

## LAZAR HOUSES AND THE DISSEMINATION OF LEPROSY

FRANCIS BLOMEFIELD, Rector of Fersfield in Norfolk wrote an elaborate description of his shire, *An Essay Towards a Topographical History of the County of Norfolk* . . . (the complete title-page goes to more than 150 words), which in its second edition, published in 1805–1810, occupies eleven volumes. This compilation contains some interesting bits of information about leprosy (*italics in the original*):

A LEPER-HOUSE [in Norwich] called St. STEPHEN'S HOSPITAL, which was formerly inhabited by *lepers, lazars, and lame folks* . . . (Blomefield, vol. 4, p. 166).

In 1606, *Edmund Newport* had a grant of it in reversion, in which it is said to be then called the Spitel-house, and was inhabited by *lepers, lazars, and lame folks* . . . it seems *Joshua Atkinson*, glover, succeeded; for he, in 1629, as *master and guider of the poor-house or hospital* without St. *Stephen's-gates*, with the consent of the poor brothers and sisters therein inhabiting, for 5*l.* paid them by the officers of *Fersfield in Norfolk*, did admit into the society of the said house, *Thomas Symonds*, alias *Cowper*, a lame boy of 4 years of age, and a poor child of Fersfield aforesaid, there to be kept and maintained during life. . . .

These quotations show that in the middle ages and in early modern times 'lame folks' were sometimes placed in confinement with lepers and that in at least one instance a disabled child was treated similarly. We now know that children are highly susceptible to leprosy. Hence if the practice of placing children and cripples in lazar houses was at all common, these establishments may have *contributed* to the increase of the disease.

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## A NOTABLE PHARMACY COMES TO MELBOURNE

THE DEPARTMENT of Medical History, University of Melbourne, has been presented with the fittings and furniture of Savory & Moore's pharmacy formerly of 29 Chapel Street, Belgrave Square, London. This generous gift from the Wellcome Trust had the enthusiastic support of Dr. F. N. L. Poynter, Director of the Wellcome Institute of the History of Medicine, who had opened the Department in 1967. The pharmacy has been re-erected in the Museum in its original form including a reduced facsimile of the bow window, and was officially opened by Sir Robert Menzies, the Chancellor of the University, on 1st June. The mahogany shelves, drawers and cupboards are in an opulent late-Regency style well proportioned to the narrow, but deep, shop making it a unique attraction probably unparalleled in Australia.

The pharmacy was opened in 1915 at 29 Chapel Street as one of the branches of Savory & Moore's main shop in New Bond Street and was constructed in a converted portion of a Georgian terrace house. The ground floor of the house was gutted to obtain an area 45 feet long by 9 feet wide, the width being increased in front to 12 feet by including the hallway. A bow window was installed in front of which was the usual area, surrounded by elegant wrought iron railings, which led to a basement which could also be entered from the shop by means of a circular staircase behind the dispenser's bench. The mahogany fittings came from an earlier pharmacy dating from about 1860–70 and were adapted to fit the new shop. The only clue to the date of the original fittings is a stamp of 'Oct. 1875' on the back of a mirror. On the back wall of the shop is a gold-lettered sign on a glass panel which proclaims 'Savory &