

## **Five days at Llewellyn Ward, Bronllys Hospital**

With kind permission from Karl.

"As the winds of change blow round the National Health Service we wonder what is to happen to our own local hospitals in the County. Of course we had heard about the proposals to alter the hospital arrangements in Powys, upgrading some and closing others but not quite how this will work in practice, indeed as far as I can tell no one seems to know what is happening.

Quite unexpectedly I have had first hand experience of Bronllys hospital Llewellyn Ward. At the beginning of February Betty, my wife, was far from well, so she was taken into the AgeCare unit in Bronllys Hospital, the Llewellyn Ward. We had been going to the clinics in the adjoining building so I knew where to take her in our car.

I was able to be with Betty every afternoon and all day Sunday, although she slept much of the time during her first days in the ward, although she was out of bed and seated in a comfortable upright armchair. As she had been rather restless in the first evening she was transferred from a double room to a single observation bedroom by the main nurse's office. This I found useful as I was able to see how the staff came and went. Being used to observing natural events, it was as if I was in a bird hide.

We were fortunate in being in a local community in which we knew and were known to several members of staff. Also Betty's name was on clearly printed card fixed to the door, it was to my disadvantage that none of the staff carried name badges.

The bedrooms were well appointed with large windows opening from the main corridor that ran down the centre of the ward so that patients could see out and as well as being under observation. Naturally each window had nice curtaining for privacy when needed and for those on the south side the external windows looked into the garden which had been created and tended by local people. On the day before Betty was discharged we were able to do a walk that took us into this almost sheltered tropical place with its spring flowers, birds and butterflies on the wing even in February.

I can see why the NHS costs so much with the high level of staffing, both medical and support, required to provide adequate care. Each person had their own duties and, as far as I could tell, particular patients to care for. I saw too, how Betty had routine measurements taken, for example weight, temperature and a device that held the end of her finger to measure her blood oxygen without taking any blood.

On arrival Betty was very lost, in the transition, when very unwell, from being in our house with only myself to a such busy atmosphere. But it is clear later she enjoyed seeing all that was going on and may now find being at home very quiet. In the ward it was not unduly noisy and after lunch stillness prevailed for an hour or two. When not in her bedroom Betty was in the day room with other people sitting round. One of our neighbours was there too. Some people were very frail needing feeding or helping in other ways but there was always a members of staff going to and fro.

Such is the hold of Rugby football on people to the west of Offa's Dyke that when the game was screened on the day room TV I could hear enthusiastic comments from one or two who had otherwise somnolent.

I was impressed by the general cleanliness. Visitors were expected to clean their hands from a gel dispenser on entering the care area. All the staff took fresh plastic aprons and gloves when tending patients. I could see no spiders' webs or dirt on ledges and the made beds would have done my barrack sergeant good to see.

Once Betty started on the path to recovery I saw she was eating well, I also checked too how well she ate when I was not present. On her return home she has kept me up to the mark. I regret I cannot offer her a choice of main meals at Riverside.

Each day I exchanged her clothing as I was told that laundry disappeared to Nevill Hall and would not return for three weeks. In doing the washing I found there was not the strong "hospital" smell I had experienced elsewhere.

No one would wish to be in hospital but if it was to be anywhere then I would opt to be in Bronllys which seems, as far as I could tell, to be well equipped. This is why it is so important that we defuse the "Big is Best" plans, after all Bronllys is not that small, for I only saw one very small part of an extensive campus.

Both Betty and I are deeply indebted to all the ward staff for their care and attention under what is not always pleasant circumstances".

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