

Headway

CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Improving Life After Brain Injury

In 1845 the Lunacy and County Asylums Act was passed. This meant that local authorities had to provide a public asylum to care for those with disabilities. People at the time became increasingly interested in finding distinctions between the types of disabilities.

Ida Darwin was born in 1854. Christened Emma Cecilia Farmer, she changed her name to Ida after reading the Hans Christian Andersen story 'Little Ida's Flowers'.

Fubourn Asylum was opened in 1858 and had a separate ward for 'feeble-minded' people. It was one of the first asylums in Cambridge.

In 1890 the National Association for Promoting the Welfare of the 'Feeble-Minded' was created to provide permanent care for the 'feeble-minded' in institutions.

In 1884 the 'Royal Commission for the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded' was formed in order to consider 'the existing methods of dealing with idiots and epileptics, and with imbeciles, feeble-minded, or defective persons'. They published several recommendations on how to provide care.

The 1908 Royal Report provided the first clear legal distinction between people with a mental illness and people with a learning disability or brain injury. Ida Darwin was born in 1854. Christened Emma Cecilia Farmer, she changed her name to Ida after reading the Hans Christian Andersen story 'Little Ida's Flowers'.

In 1913 the government passed 'The Mental Deficiency Act 1913'. This required local authorities to maintain institutions and supervise community care.

Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) was invented in 1977 by Raymond Damadian. It is currently the most widely used form of neuroimaging technology.

The Ida Darwin Hospital site was opened in 1985. It was built as an institution for people with a learning disability and is located behind Fubourn Hospital. The site was named 'The Ida Darwin Hospital' to honour the work of Ida Darwin.

Headway Cambridgeshire was founded in 1989 to support people with a brain injury. Originally on the Brookfields Hospital Site, it was relocated to the Ida Darwin Hospital Site in 2015.

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Welcome to our exhibition. This is the culmination of many months of research into the social, political and medical history of support for people with a brain injury. Through personal accounts we explore the places, people and legislation that influenced the way this support was provided and eventually led to the formation of Headway Cambridgeshire. Although the accounts are fictionalised, they derive from actual experiences and tell the stories of the individuals involved. The characters used are fictional apart

from Ida Darwin, whose account is based on her own writings from the time.

Through our exhibition we have used the language of the time in order to be historically accurate. 'Feeble-minded' could be used to describe a range of people, who were thought to be unable to look after themselves. These included unmarried mothers, people with a learning disability and those with a brain injury. We no longer use these words and today they are considered offensive.

(5) "Feeble-minded," i.e., persons who may be capable of earning a living under favourable circumstances, but are incapable from mental defect existing from birth or from an early age (a) : of competing on equal terms with their normal fellows ; or (b) of managing themselves and their affairs with ordinary prudence.

William Beeston A patient at Fubourn Asylum in 1908



Welcome to Fubourn Asylum, where I live. Local authorities set this place up in 1858 following the 'Lunacy and County Asylums Act' in 1845. This act said that local authorities have to provide a public asylum for 'pauper lunatics'. It must have been pretty noisy but the number of patients keeps growing - it is getting cramped.

Doctor Rogers says I am 'feeble-minded'. In 1904 the 'Royal Commission for the Care and Control of the Feeble-minded' was formed to provide recommendations on how people like me should be cared for. They decided it was best that I was kept here.

I spend a lot of my time working on the farm or in the kitchen. We're even cultivating a bowling green. Sometimes, in the summer, the doctors organise a game of cricket. In the autumn we work at the doctors' shooting parties, feeding the partridges in the weeks before hand and then beating them into the air for the doctor's to take aim. I enjoy the outing but feel sorry for the partridge!

I feel like I'm very far away from Cambridge. That's where my family live. Sometimes I feel out of it but they say it's better for people like me to be segregated from the rest of society. Perhaps they are right but it makes me feel unwanted.

Ida Darwin A campaigner for the 'feeble-minded' in 1912

I was born Emma Cecilia Farmer in 1854 and changed my name to Ida after reading 'Little Ida's Flowers' by Hans Christian Andersen. I came to Cambridge in 1880 after I married. I've always kept active and I've met a lot of like-minded women, who are as keen as I am for change to the way people are cared for by the state.

Through my work with the 'Cambridge Association of Care for Girls' I've come into contact with a lot of feeble-minded young girls. One girl called Mabel has been staying in our hostel to train as a servant. She has been nagged by her parents but is so desperate to return to them she smashed the windows and escaped. She is one of many unfortunate girls and I've seen the injustice they suffer in this careless world and something needs to be done. Not just on a personal level: the law needs to be reformed and proper care must be provided.

In 1908, I helped set up the 'Cambridge Association for Care of the Feeble-Minded' to help put into action the recommendations of the report, issued in 1904, by the 'Royal Commission for the Care and Control of the Feeble-minded'. We will be visiting the feeble-minded and inspecting the homes in which they are housed and making sure the law needs to be reformed and proper care must be provided.

I am currently busy campaigning for the passing of the 'Mental Deficiency Act', which will hopefully be passed next year in 1913. We hope this will make the local authority provide institutional treatment of the feeble-minded. Not everyone agrees with me but I feel that something must be done, and it will have to be me that does it.



Private Archibald Cunningham A soldier in 1940

I was caught in an explosion from a shell at Dunkirk. The doctors saved my life, it's amazing how many of the wounded are surviving these days thanks to advances in medicine. At the moment they don't know what's wrong with me. They are calling it 'shock' but they don't know if it's a problem with my brain or my nerves.

I've got this tremor in my hands and a hitching in my ears. My memory is awful. They've told me my symptoms are like I have damaged my brain but the funny thing is, I don't have so much as a scratch on my head.

I was worried I could be sent to an asylum, like my Uncle Bob was after the battle of the Somme. They said I shouldn't worry - I'll be sent for 'rehabilitation' to help me get better. I'm not sure where I'll be taken for that. I wish they could just look inside my head and know what was wrong.



Kathy Ross A Learning Disability Nurse in 1972



I remember hearing about the Ida Darwin Hospital, in Fubourn, when it was opened in 1985. It's a big hospital, and it treats people with learning disabilities. It was named after Lady Ida Darwin, she's often called a 'pioneer in the field of social work' for her work with people with disabilities. In those days they called them 'feeble-minded' or 'mentally defective'.

When I finished my nursing training I came to work here under the supervision of Dr Gwyn Roberts. He's the Psychiatrist in charge. He's very clever but he's also a kind man.

I work on Lapping ward, helping the patients wash and dress, we also take them for occupational therapy appointments and to groups - like their music therapy sessions.

I do enjoy my job but I think the hospital will close soon. When Enoch Powell was the Health Minister, he said all the institutions should be closed. People are already being moved out. Some are getting fostered by local families, and others are moving in to groups homes in the community. I want to visit one the other day and, I must say, the residents there are thriving. They are much more independent. It makes me think of my brother, you see, he has a brain injury and he's stuck at home with our Mum and Dad. I hope one day there is something for him that gives him more independence.



David John Donaldson A client at Headway Cambridgeshire in 1995



I had my brain injury in 1984. I was rushed to the hospital and they found out what was wrong using an MRI scanner. It's amazing! They could see right inside my head, and could tell there was bleeding in my brain. I was in hospital for months, and I saw a speech therapist and a physiotherapist. They helped me get on the road to recovery - but it's been a difficult and lengthy journey.

I was pleased to get out of the hospital and get back home to my wife. I thought they might send me to Fubourn Hospital. I've heard stories of people with a brain injury being sent there because they didn't know where else to put them. Thankfully times have changed.

One home I struggled with memory. I couldn't work anymore and I would get so very tired. It was hard to know what to do. Then, in 1991, I heard about Headway Cambridgeshire. A woman called Sarah, and her friend Maurice, set it up because Sarah's husband had a brain injury. Just like me he was also getting bored sitting at home. They first set it up in 1989 as a support group and then they rented a building in Brookfields Hospital site, off Mill Road, and that's where I join them these days.

I go to Headway Cambridgeshire twice a week. I go to the gym, I do woodwork, pottery, singing - lots of things. It's good fun. It's really important to be with other people who understand what I've been through and have had similar experiences. I've got a lot of good friends there.



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