

## INTRODUCTION

In the sociological surveys I have read the variable factors most commonly used for comparison and correlation are " age, sex, class". In my position as Superintendent of a Joint User Establishment, I am able to observe a microcross of society. Albeit in an initially artificial setting becomes normal. Age and sex being held constant in this setting, I have elected to use Class as a major field of research.

My aim on starting this research was, I thought, simple and clear cut to examine the correlation between social class and status within the Home and compare it with Class and status as accepted outside the Home.

After only a short period of research I found this to be far from as straight forward as I had envisaged, nevertheless the research was too challenging to abandon and the following essay is the result of my endeavours.

The conclusions I have drawn may prove faulty under expert examination and I offer no apology but to reserve the right to revise my views at a later date after a more prolonged study covering the subject in greater detail.

LOCATION OF RESEARCH "BENSTED HOUSE, FAVERSHAM"

Bensted House, known as a Joint User Establishment is administered by the Kent County Council, Social Services Department, Maidstone. In addition to the 110 residential accommodation beds provided for under Section 3 of the 1948 National Assistance Act there are also 98 geriatric hospital beds maintained for and on behalf of the Canterbury Group Hospital Management Committee. The Senior Nursing and Administrative Staff though being employed by the Kent County Council are overall responsible for the residents and patients, the Senior Officer being the Superintendent.

Compliment of Beds

Women's beds (residential accommodation)  
Men's beds (residential accommodation)  
Women's hospital beds  
Men's hospital beds

TOTAL

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The main buildings were built in 1836 and consisted of the main square block, at a later date (approximately 1856) two hospital wards were added and in 1896 the building now known as Highview was built. Between the wars a Women's Casual Ward was erected and in 1948 this was named Larches and together with the Highview building became the Men's residential accommodation block.

As a Joint User Establishment two administrations are co-jointly carried out under the Superintendent who is the officer

in charge. This is a difficult task to perform with buildings originally built for other purposes and to standards which are a century out of date. The only linkway between the units and Day rooms are through the rooms themselves or in the open air which may be refreshing in Summer but can be an ordeal for the elderly in Winter. In some respects the building has matured and obtained a character through its life but now cannot be said to be purpose built. In this setting I have examined 1/50th of the elderly whose home it is at Bensted House.

## HIGHVIEW AND LARCHES (THE BUILDINGS)

Highview and Larches are situated in the North East position of Bensted House complex, outside the original square building but physically attached to it. Though having no outside corridor Staff and residents must walk in the open air to other sections of the Establishment.

Highview being built in 1896 was based on the conception of large lofty rooms and dormitories, concrete and iron rail staircases to the dormitories which are all on the first floor, narrow high windows giving an overall impression of volume as well as space. In general is solid drab stone building though recent modern decoration is trying to cloak this impression.

Larches is a contrast almost in every way, here you have a basically wooden type permanent structure, low ceilings, small Day Rooms, one or two amenity rooms. Easy access and a link corridor to the bedrooms, all of which are situated on the ground floor. The general arrangement drawing shows the position and the lay out of the unit.