



Set within 112 acres of land, Kesteven County Asylum was built as a result of the County Asylum Act of 1808, which required every county to provide adequate facilities to care for those with mental health issues.

George T Hine, an architect with previous asylum designing experience, was selected to design the hospital, described by the Sleaford Gazette in its 5th October 1901 edition as 'probably the most "up to date" institution of the kind in Britain'.

Its location, close to the main road and railway line from Grantham to Sleaford, provided easy access for visitors, while the rural surroundings offered a gentle and calming atmosphere.

The Sleaford Gazette news story heaped praise on the development following a private tour of the hospital complex, noting its view as 'picturesque and restful to a degree', listing its wealth of features and stating 'the workmanship throughout are the best'.

Kesteven County opened in 1902, with space to accommodate up to 420 patients and its resident staff. Patient wings were purposely designed to be south-facing and the hospital was impressively equipped for its time with electric lighting, heating, airy wards and fireproof floors and ceilings throughout the dormitories. Lighting however, was only used for a few hours each day, requiring staff to carry lanterns when walking the corridors at night.

# The Beginning

## 1902 – 1939



The building costs amounted to £156,789 and included:

- A two-storey, seven and a half acre main building.
- The main building included a south-facing, red-brick block containing patient wings, administration block with recreation hall and fully equipped 700-seat theatre, large kitchen, stores yard, workshop yard and court yard.
- The hospital was divided into separate wings, with males to the east and females to the west, and divided according to diagnosis. There was strict segregation of the sexes, which required the entire building to be split and doors from the main entrance hall to be locked at all times.
- Male wards were named after trees: Rowan, Elm, Cedar, Willow, Hazel, Sycamore and Maple.
- Female wards were named after flowers: Rosemary, Wisteria, Syringa, Camillia, Heather, Lavender and Mimosa.
- There were four divisions of diagnosis, including sick and infirm, epileptics, recent and acute, and working patients.



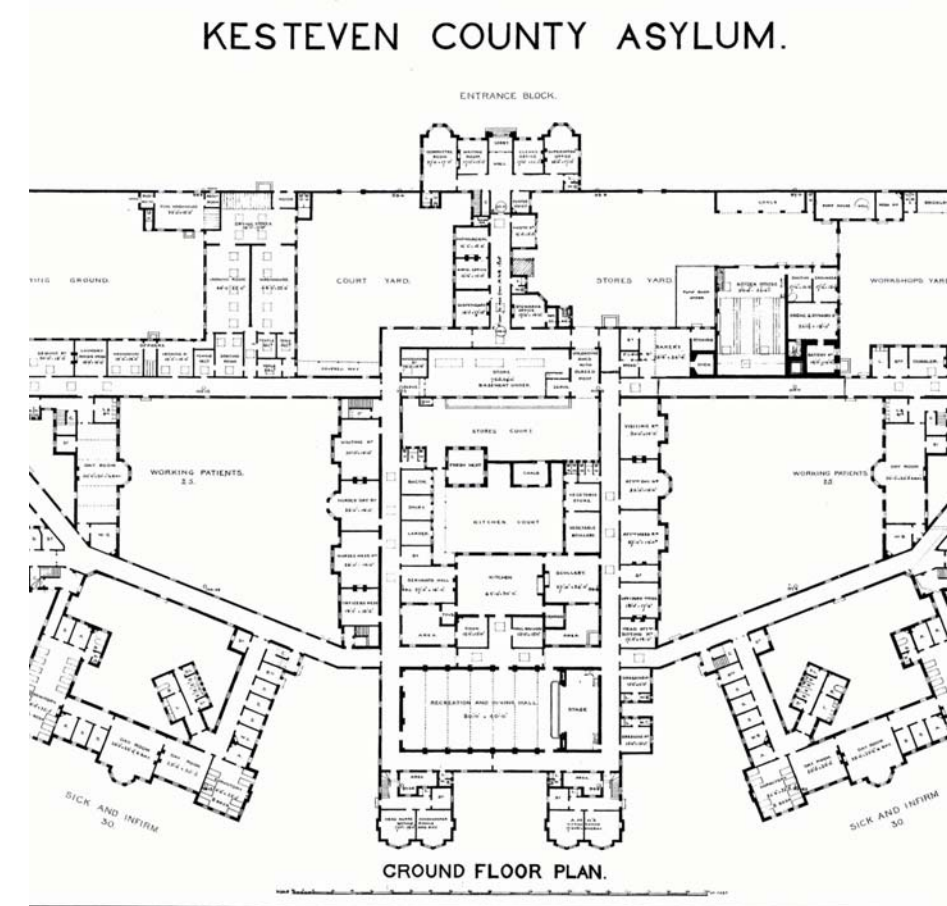
- Wards were divided into dormitories, day rooms and dressing rooms, with each wing featuring its own bath house.
- A 100ft high water tower was attached to the main building, containing two large tanks capable of holding 18,600 gallons of water each.
- A workshops yard, which aimed to help rehabilitate male patients, included plumbers, bricklayers, carpenters, upholsterers, tailors and cobblers rooms.
- Women were employed in the laundry houses, also featuring a sewing room, wash houses, ironing rooms and a sorting room.
- Two airing courts, featuring octagonal-shaped sheltered benches and situated on either side of a large recreational ground, were created behind the main hospital building. Iron railings ensured the areas were secure and patients were expected to exercise at regular intervals during the day.
- A chapel was built opposite the main building.

- Farm buildings and bailiff's cottage situated away from the main building. Men from a farming background helped to grow much of the hospital's fresh produce.
- Medical superintendent's house located to the southeast of the main building.
- Landscaped grounds including a kitchen garden, orchard, airing courts and recreation grounds designed by William Goldring, the famous landscape gardener from Kew, with work carried out by the hospital's residents.

From 1902 onwards, Kesteven County quickly became a vital part of the local community, with patient numbers swelling from 1914 to 1918 due to increased pressure from other hospitals that had been taken over for military use in the First World War. Following the war, patient numbers grew once again, between 1918 and 1921, thought to be the result of the horrors witnessed by servicemen.

In 1922, the hospital was renamed Kesteven Mental Hospital in order to reflect changing attitudes, before undergoing much-needed refurbishments and improvements in 1929. Kitchens were replaced, bike sheds added and driveways refurbished, while a graveyard was also added to the onsite facilities.

By 1939 admissions had reached an all-time high and the hospital had become a thriving and impressively self-sufficient community. The hospital fully embraced modern life during the 30s, with its own cinema, regular dances and annual sports days. The male hospital staff also formed their own football team and attracted hundreds of spectators to their home games, which were held on the Rauceby site. The hospital, however, was shortly to undergo its biggest test to date with the outbreak of the Second World War on 1st September 1939.



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