

Seacliff Records now easier to find on Archway

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The imposing buildings at Seacliff [archives reference: DAHI 20271 D266/520a].

The Dunedin Office of Archives New Zealand holds the records of the Seacliff Lunatic Asylum, later known as the Seacliff Mental Hospital. We have recently expanded our listings of the early patient records on Archway – the statutory papers are now listed individually by name, meaning it is much easier to locate the records of patients who were there in the 19th or early 20th centuries.

The statutory paper files contained the documentation relating to the committal, admission, and discharge of patients at Seacliff, as well as the Dunedin Lunatic Asylum, The Camp Mental Hospital and Orokonui Home.

The statutory papers are all in series 19850. By clicking on the “records” tab within the series information in Archway you can see the list of patients whose records are listed in that series. You can also enter the name of a particular person in a “simple search”. Please be aware

that spelling wasn't top priority in those days, so if you're having no luck, try as many variations on the name that you can think of!

The statutory paper series ran from 1862 to 1912. On 1 March 1912 the Mental Defectives Act 1911 came into force. Under the new legislation, the regulations for the admission of patients were changed. At Seacliff, they closed this series of records and all patients currently held in the hospital had their papers moved to a new series of patient admission files (series 19851). This series has yet to be listed individually by name, but that will be coming soon!

The information in the statutory papers will be, in most cases, supplemented with further details from the medical casebooks (series 19956). The patient number obtained from the statutory paper file will often lead us to an entry in the casebook. These contained further medical information relating to the patient and sometimes even a photograph.

Please note that to protect personal privacy, the statutory papers and patient admission files are restricted for 100 years from the last date on file. In addition to this, individual patient archives will not be listed by name in the public finding aids of Archives New Zealand, nor will information confirming the existence of the public archive be made available, during the period the public archive is restricted. Any access to restricted files or information requires the written permission of the Southern District Health Board. Further information on this can be found on Archway but do feel free to contact us if you have any questions.

ANY OF THE PARTICULARS IN THIS SERIES

and address of patient, with Christian name at [unclear]

Sex and age: male 61

Married, single, or widowed: single

Condition of life and previous occupation (if any): miner

The religious persuasion as far as known: Presbyterian

Previous place of abode: 90

Whether first attack: -

Age (if known) on first attack: -

When and where previously under care and treatment: -

Duration of existing attack: -

Whether subject to epilepsy: -

Whether suicidal: -

Whether subject to others: -

Excerpt from Seacliff
statutory paper.