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# Patients move out of The Close

**T**HERE were some sad farewells at The Close, Bridge, on Wednesday when, after 135 years, the hospital wards were closed and their patients moved to other hospitals. For many it meant leaving the only home they have known in recent years.

"I do not like going—this has become my home and I have been happy here," said 89-year-old Miss Elizabeth Fagg, formerly of Barham, who had spent over 13 years in Honney Ward.

The decision to close the wards was taken when progress overtook The Close — "We have been hampered by the type of buildings here," said the Matron, Mrs. Lucy Urwin.

"We cannot improve on the ward buildings. They need modernising but there is just nothing more we can do with them," she added.

However, The Close will not shut all its doors and it will now house only elderly residents in small twin-bedded rooms.

The Close's history can be traced back to 1835 when it was the Union for the 22 parishes in the district. It had 350 residents and patients.

The building later became a reception centre and has always

looked after the sick in the area. In recent years it has cared for the chronic sick, old people, long stay patients as well as having a number of residents.

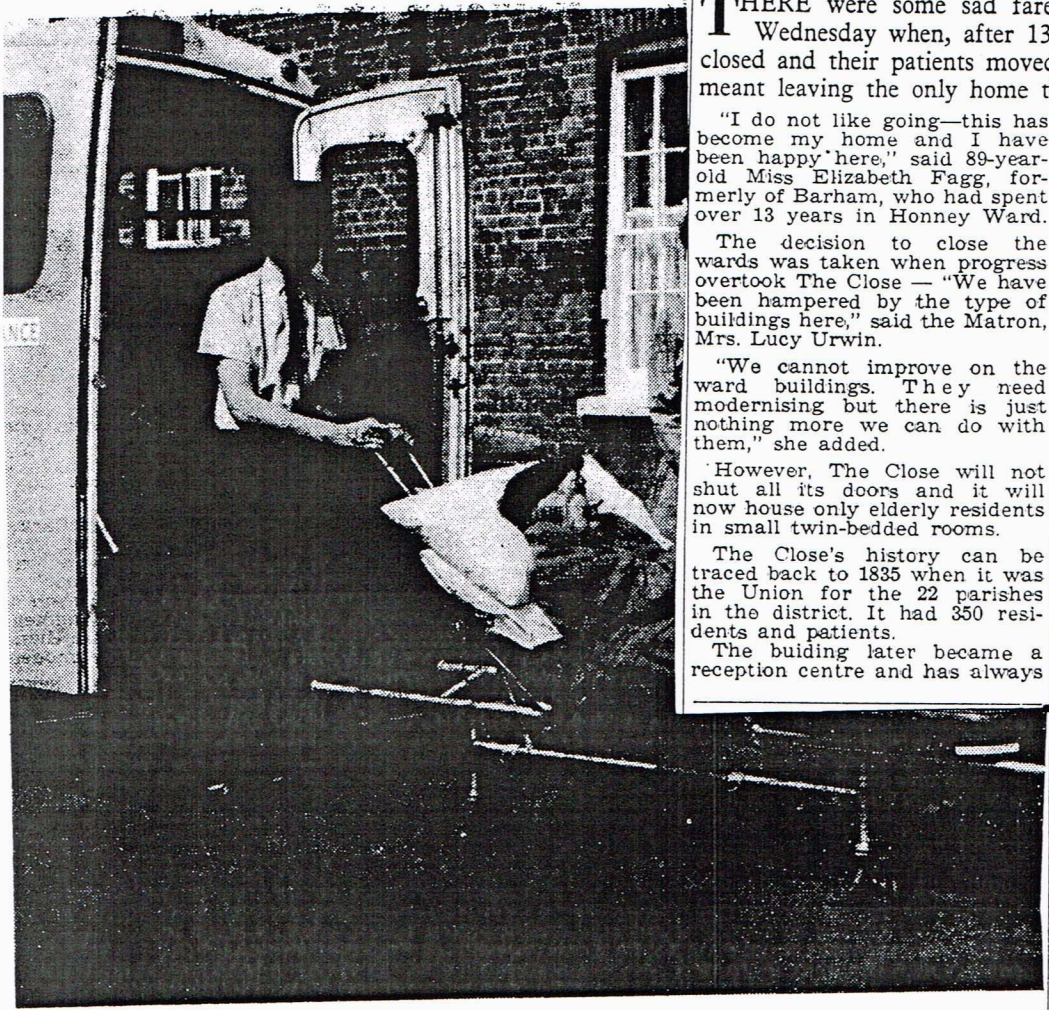
Mrs. Urwin and her husband, Harry, who is The Close's superintendent, went there in 1964. They said that although the wards may have been old-fashioned the standard of nursing had always been kept at the highest level.

They have had a nursing staff of about 36 and many of those would be going to the same hospitals as the 46 ward patients. Most of them were going to Nunnery Fields Hospital in Canterbury and Herne Bay Hospital, although some of the patients had been taken to hospitals outside the area to be near their families.

Mr. Urwin said that when they were using the hospital wards they had up to 150 new patients a year as well as the residents.

He realised that leaving The Close would be a great wrench for some of the patients who had been there a long time. But he pointed out that the new hospitals would not be completely strange to the patients as the nurses were going with them.

Mr. and Mrs. Urwin are to be matron and superintendent at Bensted House, Faversham. The new matron of The Close will be Mrs. K. Davies, who is coming from Bensted House.



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