to provide proper food and clothing for his six children under the age of 14 years, in consequence of which their health had been seriously injured. A relieving officer of St. Pancras stated that he went to the prisoner's house on the 10th of August. The prisoner was lying on the parlour floor drunk. The children who were in the same room, were in a shocking condition. They were only half-clad and in a filthy state, being covered with vermin. The youngest child, aged 15 months, looked like a skeleton, and all the other children had a sickly and pallid look. The witness also examined another room in the house and found that even worse than the first. The children were removed to the workhouse.—The magistrate said that he could not conceive a worse case of neglect. The condition of the children was shocking and must have been known to the prisoner, who would be imprisoned for four months with hard labour.

Above: Leeds times
25th August 1888

A FATHER'S NEGLIGENCE OF HIS FAMILY

Daniel Pratley, aged 35, of Middlesex-street, St. Pancras, cab-driver, was charged at the Olerkenwell police-court, on Saturday, on a warrant, with wilfully neglecting to provide adequate food and clothing for his six children, who are all under the age of 14.—George James Moon, relieving officer of St. Pancras, stated that he went to the prisoner's house on August 10. He found **Pratley** lying on the parlour floor drunk. The children, who were in the same room, were in a frightful condition. They were only half-clad and in a filthy state, being covered with vermin. The youngest child, aged 15 months, seemed like a skeleton, and all the others had a sickly and pallid look. The witness also examined another room in the house, and found that even worse than the first.—The children were conveyed to the workhouse.—Mr Smith said that he could not conceive a worse case of neglect. The accused would be imprisoned with hard labour for four months.

Right: South Wales Echo
20th August 1888

Maps

Using the census, I located several of the addresses in which Emily lived at in London, I then used Charles Booth's poverty maps to find maps of these areas. Upon researching the address she lived at when she was aged 6, 8 Middle Street, I discovered a page on British History Online which describes the living conditions of the houses on the street.

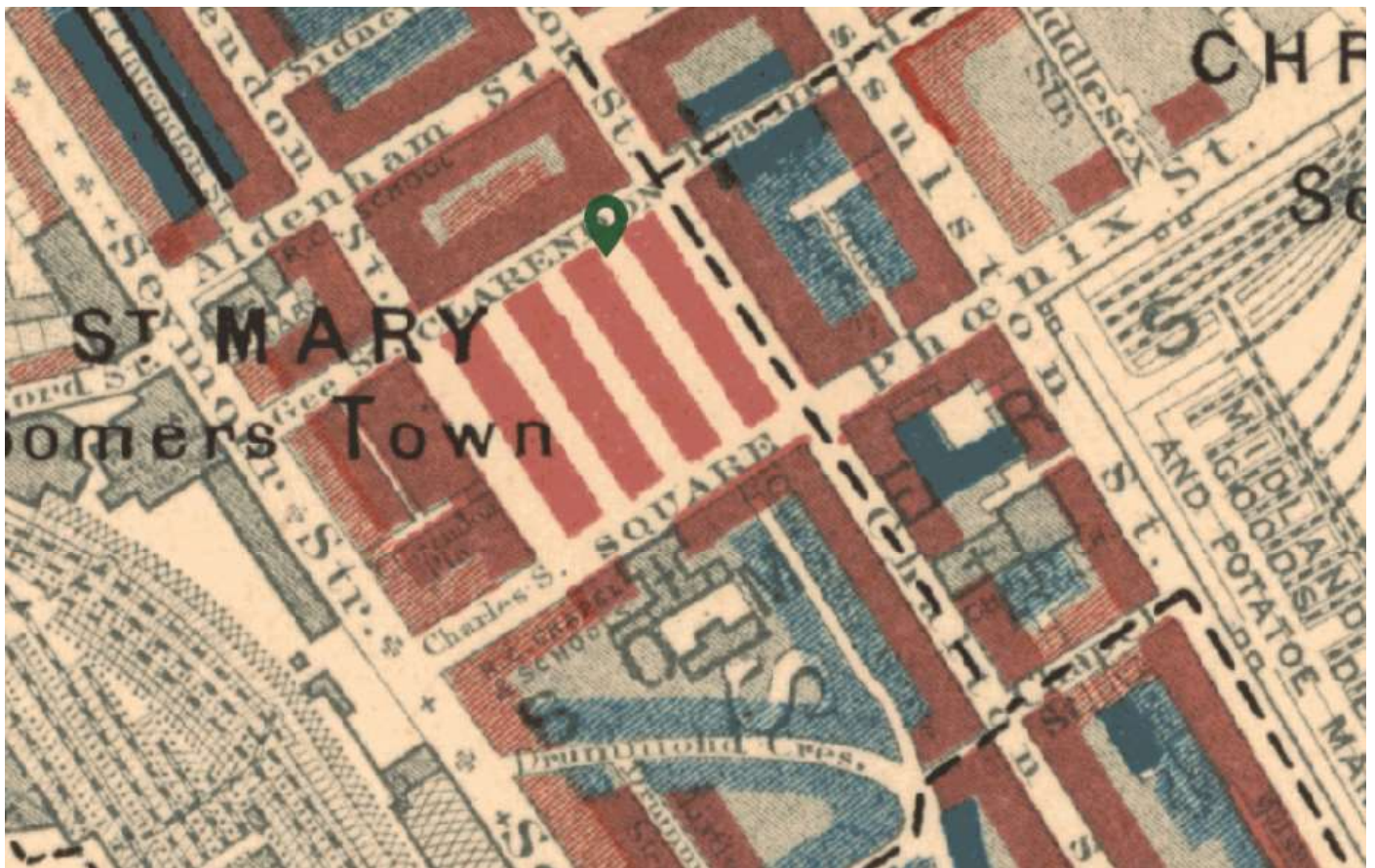
“Fairholt Street, originally Middle Street, was renamed in 1937 after the artist and writer F. W. Fairholt, who lived in Montpelier Square. The earliest houses, on the north side, were built in 1827–8 by William Henry Edmonds, carpenter, of Symonds Street, Chelsea. They were small basement cottages, with (originally) one room on each of three floors. The south side was built up ten years or so later with houses of basement, ground and two upper floors, the builders there being William Emmins of Montpelier Row and the younger John Gooch.

Before the First World War, Middle Street was unhealthily crowded, with a high rate of deaths from tuberculosis, pneumonia, and alcoholism. High rents forced tenants to take lodgers or sub-let. The cottages on the north side were particularly squalid, their low-ceilinged basement rooms lit only by part-glazed doors giving on to miniscule areas.”



Middle street and a photo of the street today (No. 8 is the house with the dark blue shutters/door)





Top: The address Emily lived after her marriage to Daniel
 Bottom: St Pancras Workhouse

[Form 53.] Asylum TL No. 7.]

CASE BOOK.

Metropolitan District Asylum
at Catterham.

G. STANLEY ELLIOT, Medical Superintendent.

Name of Patient *Emily Buckley, Widow, Domestic, Single No. 3624*Cause of Death *Anger, Shock & Distress*Address *11, St. Thomas St. Chelsea S.W.*Age *46*Date of Admission *15th October 1887* Date of Discharge (if any) *27th April 1889*

Date	Diagnosis	Notes	History of the Case
1888			
Oct 15	<i>Idiomatic</i>		<i>Entered ward on Oct 15 at 11 o'clock. She is very much distressed by herself saying & telling that she is going to be very much distressed by herself.</i>
1889			
April 23 rd		<i>Severe mental distress much increased. She is very distressed by herself.</i>	<i>On admission see fair bodily health. Is very much distressed and inclined to cry when spoken to. Paralytic right arm and leg. The accident came on two months since. Is the mother of six children, the youngest being four years old.</i>
			<i>Nov 3rd Was a few days ago in a state of mind as having the nervous system, but for her paralytic arm and leg. Health rather improved.</i>
			<i>Dec 5th No change, is frequently very fearful, but just as much more sensitive.</i>

*Note.—The date of admission, discharge, and death is entered in the case book as far as possible at the time.

*Intellectual Epilepsy
Paralytic & Domestic*

**Transcription of Case Book
P.288**

Metropolitan District Asylum at Caterham

Name of Patient Emily Pratley, Charing, Protestant

Register No. 3048

Union or Parish chargeable Parish of St. Pancras

Residence Mother Mrs Parsons, 94 Walton St., Chelsea

Age 36

Date of Admission 18th October 1888

Date of ~~discharge or death~~ 27th April 1889

Date	Diet	Extras	History of the Case
------	------	--------	---------------------

1888

Oct 18 Ordinary

Facts as stated on Order of Admission

1. She is very melancholy: sits

by herself crying and sobbing: fancies she is going to die every minute: her memory is defective. 2. E. Rees, Supt. of Wards, says her memory is very defective and is much given to crying.

Oct 18

when spoken to. Paralysed Right arm and leg, the attack came on two months since. Is the mother of six children, the youngest being four years old.

On Admission, in fair bodily health- is very melancholy and inclined to cry

Nov 3rd

for her paralysed arm. General health rather unimproved.

Was a few days ago removed to C12 and is having the Batiery and daily

Dec 5th

more cumslady

No change, is fregecully

very fretful, her jail is much

1889

March 7

slight strokes/SSS and is now quite unable to do anything for herself owing to increasing paresis.

General health much impaired, present state critical, has had several

April 23rd

several pressure sores have formed both on extrenities and over side of face and head.

Is much weaker and appears to be fast sinking. N. of rite of every case

Paralysis and Dementia

Emily's Casebook

Asylums

Prior to 1808, Asylums were privately run and those with the means made arrangements for their mentally ill relatives until an act in 1808 provided for funding county asylums. However, not many were built and the poor mentally ill and criminally insane were still kept in prisons and workhouses. In 1845, the Lunacy Act and County Asylum Act obligated counties to build county asylums for the poor and criminally insane. In 1914, over one hundred thousand patients were housed within one hundred mental institutions around the U.K.

During this period, the terms 'lunacy' and 'insanity' referred to what would be now called mental disorder, either referring to mental illness or a learning disability. The terms 'imbecile' and 'defective' were used loosely for conditions associated to weakness of the mind, such as senile dementia and the end-results of mental illness. Records show that many admissions to Asylums labelled patients as having Mania, Melancholia or Dementia, in today's standards these are roughly equated to manic episodes, depression and schizophrenia.



Leavesden/Caterham administrative block plan, 1868.



The Imbeciles Asylum, Caterham

The Imbeciles Asylum, Caterham was built in 1868 and opened in October 1871 by The Metropolitan Asylums Board which had been set up to administer care to the sick poor in Metropolitan London. The board initially planned to build several smallpox and fever hospitals at Stockwell, Homerton and Hampstead, together with asylums for imbeciles at Leavesden to serve North London and Caterham to cover the south. The opening of the two asylums reduced the number of insane patients in London Workhouses by a third.

The Caterham asylum was situated to the North-West of Caterham. The asylum was intended to accommodate 860 females in six separate blocks, and 700 males in five separate blocks 1,560 inmates; 1560 inmates in total. Eight months after the asylum was opened the asylum housed 1444 patients and the following year in 1872, it housed 1672 patients. Extensions to the buildings were made in 1873 which included an additional block for 160 women and a recreation hall. By 1900, Caterham, Leavesden and Darenth were housing almost 6,000 patients. Between their openings and 1900 they had dealt with almost 24,000 cases.

By 1881, the asylum was also known as the Caterham Asylum for Safe Lunatics and Imbeciles. From 1920 to 1940, the asylum was known as Caterham Mental Hospital and became St Lawrence's Hospital in 1941. In 1981, the hospital featured in a TV documentary entitled "Silent Minority" about conditions within the hospital. The documentary showed the poor conditions of the hospital. After the introduction of Care in the Community in the 1980's the capacity of the hospital reduced until it closed in 1994. Today, the hospital has been demolished and a housing estate built on the grounds.

The only part of the hospital still remaining is the burial ground which was neglected after the closure of the hospital. Over 3100 people were buried in the burial ground, few were buried with memorials which were moved to the outer perimeter of the grounds when the hospital closed. Others would have been buried with wooden markers which rotted or metal markers bearing nothing but a number. The bodies of those who died without friends or family were given to the School of Anatomy to help doctors with medical research.

Photos I found online of Caterham Asylum, unsure of date but likely several decades after Emily was hospitalised there.



Page 1: A male ward (Top)
Page 2: Dining Hall (Top)
Wash Room (Bottom)







The Burial Ground

During my initial research, one of the first things I discovered was a blogpost which detailed the author discovering Caterham Asylums burial ground on a walk in 1990. The author explained that at the time she did not know where she was, there was no signs that indicated what the ground was and carried on their walk after taking one photo; a photo of one of the memorial stones that had captivated her, an angel which's head had fallen off. A few decades later the author discovered that she had been within the burial ground and revisited the site, which was now surrounded by a golf course, the graveyard had now been cared for by local residents.

Like the author of the blogpost, I too was captivated by this image of the angel and throughout my research I have kept revisiting the image. Personally, the angel forms a representation of Emily and the others imprisoned in the asylum, they were seen as their minds haven given way and the angel that was left their in memory of one of those patients, had lost it's head too.



All In The Mind

All in the Mind (1997) was a collaborative project involving Patricia Mackinnon-Day, Leo Fitzmaurice and Simon Robertshaw which was created in response to a disused psychiatric hospital called the "Deva" in Cheshire. The final outcomes of the project included workshops, a publication and an exhibition held at the Deva and Turnpike Gallery.

The Deva was a Victorian asylum in Chester which lies in the grounds of the still active Countess of Chester Hospital in Chester. The asylum was built in 1829 and closed in 1984 after the implementation of Thatcher's Care in the Community policy. At the start of the project, most Victorian asylums had closed due to the policy and were in the process of being demolished or turned into housing. Patricia Mackinnon-Day states on her website;

"In disused psychiatric hospitals, the only traces of the previous community lay in the detritus left behind; patients' personal reports, belongings and medical records. Although in 1997 the data protection laws were in place, it was as though the authorities did not regard the patients' privacy as something worth protecting..."

I was surrounded by physical evidence of all the sociological and psychological reports: high windows, mirrors used for surveillance, structural walls above courtyards wide enough to be walked along and used for surveillance. Handles and locks on the outside of doors, rows of open baths and cells with high up windows, scratched messages on windowpanes...

The research aim was to uncover internal and external conflicts, structures and strictures within psychiatric institutions and their effect on the lives of individual patients. I was also overwhelmed at times with a deep personal resonance: the materials were a metaphor for loss and were telling of patients incarcerated for long periods of time; forgotten and never spoken about. I did not know what I would discover but wanted to explore and dig deeper into how these invisible communities had once lived."

Mackinnon-Day's work in the exhibition featured a wire-wool straitjacket and an iron hospital bed with a blanket woven from wire wool. From afar the bed looks warm and cosy but close up the bed serves as a reminder of the discomfort of being mentally ill. Another piece MacKinnon-Day created entitled Shut Up features a cell doorway bricked up with patients' record books which were found abandoned in the hospital.

Other work in the exhibition included Leo Fitzmaurice's Isolator, an isolation cell with every surface, including a chair, painted in broad yellow and black stripes, which shouts a mute but hysterical warning of danger. While Simon Robertshaw had stripped the veneer from cell doors to expose the original wood covered in dents and cracks left by forcibly restrained patients who slammed their bodies against it. Robertshaw has then removed the doors and assembled them to form an enclosure which when viewed through the doors spyholes contains nothing but darkness.



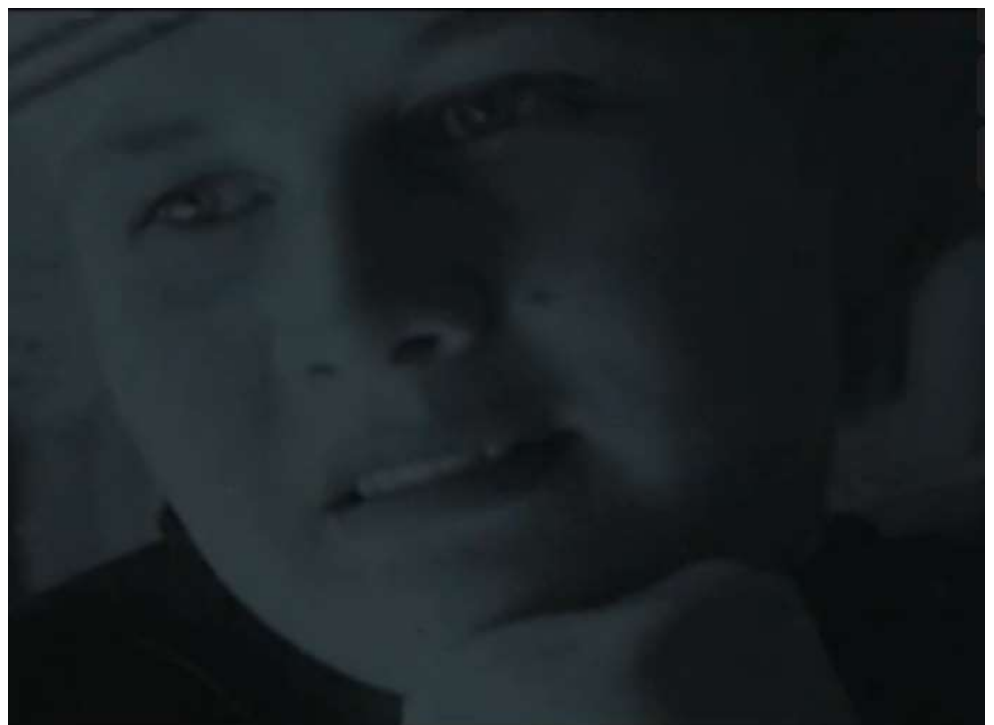


On The Border Lizzie Thynne

On the Border is a 56-minute documentary that explores artist Lizzie Thynne's Finnish family history prompted by letters, objects and photographs left in her mothers' apartment. Her mother, Lea, and her siblings were evacuated from the disputed Karelia border territory. Lea's father was killed in 1941, fighting alongside the Germans against the Soviets. Lizzie's mother suffered a mental breakdown aged 42 and began to see and hear things.



In *On the Border* Thynne explores the indirect impact of the war and its affect on her mother, searching for the reasons for her mother's breakdown. The documentary juxtaposes fragmented memories, dreams, and diary entries with the artist's journey to significant places and people involved in her family's history creating a work of mourning and remembrance. Throughout her exploration, Thynne acknowledges that she can only understand her family's past through her own experience and imagination.



Ideas

My initial inspiration for this project was a piece of work I made in memory of my paternal grandfather which I created in an aim to learn more about him as he had dementia my entire life and thus, I had never been very close to him. The research I collected about my grandfather culminated in a cyanotype book; each page depicting something about him. Initially, I wanted to create something similar to this book in memory of Emily Pratley.

However, throughout my research I realised the difficulties in this, with my grandfather I had living relatives who could tell me stories, those who knew his character and his story. Among this, I was also able to collect belongings and photographs. With this project, all I have is documentation that tells us very little about Emily's character; we have no living relatives who knew Emily, no photographs, no belongings. The only indication of Emily's character is drawn from two sources, a newspaper article that says she "had been the breadwinner, slaving over a mangle to get her children a crust of bread" and a line from her medical notes stating, "her mind having given way" and another noting that all she said while hospitalised in the asylum was "I am going to die". What these told me is that Emily was a mother trying her hardest to provide for her children who succumbed to her own mind.

Knowing this, it feels wrong to create a piece of work similar to my grandfathers, the piece I made about him felt soft, ethereal. Emily's life was the opposite of those things, she suffered the atrocities of life and to create a piece of work that neglects that feels as though it would fail her story. However, on the other hand, just because Emily suffered, does that mean she does not deserve a memorial that paints her as a multifaceted person.

Taking all of this into account, my aim has become to make a piece of work that juxtaposes both of these things; telling the atrocities of her life while also painting Emily as a person, a woman who undoubtedly did everything she could to protect her children.

