

Introduction

‘There they stand, isolated, majestic, imperious, brooded over by the gigantic water-tower and chimney combined, rising unmistakable and daunting out of the countryside—the asylums which our forefathers built with such immense solidity to express the notions of their day. Do not for a moment underestimate their powers of resistance to our assault.’ (Powell, 1961)

Enoch Powell, right-wing libertarian and Minister of Health, prefigured the first wave of closures of mental hospitals in 1961 in his well-known ‘Water Towers’ speech, in which he emphasised the material presence of asylum buildings within the landscape, although it was to be another two decades before the closures began. The asylum, and later mental hospital, had been the dominant approach to care for the mentally ill for more than a century by this stage. Trenchant critiques of psychiatry and the asylum system were launched by Goffman, Foucault and Szasz the same year, and have been continued by historians and others in the past half century. These point to the asylum system as a failure, and accuse asylum authorities of ultimately building ‘warehouses’ and ‘museums of madness’ merely with the object of sequestering society’s unwanted out of sight, as cheaply as possible (Foucault, 1961; Goffman, 1961; Szasz, 1961; Scull, 1979).

Within this overarching context a considerable scholarship has been produced on the architecture and spaces of asylums. The establishment and early development of the asylum system has been seen as a ‘golden age’ of asylum construction, in which hopes were high that therapeutic environments could bring about cures in large numbers of the suffering. The later period of asylum building, has been described as an era of ‘therapeutic pessimism’, following the inexorable increase of numbers of insane, which is thought to have fatally undermined any belief in the restorative powers of the asylum. Perhaps as a result of the historiographical assertion that asylums of this period had merely become ways to house economically ever larger numbers of the mentally ill, some developments in asylum architecture and layouts have not received the attention they deserve. Across Europe and America, and in Britain and Ireland, the later decades of the nineteenth century saw both a trend to segregate asylum accommodation into separate buildings, and a further, associated trend, to situate these segregated buildings on expansive ‘colony’ sites in rural areas, where patients were set to work as much as they were able. There was considerable variation in how far these trends were adopted in each jurisdiction. In Germany and Scotland, however, the ‘segregated system’ was universal for new building after 1900, the latter taking its inspiration from the former, and particularly the earliest example of the

colony asylum at Alt Scherbitz, which was a model for asylums around the world.

The colony asylum exhibits several important differences from the traditional asylum style. Firstly, it was usually located at a far remove from centres of population, in contrast to earlier asylums that tended to be within easy reach of an urban centre. Secondly, its segregated character gave an unprecedented freedom in the way buildings were distributed around the site. Thirdly, the smaller size of buildings allowed for them to resemble ordinary dwelling houses, in architecture, layouts and decoration/furnishing.

This raises several interesting questions about the nature of asylum accommodation at this period and whether or not they can truly be compared to ‘warehouses’. But this study seeks to go beyond the implications of such buildings for the asylum project and to ask how we should see such experiments in relation to the rise of the middle classes in this period and burgeoning environmentalism taking new forms in utopian projects, such as the garden city. Also prominent in this period are changing concepts of gender and fears of racial degeneration associated with urban slums, which provide a historically-situated context for such changes in asylum accommodation. Asylum buildings were part of emerging medical and social discourses, having symbolic power and meaning beyond the intentions of the asylum builders. Textual evidence is examined in this study for the implied, the understated and the allusive traces of attitudes and beliefs concerning the poor and the insane, in order to connect asylum materiality to concepts and ideas that formed part of culture at this period.

The colony asylum is a stage of development in the history of institutions for the mentally ill that has as yet received limited attention in the prolific literature on insanity and there has been no detailed assessment of the extant material evidence relating to this asylum type in Scotland and Ireland. The archaeology of institutions, a relatively new area of study, has produced very little published work on asylums for the mentally ill, and none relating to this particular asylum type.

For the purposes of this study, six asylum sites were selected as case studies. Having determined that, within Britain and Ireland, the colony asylum layout was most enthusiastically adopted in Scotland, the three public asylums that were built here after 1900, Bangour, Dykebar and Kingseat were made the core of the study. These were supplemented by a colony asylum in the north of Ireland, Purdysburn, and the German asylum that provided

the inspiration for the Scottish and Irish examples, Alt Scherbitz. A traditional-style asylum, built in Lancashire, was included in the study as a point of comparison.

This study sets out to analyse the colony asylum in order to determine how its appearance as a material phenomenon of the Asylum Age is connected to cultural change, both in terms of medical thinking and also more widely. The analysis also uncovers how the colony asylum expressed cultural difference, in terms of differences in the way society was conceptualised in Scotland and in England.

A primary aim of the study is to trace the historical development of the colony asylum in Scotland and Ireland in the period up to World War One, by identifying the unique characteristics of the this asylum layout in relation to earlier asylum types and by exploring the reasons why colony asylums were built in Ireland and Scotland in this period but not in England. The colony asylum is positioned within the context of utopian communities, such as labour colonies and the garden city.

A second aim is to analyse the layouts, built form, interior spaces and furnishings of the colony asylum in relation to themes suggested by contemporary literature and archives. The study identifies how a concern with hygiene, particularly light and ventilation, is expressed in the way the buildings have been constructed and laid out and further identifies the ways in which the buildings were rendered ‘home-like’ both architecturally and in terms of layouts and furnishings, and the tensions introduced to this aspiration by the requirements of the institution. This analysis reveals how the material culture of the colony asylum was influenced by contemporary understandings of mental health and therapeutic care

A third aim is to determine what the architecture and interiors of the colony asylum can tell us about contemporary attitudes to environment, class, poverty and health, both mental and physical. This aim challenges a historiographical orthodoxy which holds that asylums of the early twentieth century were built as ‘warehouses’ to sequester the unwanted. The tools of discourse analysis are used to connect the materiality of the asylum with wider cultural issues such as degenerationism and antipathy to urbanism and industrialization. The study identifies the ways in which the environment of the asylum attempted to address the problem of poverty and madness by providing idealised bourgeois domestic spaces.

The following sections critically examine the background to the study of institutions within historical archaeology and consider how archaeologists have approached the study of asylums, in particular. A survey of the study of asylum environments across disciplines is followed by a summary of recent thinking in buildings archaeology and buildings theory, leading to the positioning of this study within previous scholarship and an assessment of the methodological strategies used.

1.1. Archaeology of institutions

The archaeology of institutions, defined by Baugher (2009:5) as organisations that ‘control people’s behaviour and daily life’, can be said to have been established in the early and mid-twentieth century with the excavation of Spanish missions in the United States (Farnsworth and Williams, 1992; Thomas, 1993; McEwan, 2002; Orser, 2002). The last fifteen years has seen a flowering of the archaeology of institutions which has begun to range across sites as diverse as almshouses, asylums, prisons, reformatories and schools. A shift in focus has taken place from early studies which consisted largely of uncovering building footprints for the purposes of historical preservation to a diverse range of research questions encompassing ‘class, inequality, gender, race, ethnicity and ideology’ (Baugher, 2009: 7). Archaeological work on institutional sites can be divided roughly into the almshouses and poorhouses dating from the pre-industrial era on one hand, and nineteenth and twentieth-century asylums, psychiatric hospitals and prisons on the other. The latter are often categorised together as differing qualitatively from the institutional sites that preceded them. Work on pre-industrial institutions for the poor has raised questions about whether living conditions were as severe as might have been predicted. Food remains have pointed to a varied diet (Baugher, 2001: 188) and artefacts to a comfortable, if frugal, lifestyle, which has been contrasted to the ‘mean-spirited’ conditions that were thought to prevail in the nineteenth century (Cotter, Roberts and Parrington, 1993; Baugher, 2001; Huey, 2001).

Some authors have identified a change in attitude towards the lower classes in the nineteenth century, in which the poor became morally culpable for their plight and could be reformed by placing in what Goffman later termed a ‘total institution’ (Goffman, 1961). This era is characterised by what has been called a ‘carceral enthusiasm’ in which ever-rising numbers of the poor and marginal were catered for in institutions. Three published works, Beisaw and Gibb’s collection of papers on institutional life (Beisaw and Gibb, 2009); Casella’s (2007) summary of archaeological work on institutions and a related collection of papers on internment (Myers and Moshenska, 2011) have sought to give an overview of institutional life in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by drawing together the research to date. Casella (2007), in particular, connects institutions through time and space and asks broad questions relating to why society (with an emphasis on American society) incarcerates in the present. Although much of the historical context she identifies is useful, the attempt to draw together a multiplicity of sites through common themes may have worked against a deeper understanding of sites, such as asylums for the mentally ill which are not easily encompassed within the prison model. Although Casella acknowledges that ‘institutions exist not only to detain, but also to teach, heal, accommodate and inspire’, she ultimately reads the archaeology as a commentary on how

individuals endure disciplinary control through various strategies of coping and resistance (Casella, 2007: 75).

Casella and others are highly influenced by two theorists, who emerge in a large majority of published work on institutions, using their work in particular ways. Goffman's work on the 'total institution' is used for its exploration of the ways in which inmates are subordinated through being stripped of their individuality and the range of responses to this, withdrawing, challenging or accepting their confinement (Goffman, 1961). Foucault's work on the institutionalisation of the individual, is used mainly for its focus on surveillance as the means of producing disciplined bodies. Archaeologists of institutions do not usually engage with Foucault's broader approach to governmentality, which culminates in *Discipline and Punish* with the colony institution of Mettray wherein were superimposed the 'coercive technologies' relating to family life, the army, the workshop and the prison within increasingly individualised spaces. Foucault suggests that disciplinary regimes were subject to 'descending individualisation', the least powerful in society being the most subject to classification and tabulation (Foucault, 1977: 193, 200-209, 293-297).

Critics of these approaches, which appear to deny or minimise the agency of individuals, have sought to introduce feminist perspectives, evidence of resistance and of the heterarchy of power. A common theme in the archaeology of institutions has been the examination of artefactual evidence in order to determine whether inmates were well or badly treated, whether the artefactual evidence corroborates or disproves the documentary evidence, or whether it shows that individuals resisted or subverted their confinement. Buildings are often not extant, or do not form a significant part of the study. For example, an excavation of Walnut Street Prison in Philadelphia, found among other artefacts bone dice that have been interpreted as prohibited gaming activities that formed part of inmate coping and exchange strategies (Cotter *et al.*, 1988; Casella, 2007: 87). Feister's excavation of a nineteenth-century orphanage found the toys which were recovered spoke of a relatively benign regime that did not fit with preconceived ideas (Feister, 2009). Artefacts obtained at Industrial Indian School sites (Lindauer, 1996), such as dinner plates with bifacially flaked rims, worked with traditional technologies, can be seen as a form of cultural resistance. Buildings are occasionally included in the narrative of resistance, as at Old Rhode Island Penitentiary, where changes to the built environment were made including a rebuild after an act of arson (Garman 2005). Some studies have found evidence which reinforces the expectation that institutions were places of harsh treatment and poor living conditions, such as Cook's (1991) analysis of skeletons at the Uxbridge Almshouse burial ground. This study uncovered pathological conditions arising from work requirements in the asylum, while a similar study at Cook County Poor Farm, Illinois found evidence of cavities, gum disease, bone trauma and periostitis linked to health, diet and

hygiene conditions at the institution (Cook, 1991; Grauer, McNamara and Houdek, 1998).

On the whole, archaeological studies of institutions take as their starting point the expectation that the material practices of these sites are informed principally by the attempt of institutional authorities to maintain control over inmates/patients. Inmates/patients submit to or resist this control producing artefactual evidence which either conforms with or challenges an expectation of an environment which is harsh and oppressive. This concentration on underlying power dynamics can work to detach the archaeology from its historical and cultural context by focussing on essentially ahistorical, structural dimensions of meaning. While power relations are no doubt essential to an understanding of institutions, there are many dimensions of meaning, that do not fall within a simple dichotomy of powerful and subordinated.

For example, built remains are difficult to fit into the dialectic of control and resistance that informs much institutional archaeology. Unless adaptations have been made as a result of inmate resistance (Spencer-Wood and Baugher, 2001; Thomas, 2013) buildings can be seen straightforwardly as symbols of, and mechanisms for control, rather than repositories of layers of meaning. Furthermore, the analysis of institutions for the mentally ill is informed by a very contemporary (i.e. late twentieth and early twenty-first century) understanding of the asylum project as a failure, an understanding which is itself a product of cultural change fed by the work of Foucault and Goffman, among others. Scholarship sometimes chooses to appraise institutions for how 'institutional' they are, or how effectively they were resisted, in our own terms, rather than as cultural artefacts, informed by values and aspirations that are not self-evident but need to be deliberately uncovered. Institutions, in common with other archaeological remains of the historical era, have been seen overwhelmingly as part of the historical development of capitalism, a means of managing the economically unproductive and those threatening to social order.

Some writers have sought to develop a more nuanced approach towards institutions and De Cunzo's study of the Magdalen Asylum of Philadelphia (1995) is worthy of note in this regard. De Cunzo reads the history and archaeology of the asylum as an interplay between the objectives and desires held by the asylum authorities and the 'fallen' women occupants. The asylum was designed to reform wayward women through labour and cultivate a 'purified feminine identity' (Casella 2007: 119). However, the attempt to instil guilt and foster redemption in the inmates was largely a failed exercise, the women making use of the institution for their own ends as a place of refuge and respite from difficult circumstances in the outside world. De Cunzo emphasises the rituals of asylum life which were intended to mark women's rejection from society, transformation and re-integration as moral citizens. Drawing on anthropological understandings of pollution, cultural context is interrogated in order to uncover the

values informing a contemporary understanding of poverty, disease and immorality. ‘Philadelphians connected bodily and moral contagion. As epidemics raged through the city, the ‘fallen’ woman, carrier of sexually-transmitted disease, symbolized contamination and pollution that must be checked’ (De Cunzo 1995: 131). The material remains of the asylum are explicitly connected to contemporary ideology, ‘Plain, functional furnishings and dress curbed ostentation and aspirations above one’s social and economic place, even as refined dinner and tea wares signified the principles of pious consumption—the beauties of moral purity and its embodiment, nature’ (De Cunzo 1995: 126).

Spencer-Wood (2009) brings a gendered perspective to the archaeology of institutions through research which addresses the institutionalisation of women as ‘systematic patriarchal control of women’s bodies and their sexuality’. She puts forward a Marxist analysis that women’s unpaid domestic labour was essential to the operation of institutions and was exploited for profit. The Foucauldian concept of ‘docile bodies’ is countered with the argument that women developed strategies of resistance both individually and collectively and were able to negotiate to improve their situation in ways which can not only be seen as resistance but also as ‘self-empowering actions driven by goals such as freedom to control one’s own life and identity’. American colonial women were also social agents, creating new organizations and charitable institutions. Spencer-Wood points to a contemporary gender ideology which considered women as ‘innately more pious, pure and moral than men because of the separation of women’s domestic sphere from men’s capitalist sphere’ (Spencer-Wood, 2001: 106).

De Cunzo and Spencer-Wood both situate their research within a cultural context that gives specific historical meaning to ideas such as ‘womanhood’ and ‘morality’. However, neither of these writers seeks to attach cultural meanings to buildings themselves, instead making use of these ideas as the wider historical background against which their sites are situated and as informing the symbolic resonance of artefacts and spaces.

While American archaeology has often focussed on the artefacts associated with institutions, rather than the buildings themselves, and is dominated by excavation as a methodology, scholars from the UK have had comparatively more to say about buildings, beginning as in the US with investigations into almshouses (Fennelly and Newman, 2016). Recent work has built on ideas of power/control/resistance to consider other social and cultural modes such as Improvement and Reform, while also considering the ways in which buildings and environments reflect ideologies including public policy, and symbolise cultural values (Springate, 2017). Workhouses have become another theme, beginning with Lucas’s examination of the changing use of workhouse buildings in Southampton and culminating in Charlotte Newman’s recent examination of the use and adaptation of workhouses in West Yorkshire

and Liz Thomas’s assessment of the changing moral geometry of Ulster asylums (Lucas, 1999; Newman, 2010, 2013a, 2013b, Thomas, 2013, 2017). Newman interprets the choice of workhouse location on the outskirts of towns as ‘removing paupers to the margins of society’, while within towns they served as a reminder of ‘dominance and authority’ (Newman, 2010: 148-149). Building style is also linked to dominance, authority and order, while the spaces and architecture of the buildings are seen as implementing strategies of surveillance, segregation and specialisation, which were subject to change over time and across the region. Liz Thomas emphasises themes of uniformity, discipline and classification in Ulster workhouses, while uncovering the ways in which resistance to the authority of Commissioners by both Guardians and inmates led to buildings being altered and used in unintended ways, including the gradual movement of children within workhouse schemes to a more privileged position reflecting their gradual idealisation within society. The archaeology of internment camps, prisoner of war camps, concentration camps and other material phenomena associated with wartime has been another strong theme in the UK and Europe, emphasising issues of power and control (Myers and Moshenska, 2011; Mytum and Carr, 2012; Carr, Jasinski and Theune, 2017). An understanding of the cultural context of these sites has started to bridge the gap between macro-scale social theory and micro-scale enumeration of artefacts and buildings.

1.2. Archaeology of the asylum

Several archaeologists have written on the historical background to asylums for the insane and their place within the archaeology of institutions, emphasising the potential of archaeology’s focus on materiality to offer a perspective on ‘individual bodily encounters with institutional life’ (Casella 2007; Casella 2009:27 Beisaw & Gibb 2009; Spencer-Wood & Baugher 2001). However, there has been comparatively little detailed investigation of asylum sites to date by archaeologists. Until the 2000s, there were no published archaeological studies of asylum environments i.e. studies that used archaeological method, such as site visits, building survey or the study of artefacts. Work by Piddock and Longhurst, examines sites in Australia, with some reference to English asylums, while Fennelly and Newman are the authors of published work relating to Britain and Ireland (Piddock, 2001, 2007, 2011, 2016, Longhurst, 2011, 2015, 2017; Fennelly, 2014, 2019; Newman, 2015). Piddock’s (2007) work on lunatic asylums in South Australia and Tasmania takes as its essential premise the existence of an ‘ideal’ asylum in terms of types of room and standard of accommodation, conceived, and to some extent, practised in Britain. Piddock finds that the asylums that were built in South Australia do not conform to the ‘ideal’ in many important respects and seeks to explain this by reference to several factors; economic constraints, ignorance of the literature and practice in Britain and social perceptions of insanity as caused by intemperance and vice (a belief, incidentally, which was equally held in Britain at the time). She takes the

ideal/reality approach familiar to archaeologists, in which archaeology provides a challenge to the picture drawn by historical documents but her work does not generally explore the significance of the ideals, concluding that the asylum was intended to be therapeutic but that the reality was somewhat different (Pidcock, 2016). Pidcock's use of analytical techniques to assess asylum buildings is rare, and welcome, and the identification of a contemporary discourse around the 'ideal' asylum is well founded, but it is not clear that the Australian authorities would have built the 'ideal' English asylum under any circumstances.

Longhurst (2011; 2015; 2017) makes a comparison of four institutions for the mentally ill in New South Wales, to some extent building on the work of Pidcock but adding a dimension of change through time. Longhurst follows Pidcock in analysing the difference between psychiatric ideals and the way asylums were actually built, but takes this further by looking at the ways asylum management coped with this dissonance over time through strategies of tolerance, mitigation and finally abandonment. Authorities responded to this dissonance by modifying the buildings, with closure of the institution taking place at a point where the non-correspondence between ideas and reality could no longer be tolerated or mitigated against. Again, the focus is on what 'should' have been built, rather than what was built. This position is dependent on an understanding of contemporary psychiatric discourse as singular and uncontested. This is not borne out by reference to contemporary debates which continually betray uncertainty, controversy and a consciousness of mental illness as poorly understood.

Newman's (2015) study is unusual in that it makes use of a collection of architectural fragments retained from a private Georgian madhouse, relating these fragments to the image the proprietors wished to represent of 'respectability, benevolence and improvement' (Newman 2015: 160). Newman notes that standards of decoration were high and a concerted effort was made to provide an environment that would have been familiar in taste and comfort to the patients. Katherine Fennelly's (2014) study explores the soundscapes of asylums, situating the asylum project within a drive towards urban and social improvement during the nineteenth century. Fennelly reconstructs historical asylum soundscapes from documentary sources, in a partly phenomenological study which speculates on the impressions noises such as keys turning in locks may have made on patients. Fennelly deals in some detail with patient classification, which was a means of separating noisy from quiet patients and with such features as vaulted ceilings which would have acted to reduce noise. Following archaeological method, Fennelly uses the position of rooms within the asylum buildings as a form of primary evidence, rather than relying solely on documentary sources.

Fennelly has questioned the bracketing together of differing types of institution, such as asylums and prisons, and advocates for the heterogeneity of institutional sites,

particularly in her monograph on the archaeology of Georgian asylums in England and Ireland, which explores aspects of spatial organisation and movement within asylum buildings. (Fennelly 2019: 155). Fennelly and Newman propose multiple research methodologies for the analysis of institutional buildings in order to uncover 'individual institutional practices that reflect the local economic, social and political environment' (Fennelly and Newman, 2016: 187). Archaeologists are well-placed, it is argued, to comment on the lives of those left out of the historical record, using material evidence to reconstruct everyday lives.

The totality of archaeological scholarship around institutions shows an emphasis on exposing mismatches of various kinds; between the historical record and the lived experience of inmates, between the 'total' institution and resistance/insubordination, between the 'ideal' and the reality. Although, no doubt productive, these approaches can be seen as relegating archaeology to the position of 'handmaiden' with regard to historical disciplines (Hume, 1964), where archaeology concerns itself largely with the material 'gaps' that no other discipline can fill. In order to understand the material culture of institutions it is necessary to understand material and discursive practices as intimately informing one another, rather than acting in opposition to each other. This entails an appreciation of the material world as culturally situated and symbolically resonant and means that we must explicitly uncover the meanings and values associated with materiality in the past, rather than bringing a contemporary understanding to our analysis. One of the most significant impediments to our understanding of institutions for the mentally ill is the contemporary view of the asylum as a failed experiment, an understanding which pre-judges the outcome of our analyses and fails to credit the historical impulse behind their creation. A focus on power relations in a narrow sense, deriving from a number of influential theoreticians, encourages us to reflect backwards with a modern sensibility and find what we seek. A more integrated archaeology of institutions must aim to uncover the historically-situated, culturally contextualised meaning of institutions for the mentally ill, encompassing issues of therapeutic care, enlightenment aspiration and improving zeal. Asylum scholarship in other disciplines has both continued some of the themes seen within historical archaeology and added a greater focus on documentary sources. The contributions of some of the major scholars in the areas of historical geography, architectural history, social history and landscape history are considered below.

1.3. Other scholarship relating to asylum environments

The critical study of the architecture, interiors and physical environment of asylums can be said to have initially been stimulated by Foucault's 'Madness and Civilization', and his 'Discipline and Punish' (Foucault, 1965, 1977). It is often Foucault's work on prisons, rather than his earlier work on the history of madness, that has been of interest to

scholars of asylum materiality, particularly his analysis of Bentham's 'ideal' disciplinary structure, the panopticon. By this and other architectural means, 'docile bodies' are produced by rendering inmates visible but unaware of whether or not they are being watched. Hence, argues Foucault, a state is induced in the inmate, 'of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power' (Foucault 1977: 201). Scholars of the asylum have also been engaged by Foucault's rejection of Whiggish accounts of asylum history, and his recasting of asylum reform in the early nineteenth century as 'an insidious instrument of bourgeois social control' (Brown 1980: 105). Although Foucault's historical analysis of institutional confinement has been questioned (notably by Porter 1990; Sedgwick 1981), his reading of architecture in terms of surveillance and control continues to be influential.

The study of asylum architecture began, following Foucault, with the attempt to connect buildings and spaces with wider social themes, particularly power and sequestration of those deemed socially problematic. Thompson & Goldin (1975) identify the main determinant in asylum design as 'supervision and control', and consider the progression in asylum design from the cells and chains of Bethlem to the classified, hygienic spaces of Derby Asylum (1851) through this lens, which sees the forms of surveillance and restriction modified according to progressing medical discourses. Several important studies published in the 1980s continued these themes. Andrew Scull, perhaps the leading scholar of Victorian asylum history, attributes the sequestering of the insane to the advent of a mature capitalist economy in which the unproductive became a burden. Scull has suggested a number of underlying reasons for the commitment to public asylums, including the emergence of a psychiatric profession who were anxious to further themselves by distinguishing the insane as a distinct category who could only be cared for in an institutional setting (Scull 1993:41). Scull implies that the continual assertion by alienists that patients could not be cured at home, but must be removed to an institution, formed part of a strategy to consolidate their jurisdiction over mental illness (Scull 1993: 136). Enumerating the arguments of contemporary critics (for example, that the company of other mad people was detrimental to the well-being of patients and that the routines of the asylum were infantilising), Scull suggests that the asylum project was 'a venture which was misconceived from the start' (Scull 1993: 142). Asylums were a means of preserving order by removing the insane from society, the buildings becoming ever larger in order to benefit from economies of scale. He sees classification of space within asylums as a means of control through creating a reward system. Scull is willing to acknowledge an early utopianism in the asylum project but refers to later Victorian asylums as 'warehouses for the unwanted', that were architecturally 'bald and monotonous', a further excuse for isolating the mad in asylums, at this period, being the acceptance of hereditary explanations for their illness, which meant that they should not be allowed to reproduce. Asylum buildings

and environments, for Scull, are little more than the means of sequestering and controlling the insane as cheaply as possible (Scull 1980: 26; Scull 2015: 223).

Tom Brown looks at the history of the Canadian mental health system through the asylum at Toronto, and tries to balance the 'social control' theory of asylum development with a perspective that credits the intentions of the asylum builders. He finds that the asylum environment was explicitly chosen to be therapeutic. The asylum buildings were to be small in size, warm and well-ventilated with spacious rooms and as home-like as possible, with a benign father-figure in the medical superintendent at the centre (literally and figuratively), and with patient classification that would ensure protection for calmer from more disruptive patients. This ideal ultimately failed to deliver in practice, however. The heating and ventilation systems did not function, the physical size of the building made it 'intimidating and alienating' and difficult to negotiate for staff and patients, producing an environment that was 'frightening, dis-orienting, and ultimately overwhelming' (Brown 1980: 123). Brown does not connect his analysis specifically to discourses of power and surveillance, but states that the physical environment of the asylum, failed to function even in the terms of medical discourses of the day, falling short of the great hopes that were held out for them. Donnelly (1983) continues to emphasise the asylum as a therapeutic instrument, that managed inmates and replaced the 'mechanical restraint' of an earlier era. Donnelly contrasts the semblance of liberty offered by an asylum with the reality of security and restraint, emphasising surveillance, classification and segregation within asylum buildings.

A geographical approach to asylum spaces is taken by Chris Philo (1989), who questions the Foucauldian concept of panoptic surveillance through segregation within asylum buildings, pointing out that as the asylum project proceeded panoptic styles fell out of favour and patients tended to be, in fact, aggregated together in large dormitories and dayrooms. In the latter decades of the nineteenth century, there was considerable argument over the best type of plan for asylums, but surveillance was rarely made a significant factor and segregation of patients in internal accommodation was avoided. The factors Philo pinpoints as of concern to asylum builders, were economy, ease of construction, accessibility, ventilation, fire risk and home surroundings. Philo concludes, however, that Foucauldian panopticism could exist independently of strictly panoptic layouts and that despite the intention to reform/cure the insane, the consequence of withdrawing the mentally ill to institutions was 'to produce and then continually reproduce a population designated as different, deviant and dangerous by a 'mainstream' society' (Philo 1989: 284).

The following decade saw two major studies of hospitals in the field of architectural history by Taylor (1991) and Richardson (Richardson *et al.*, 1998), both of which have substantial chapters on asylums/mental hospitals in

England and Wales. These studies take a similar approach in choosing outstanding examples of asylum architecture and judging the success of buildings in both architectural and functional terms, while tracing the development of asylum architecture from an 'evolutionary' standpoint. Although the Richardson volume, in particular, is based on a Historic England survey of asylum buildings, only selected buildings are covered by both studies, and so it is difficult to judge how typical the examples are that have been chosen, or the range of asylum types that were being built in any particular time period. Plans and elevations (and some photographic evidence) together with contemporary published material are the sources used, and the study of asylums is progressed by considering some of the ways in which the asylum paralleled hospital development, for instance, in the way in which pavilions were adopted in the later nineteenth century.

Thomas Markus (1993) again concentrates on control and segregation in the planning and construction of asylum buildings, noting the attempt that was made to remove penal features from such structures but concluding that as the nineteenth century wore on, 'buildings became surveillance-oriented, larger, more crowded and Spartan—in fact, carceral' (Markus 1993: 140). He notes that public buildings are not only outcomes of contemporary ideas but also formative of them, however, it is unclear in what sense this is meant since his reading of asylum history is fairly conventional (Markus 1993: 132-133).

Markus Reuber (1996) concentrates on asylum buildings in Ireland for his study of asylum development, which sees the architecture of asylums moving through stages from isolation and classification to the development of a 'curative society' in the colony asylum at Purdysburn. Using plans and published contemporary material, Reuber considers the development of asylums mainly within the terms of the asylum builders themselves.

Barry Edginton published a number of papers in the 1990s and 2000s relating largely to the architecture of the York Retreat, an asylum that was highly influential for the history of the treatment of the mentally ill (see Chapter 2). Edginton concentrates on order and discipline as features of the asylum environment and the ways in which observation and classification were facilitated by the York Retreat. Edginton also emphasises the role of the surrounding landscape as calming and elevating. However, he relies a great deal on secondary materials and on contemporary published material rather than primary records, photographs or plans for his assessment of buildings and environments, therefore running the danger of replicating the viewpoints and ideology of the asylum builders.

Leonard Smith (1999) takes a slightly different approach in focussing on the dichotomy between the façade of the asylum which he associates with the impression of cure, and the internal arrangements which he associates with custody and prison-like features, once more associating the reality of asylum with power and control. Smith makes

use of a full range of primary and secondary written sources, but no plans are shown and he makes only general references to architecture and environment.

A study of Severalls asylum (opened 1913) carried out by Diana Gittins (1998) differs markedly from previous work in that she makes extensive use of oral history, garnered from interviews with patients and staff. Gittins adds to the historiographical orthodoxy, that asylums were intended to be therapeutic and healthy, particularly in terms of situation and that they were at the same time sites of constraint, categorisation and control, by demonstrating that there were a range of responses and behaviours associated with asylum life. From abusive staff to those who treated patients with great kindness, from patients who remember their time at Severalls with horror and those who recalled it with gratitude. Gittins uses an anthropological approach to show that spatial division and classification in the asylum worked not only in terms of gender, class and diagnosis, but also to separate the insane from the sane. The laundry building, for example, was organised to separate men's, women's, staff and officers' laundry, through fears of the 'polluting powers of the mad and of madness, and, in particular, the polluting potential of fluids and water in relation to them' (Gittins 1998: 21-24).

Since 2000, there have been three important general studies of asylums in the field of architectural history, by Catherine Stevenson, Carla Yanni and Alison Darragh and a collection of papers on the subject of built environments and spaces. Stevenson's (2000) work concentrates largely on the architecture and interiors of Bethlem hospital and other contemporary institutions for the insane in the eighteenth century. The asylum is seen as fulfilling a range of requirements, aesthetic, therapeutic and functional, with an emphasis on the change from 'palatial' architecture to more sober, therapeutic styles as Bethlem underwent phases of rebuilding. Stevenson considers the 'magnificence' of the charitable institutions that were a striking feature of eighteenth-century welfare provision, Bethlem being described as 'for many years the only building which looked like a palace in London' (Stevenson 2000: 33). The beginnings are noted of a significant tension between 'charitable display' in which the magnificence of buildings manifested the wealth and compassion of the patrons and the feeling that ostentatiousness was antithetical to charity, demonstrating that too much money had been spent on buildings rather than charitable care. Allied to this was the feeling that 'architecture should inspire an emotional tone appropriate to the building's function' and therefore decorative exuberance was unsuitable (Stevenson 2000: 103).

Yanni (2007) deals with the American public asylum in its period of establishment and full flowering from 1770 to 1894, focussing largely on the popular Kirkbride plan of pavilions stepped back in echelon and the 'cottage plan' of segregated buildings, which partially succeeded it. Yanni emphasises the attention to light, air, landscapes and other features of curative environments.

An anthology published the same year and edited by Leslie Topp, James Moran and Jonathan Andrews (Topp, 2007) brings together a number of architectural and spatial studies from major scholars in the field such as Leonard Smith, Barry Edginton, Chris Philo and Jeremy Taylor. pioneering volume of collected essays about the built environment of asylums, constitutes a ‘state of the discipline’ marker point. The introduction to the volume opined that the historiography of asylums had not done justice to the history of psychiatric spaces and that interdisciplinary studies could have much to offer, nuancing earlier studies on asylum materiality.

Asylum landscapes and layouts were the subject of several studies after 2000, the major contributors being, Sarah Rutherford (2003;2004;2005), Clare Hickman (2005; 2009; 2013) and Leslie Topp (Topp and Wieber, 2009; Topp, 2017). Rutherford and Hickman both concentrated on the designed landscapes surrounding asylums and their perceived therapeutic properties. Rutherford showed how asylum landscapes were modelled on country house estates, while airing courts often resembled domestic town gardens. Rutherford also considers architectural styles of buildings and their layouts as part of the designed landscape. She concludes that the landscapes of asylums should be seen as part of an ‘environmental discipline of the poor’ (Rutherford, 2004).

Hickman’s work emphasises the ways in which asylum landscapes participated in a general discourse of ‘nature’ as healthful, tranquilising and beneficial to the psyche during the Victorian period and earlier. Leslie Topp’s work on asylums of the Austro-Hungarian empire in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century has constituted the most analytical scholarship on the layouts of colony-style asylums within their landscapes. Topp concludes that the ‘freedom’ discursively implied within the colony form, and the distribution of buildings across a rural estate, was belied by the reality of involuntary confinement and, in fact, constituted a response to anti-psychiatry movements and an engagement with early modernism (Topp, 2017).

Two scholars focussed, at least partly, on the spatial location of asylums, Chris Philo on asylums in England and Wales and Kim Ross on asylums in Scotland. Philo (2004) discusses the factors influencing the location of asylums, in particular, whether or not they were sited in more rural areas, or nearer to urban centres. Philo teases apart the complexity of discourses in this period and sees increasing ruralisation of asylums as a meeting of medical and moral approaches to the treatment of the insane in which rural areas were seen as healthier and better able to offer the picturesque views and cheerful prospects which could soothe the mind. However, he concludes that as somatic and hereditary explanations for madness became more prevalent towards the end of the nineteenth century, environment became downgraded as a cause of insanity.

Ross’s unpublished thesis (2014) concentrates on the ‘affective power’ of asylums across different scales from

site and situation to grounds and buildings. Ross perceives the spatial location of Scottish asylums as drawing together moral, medical and hygienic dimensions that favoured rural sites, and in contrast to Philo, points to a renewed faith in environments as therapeutic towards the end of the nineteenth century.

The last fifteen years has seen a response to the ‘material turn’ in historiography in the form of an increased interest in the interiors and furnishings of asylums. The principle scholars in this area have been Mary Guyatt, whose 2004 chapter appears to have first stimulated this area, and Jane Hamlett (Hamlett 2015; Hoskins & Hamlett 2012). Guyatt stresses that late Victorian and Edwardian asylum interiors were homely and comfortable and considerable thought was given to the correct way to furnish and decorate because of the increasing recognition that many patients would spend their lifetimes in an asylum. Hamlett’s work traces the development of asylum interiors from spaces that derived their domestic feel from their organisation as a household under a patriarch in the early years of the asylum system to the gradual building of environments that resembled middle-class homes in the second half of the nineteenth century. By the end of the nineteenth century she finds that concerns with hygiene began to militate against the domesticity of interiors at English asylums.

Overall, it can be seen that studies of asylum environments have fallen into six main categories, namely: 1) architecture of asylum buildings, 2) internal building layouts, 3) spatial location of buildings, 4) spatial distribution of buildings on a site, 5) landscapes and grounds, 6) interior decoration and furnishings. Studies have appeared in several disciplines, most commonly, history, architectural history, historical geography and historical archaeology. Many scholars have contributed in more than one area, but there has been a tendency for each discipline to concentrate on one of these areas. For example, the spatial location of asylums relative to urban centres has largely been tackled by geographers, and the architecture of asylums by architectural historians. Each discipline also tends to favour a distinct theoretical approach, with geographers engaging more with Foucauldian analyses of spatial forms and architectural historians with typology and aesthetics.

A number of themes cut across the asylum scholarship to date. Asylums are treated as a reform project in which the asylum was, at least in the early stages of the asylum construction programme, informed by ideals that sought to make buildings and spaces therapeutic and aesthetically pleasing as well as functional living spaces for numbers of patients. Many authors focus on how asylums fell short of the ideals and were compromised by the need to sequester and control, and most agree that the ideals broke down, in any case, towards the end of the nineteenth century. Themes for investigation have been asylum location, classification and segregation, measures for control and surveillance and hygiene and therapy, but few asylum studies have analysed building sites/topography, building interiors and building architecture at a level of detail that

Table 1. Selected Scholarship to date relating to asylum buildings and environments.

Scholar	Year	Location and period of study	Sources (PR= Primary records PPM= Primary published material)	Discipline	Methodology	Interpretation of asylum environments
Dieter Jetter	1971-1981	Europe (1780-1840)	PPM, plans	History	Typological	Asylums as reform project
John D Thompson & Grace Goldin	1975	Europe (c1650-c1850)	PPM, plans, elevations	Architectural History	Typological	Asylums as reform project
Andrew Scull	1977-2015	England and Wales (c1800-c1900)	PR, PPM, plans	History	Documentary research, building analysis	Asylums initially conceived as utopias but ultimately become warehouses for the unwanted
Tom Brown	1980	Canada (1792-1910)	PR, PPM, photographs, plans	History	Documentary research, building analysis	Asylums idealised therapeutic spaces that failed to live up to ideal in practice
Thomas A Markus	1982-1993	Scotland and Europe (1780-c1850)	PPM, plans, elevations	Architectural History	Spatial analysis diagrams and contemporary commentary analysis	Asylums as reform project
Michael Donnelly	1983	Britain (1790-1850)	PPM, plans	History	Analysis of buildings and contemporary commentary	Asylums as reform project
Chris Philo	1987-2004	England and Wales (c1250-1870)	PPM, plans	Historical Geography	Analysis of buildings and contemporary commentary	Spatial location of asylums with reference to rural/urban dyad, spatial organisation within and of asylum buildings
Harriet Richardson	1988-2010	Scotland (1729-c1970) England and Wales (1660-1948)	PR, PPM, plans, elevations, photographs	Architectural History	Typological	Development of asylum types over time, emphasis on architecturally outstanding buildings
Jeremy Taylor	1991-1995	England and Wales (1840-1914)	PPM, plans, elevations, photographs	Architectural History	Typological	Development of asylum types over time, emphasis on architecturally outstanding buildings
Markus Reuber	1994-1999	Ireland (1600-1922)	PR, PPM, plans, elevations, photographs	History	Typological	Development of asylum types in relation to ideas about treatment
Barry Edginton	1994-1999	England (1792-1914)	PR, PPM, plans, elevations, photographs	History	Analysis of buildings in relation to medical discourses	Influence of 'moral treatment' on asylum design
Christine Stevenson	1997-2000	England (1660-1815)	PPM, plans, elevations	Architectural History	Analysis of buildings in relation to social and cultural discourses	Asylum architecture and spaces informed by a variety of concerns: aesthetic, therapeutic and functional
Leslie Topp	1997-2017	Austro-Hungarian Empire (1890-1914)	PR, PPM, plans, elevations, photographs	Architectural History	Documentary research, building analysis	Asylums as embodiments of socio-medical values such as freedom and progress.
Diana Griffiths	1998	England (1913-1997)	PR, PPM, interviews, plans, elevations, photographs	History	Oral history and building analysis	Asylums are responded to in varying ways, both positively and negatively, by patients and staff.
Leonard D Smith	1999-2007	England (1750-1820)	PR, PPM, elevations	History	Documentary research	Asylums had impressive façades with more prison-like facilities behind
Johann Louw and Sally Swartz	2001-2007	South Africa (c1850-c1920)	PR, PPM, plans elevations	History	Documentary research, building analysis	Asylum spaces as expressions of therapeutic ideas, colonial discourses and white/black segregation
Susan Pidcock	2001-2016	Britain and Australia (1800-1880)	PR, PPM, site visits, plans, elevations, photographs	Historical Archaeology	Documentary research, building analysis	Asylums often fail to correspond to psychiatric ideals

Scholar	Year	Location and period of study	Sources (PR= Primary records PPM= Primary published material)	Discipline	Methodology	Interpretation of asylum environments
Svein Atle Skålevåg	2002	Norway (1820-1920)	PPM, plans, elevations	History	Analysis of buildings and contemporary discourses	Asylums as therapeutic, reflecting changing ideals in psychiatry from moral to somatic treatment
Carla Yanni	2003-2007	United States (1770-1900)	PR, PPM, plans and elevations, photographs	Architectural History	Analysis of buildings and contemporary discourses	Asylums as therapeutic environments, developing over time
Sarah Rutherford	2003-2008	England (1808-1914)	PR, PPM, maps, plans	Landscape History	Analysis of landscapes and building layouts	Asylums (buildings and grounds) as designed landscapes of a therapeutic nature.
Mary Guyatt	2004	England (1880-1914)	PPM, photographs	History	Analysis of interiors and contemporary discourses	Asylum interiors as homely and calming
Clare Hickman	2005-2013	England (1800-1860)	PR, PPM, photographs	Landscape History	Analysis of contemporary discourses	Asylum landscapes as therapeutic.
Elizabeth Malcolm	2009	Australia (1850-1890)	PPM, plans, photographs, elevations	History	Analysis of contemporary discourses	Kew asylum as well meant but out of date and inadequate in practice
Alison Darragh	2011	Scotland (1781-1930)	PR, PPM, plans, maps, photographs	Architectural history	Typological	Asylums as therapeutic environments, development of designs over time.
Peta Longhurst	2011-2017	Australia (1835-2003)	PPM, plans, photographs, site visits	Historical Archaeology	Analysis of buildings and contemporary discourses	Asylums fail to live up to psychiatric ideals due to factors such as economics. Dissonance is responded to by tolerance, mitigation and finally abandonment.
Katherine Fennelly	2012-2019	England and Ireland (1808-c1850)	PR, PPM, site visits, plans, photographs	Historical Archaeology	Analysis of buildings and documentary records to reconstruct soundscapes	Sound control in asylums related to paternalistic, moral ideas of insanity and reform
Jane Hamlett	2013-2015	England (1845-1914)	PR, PPM, plans, photographs	History	Documentary research and analysis of contemporary discourses	Emotional role of environment in the creation of a 'home' and modifying behaviour
Juliet L.H Foster	2013	England	Secondary Sources	Psychology	Literature Review	Asylum buildings as a source for understanding changing attitudes towards mental health
Kim A Ross	2014	Scotland	PR, PPM, site visits, plans, photographs	Historical Geography	Documentary research and analysis of contemporary discourses	Asylums as engineered environments producing docile subjects. Evolution of siting and design over time.
Rebecca McLaughlan	2014-2016	New Zealand	PR, PPM, site visits, plans, photos	History	Documentary and building analysis	Asylums a compromised attempt to meet needs of mentally ill
Charlotte Newman	2015	England	Artefacts, plans, photographs	Historical Archaeology	Analysis of artefacts and contemporary discourses	Private madhouses shows material evidence of a high quality interior, spaces also show evidence of control

would enable the claims made by asylum authorities to be tested. Most asylum studies rely heavily on contemporary published and documentary evidence to which the sites and buildings provide support, rather than the reverse, in which sites and buildings are given priority. Scholarship relating to the study of buildings, and built environments more broadly, are assessed in the following section, as this constitutes a critique of some of the approaches usually taken.

1.4. Buildings archaeology and buildings theory

Buildings archaeology is a relatively new sub-discipline within the field of archaeology,¹ that has appropriated the analysis of upstanding buildings as a legitimate field of archaeological enquiry. Buildings archaeology began with a concern for the accurate and meaningful recording of upstanding structures, but was always interdisciplinary in nature, drawing on architectural history, social and cultural history and folk-life studies among others (Johnson 2010:10-11; Arnold et al. 2006). As a discipline it has shifted rapidly from a purely descriptive mode to include an emphasis on interpretation (Newman 2010: 2), placing buildings in their craft and design tradition, but also contextualising them socially and culturally (Leech, 2006). The recognition that buildings survey can only ever be partial and subjective and must therefore be informed by an understanding of meaning and significance has been critical to the development of the discipline (Giles, 2014).

Several scholars outside the field of archaeology have sought to address the shortcomings of other disciplines in relation to the understanding of buildings as socially and historically located structures. The work of French cultural theorists, Bourdieu, Foucault and Lefebvre has been influential. They have made links between the spatial and the conceptual, be it Bourdieu's structuralist division of domestic space according to North African cosmology, Foucault's use of the 'panopticon' as metaphor for the mechanism of power or Lefebvre's concept of the reproduction of society through the social production of urban space (Bourdieu, 1970, Lefebvre, 1991). All these approaches are heavily influenced by Marxist theory and are subject to criticism, not only because they apparently minimise agency, but also because they tend to suppress mid-level cultural phenomena, as discussed below. Giddens' 'denial of structure' has been critiqued for its **over-emphasis** of human agency, however (Storper, 1985). Thomas Gieryn has suggested that neither agency nor structure dominate in social reproduction, and we should see buildings, not as the objects of human agency but as in themselves agents of social reproduction, with which we are involved in a 'recursive relationship of mutual constitution and presupposition'(Gieryn 2002: 36). In other words, the social meaning of buildings extends beyond what was intended, and this is not to minimise the

intention but also to recognise that built space constrains social and cultural interaction. Buildings may hide as much as they reveal, including 'the many possibilities that did not get built, as they bury the interests, politics and power that shaped the one design that did' (Gieryn 2002: 39). Gieryn concludes that buildings analysis 'must respect the double reality of buildings, as structures structuring agency but never beyond the potential restructuring by human agents'(Gieryn 2002: 41). Gieryn identifies three ways in which buildings structure social action, by making material 'demands and expectations' that society must submit to in order to satisfy their own needs and wants; by 'concealing the politics and interests inherent in their design behind interpretative registers that focus on instrumental efficiency, cost or possibly aesthetics'; and by stabilizing social action due to the cost and difficulty of subsequent alterations (Gieryn 2002: 43-44). Gieryn's concept of 'interpretative flexibility' reminds us that the meaning of buildings is 'contingent and variable' and is not to be thought of as fully determined by the designers or the attributes of the building itself. However, Gieryn's case study makes plain the ahistorical nature of his sociological understanding, which is detached from the cultural context of architecture and science. William Whyte (2006) takes further the question of buildings and meaning, with a more historically-situated interpretation of 'architecture as evidence'. Whyte notes that buildings are frequently likened to texts to be 'read' as a code or language, but suggests instead that we should think of buildings as comprising a series of transpositions whose meaning changes over time and must be translated. He notes that buildings have been widely understood to be meaningful in a way that goes beyond structure and function and which articulates ideas, emotions, beliefs and social and cultural values. Buildings are frequently seen to embody meaning by expressing the 'spirit of the age' in which they were built. However, their complexity makes any methodology for 'reading' them elusive. Buildings are functional, ornamental, symbolic. They are three-dimensional art forms, which must obey the laws of physics and stand rather than fall, carrying out the practical purpose for which they were built. Further the historian or archaeologist of buildings has access to a range of sources beyond the building itself, including primary and secondary written sources and representations of the building in drawings, maps, plans and photographs, all of which raise methodological issues. Whyte asks how historians can be sure 'that they are accurately interpreting the subject' and are not in fact projecting on to architecture the meanings they expect to find. The metaphor of language has, he argues, been used to imply that built forms are straightforwardly legible in a way which is not justified (Whyte 2006: 165-7). The way they are interpreted will change 'through time and among cultures' and therefore historians must 'study buildings within their context, examining how they relate both to their immediate environment and to their wider culture' and noting how they were received by contemporaries and used by those they were built for. This 'diversity of focus' together with the 'multidimensionality of buildings' means that architecture cannot be compared to a text but should

¹ The first academic volume on the topic was published in 1994 (Wood and Chitty, 1994), the first Masters' degree in the subject was established in York c2000, and the Buildings Archaeology Group was reformed as a special interest group of the Institute for Archaeologists in 2003.

rather be seen as an idea translated to plan, drawing and then building. These are a series of genres with differing conventions and specific logics. These genres are linked by a 'series of transpositions', which 'shape each artefact, and inevitably influence the final product of the process, the building itself'. Whyte suggests that historians use 'every possible piece of evidence' to explore the evolution of the building with an awareness of the logic of each genre and the changes and transformations that occur between genres, leading to a multiplicity of meanings.

The privileging of textual over material sources that is seen in much historical work has been questioned by Andrew Ballantyne, who suggests that buildings, because costly and time-consuming to produce, can be a better guide to the value-system of a society than words: 'What people say they care about, in their conversation or in their books, is one kind of evidence for the system of values in a society, but a better guide to what they really believe is to look at how they act [i.e. what they build]' (Ballantyne 2006: 37). Furthermore, buildings as material objects and works of art, can be resonant in a multiplicity of ways that can be harder to find in texts, particularly the kind of texts that are produced by scientists, managers and administrators and form the bulk of historical primary sources.

1.5. Approach taken in this study

Several disciplines and sub-disciplines have taken on the study of asylums, their culture and materiality, including archaeology, architectural history, medical and social history and historical geography. It has been argued here that the potential for the study of asylum buildings to inform our understanding of their social context and, equally, the potential of their social context to inform our understanding of asylum buildings has, so far, been under-explored. A positioning of asylums with prisons and workhouses as emblems of control within the progress of industrial capitalism has only limited explanatory power in assessing these buildings. Other broad socio-cultural movements may be at least as important to an analysis of asylum buildings, such as changes in attitudes to insanity and personal liberty associated with the Enlightenment, and the moral, intellectual and physical betterment of the self and of the environment associated with what has been termed the 'Age of Improvement'. With regard to the latter concept, Sarah Tarlow has pointed to the reductionism of the historical archaeology of capitalism, which seeks to reduce all human practices to the 'exercise, legitimisation, manipulation or rejection of power relationships of inequality'. Tarlow suggests that there are other concepts which are at least as significant in shaping the material world, such as beliefs, aspirations and cultural values (Tarlow 2007: 9).

This study argues that asylum buildings should be seen not only in the context of providing a solution to the problem of unproductive, undisciplined bodies, but that the discursive construction of asylums as an enlightenment project, tending towards increased liberty and therapeutic

care for the insane, can be further elaborated as an explanatory paradigm. The 'improvement' of the working classes through specific types of constructed environment should also be taken into account when analysing asylum buildings. All these macro-level concepts can be historically situated within the late-nineteenth-century/early-twentieth-century historical moment, in which concepts of degeneration, leading to the nascent pseudo-science of eugenics together with a resurgent environmentalism, were strongly influential on the types of buildings and landscapes that were deemed suitable for the insane poor. This study also proposes local variations in asylum building schemes, suggesting that the colony asylums built in Scotland and the north of Ireland differed substantively from those deemed suitable south of the border, due to cultural variations that are not explicable in terms of an appeal only to 'capitalism' or 'enlightenment' as explanatory contexts.

The analysis of asylum plans and elevations has generally been founded upon an interest in the topics of surveillance, sequestering of the insane, rural surroundings, classification/segregation of patients and the part played by hygienic considerations such as light and air in asylum buildings. Architecture and layouts have generally not been analysed in any systematic way, however, with heavy reliance being placed on written sources for interpreting the character of the asylum environment and what should be considered significant. Buildings and environments are not usually given primacy as evidence, but act to support the documentary record. This means that the interpretation of environments tends to rely on a rationale which is internal to medical discourses and either adopts or critiques the point of view of the asylum builders. Attitudes and allusions which are betrayed or suggested by material culture and written sources but not explicitly stated, are not generally explored. Later work has addressed these issues to some extent. Stevenson, in particular, makes sensitive assessments of asylum architecture which allude to how forms are linked to their social and cultural context. Hamlett has suggested that asylum interiors should be seen in the context of the development of middle-class interiors in which objects were often treated as having a moralising character, thus connecting the material world of the asylum to the society in which they were situated. However, the literature is often driven by the conflict and interplay between medical discourse (micro scale) and structures of power (macro scale) without giving sufficient consideration to the meso scale of asylum materiality as an embodiment of social and cultural trends as these change over time.

Studies of asylum environments are often based on a few example institutions, especially those relating to English asylums, which account for the majority of the scholarship. It is challenging, therefore, to position example institutions within a broader framework, where they can be understood as more or less typical of each period and to make generalisations about how asylums developed over the nineteenth century, particularly whether or not their

interior environments became more or less ‘domestic’ or ‘hygienic’.

Hamlett has suggested that cultural history is now moving away from a ‘supposed dichotomy between representation and reality’ and is instead exploring the reach of such representations and how they affect materiality and practices’ (Hamlett 2015: 15). This is very pertinent for the study of asylums, which has tended to rely on a supposed ‘failure’ of the asylum in practice to live up to the intentions and ideals proposed at mid nineteenth century.

Asylum environments did not achieve the rates of cure that were proposed, and regimes which were supposed to be gentle and caring were apt to become abusive and neglectful. However, asylum culture and materiality can also be interpreted in its own terms, as a product of and a contributor to medical and other discourses and an authentic representation of those discourses. If asylums do not adhere to the prescriptions in contemporary psychiatric literature, we must consider what influences and motivations **did** influence their construction, whether explicit or implicit.

This study starts from the assumption that buildings have a multiplicity of meanings and that at least some of these meanings can be accessed, by the historical archaeologist, using the evidence of the building itself, its architectural style, layout and interior spaces, as well as its positioning in the landscape and relative to other structures. The historical archaeologist also makes use of primary sources relating to the building, such as elevations and plans; sources relating to the architects, builders and other authorities engaged in the construction and published sources which convey the cultural context in which the building is situated, but the buildings and environments themselves are given considerable weight in any interpretation. Materiality may offer a validation for one discourse over another, where competing viewpoints exist, and can give weight to an opinion that may be difficult to discern within documentary materials. Additionally, the material world sometimes betrays attitudes that cannot be easily expressed verbally, are contradictory, or alternatively so entrenched that they are no longer apparent to the holder.

‘Meaning’ in the context of buildings can be seen as the connotations of building structure, style, layouts, spaces and siting that go beyond the physical description of parts and connect the building to contemporary culture by defining what they represent. For example, a window, may have a literal meaning as a (usually glazed) opening in a wall that admits light and/or air. However, it may also express or represent a multitude of further aspects of contemporary culture that are not unconnected to its physical form but situate it as a product of its particular time and place. The style, size and shape of the window and its positioning relative to others may indicate a concern with architectural fashion, its size and orientation may also suggest a concern with the therapeutic qualities of light and air. The style and size of windows may symbolize a connection with the

domestic rather than the carceral as conceived at a certain time period. It may also represent, through the admission of light, a commitment to therapeutic care on the part of asylum authorities and a public assertion of a particular asylum as a space of humane treatment.

Fundamental to the understanding of culture, as it relates to materiality in the past, is that it is *particular* to a certain place in the world and to a certain period of history, and that therefore present day understandings of insanity, and poverty cannot be transposed backwards in time and must be redefined by reference to contemporary cultural artefacts. This study also argues that the culture of asylum building and management (if not the subsequent inhabitation of the asylum) is particular to a certain class stratum, namely the educated middle classes composed of architects, doctors, councillors and others and is largely limited to the male gender, being informed by these partial perspectives. This study does not attempt to reconstruct patients’ perspectives through their voices, which are very much subdued due to the nature of surviving evidence relating to the asylum project, but neither are patients absent from this account. Patients are here seen as culturally constructed through the discursive (material and textual) practices of the Asylum Age,² and this is inescapable, however their voices may be or not be recorded.

The powered nature of institutional care underwrites this approach to interpreting the asylum. The materiality of asylum remains form part of a construction by asylum authorities through whom wider cultural forces take shape, the material remains expressing and representing a concept of asylum inhabitants, which, it is argued, constituted them in relation to late-nineteenth-century concepts of domesticity, individuality, hygiene and degeneration. The emphases in buildings and layouts, supported by documentary and contemporary published materials constitutes the patient as a defined presence, subject to ideological definition.

1.6. Methodology

Early scholars of the asylum environment, made use of plans, elevations and published contemporary materials, such as books, journal articles and parliamentary papers. Several early studies relied primarily upon contemporary published material, but later work has made increasing use of primary records including asylum minutes, reports and photographs. Site visits did not form part of the methodology used, until the systematic surveys of the 1990s and the advent of archaeological studies after 2000. The recording of buildings through site visits is generally not made a central part of the research, where such visits have occurred, often due to the fact that many asylum buildings are still in use as psychiatric facilities or have been repurposed. A few scholars have

²The Asylum Age is here used as a shorthand for the era of large-scale institutionalisation of the insane, commencing in the early to mid-nineteenth century across Europe and peaking in the 1950s.

used unusual methodologies, such as spatial analysis diagrams (Markus, 1993), oral history (Gittins, 1998) and artefactual analysis (Newman, 2015). The latter two clearly depend on the availability of and access to artefacts and informants. Markus's spatial analysis diagrams were not used in this study, as the buildings in this study are of a relatively simple character and ground plans were felt to be sufficient to show spatial relationships and access points.

An analytical approach to the material evidence is used in this study, combined with evidence drawn from primary unpublished sources and from contemporary published materials. Using this evidence, asylum buildings are situated within a particular cultural historical moment, as part of the broader context of the development of industrial capitalism, and of Enlightenment theories of liberty, individuality and improvement, but making a finer grained reading of the material evidence which also connects it to concerns particular to the period c1900, namely, degenerationism and environmentalism.

1.6.1. Material evidence

Choice of Sites

The sites chosen for study were:

- Purdysburn Villa Colony, Belfast, Northern Ireland
- Kingseat Asylum, Aberdeen, Scotland
- Bangour Village Asylum, Edinburgh, Scotland
- Dykebar Asylum, Renfrewshire, Scotland
- Whalley Asylum, Preston, Lancashire
- Alt Scherbitz Asylum, Leipzig, Germany

The sites in Ireland and Scotland were selected as the only examples of general colony asylums that were constructed in Britain and Ireland in the period before the First World War. Although some institutions were built on colony lines in England, as discussed in Chapter 2, these were usually charitable enterprises or built by Poor Law Guardians and catered only for a distinct sub-set of the asylum population, either epileptics or the cognitively impaired. Only one colony asylum was built by an asylum authority, (Ewell Epileptic Colony) and this was exclusively for epileptics. It was only in Scotland and the north of Ireland that the village or colony model was adopted for a general asylum population, and indeed in Scotland, the village was the only type of asylum that was built after the mid-1890s. The more enthusiastic adoption of the village model in Scotland, particularly, appears to have been a development that was distinct from the more cautious and tailored approach in England, and English colonies were therefore excluded from the study.

All the asylums chosen were public asylums for the insane poor built under the relevant legislation for each jurisdiction. Crichton Royal Lunatic Asylum, a charitable asylum near Dumfries, built a 'Third House', along colony lines in order to house their pauper patients during the

period covered by this study. It was decided not to include this institution in the study because of the charitable nature of the asylum's administration which raised issues that set it apart from the public asylums at the core of the study. In addition, the colony was built on a pre-existing site, which meant that the location could not be analysed in the same way as the other sites.

Alt Scherbitz asylum, near Leipzig in Saxony was chosen as the earliest colony asylum in Europe and the model which Aberdeen and Bangour Village explicitly claimed to follow, architects and asylum authorities from Scotland, including the Lunacy Commissioner, having visited Alt Scherbitz from 1897 onwards. Although the influence of Alt Scherbitz on Purdysburn is not explicitly credited in asylum records, a local medical journal stated that Alt Scherbitz was the example being followed at Purdysburn (*Belfast Health Journal*, May 1901). The Scottish-trained medical superintendent of Purdysburn, William Graham, appears to have borrowed the term 'Villa Colony' from a Lancashire report which describes Alt Scherbitz and this was the term used at Purdysburn (and nowhere else) to describe the new asylum form (*Report of a Lancashire deputation*, 1900). Although other colony asylums existed in Germany by this period, Alt Scherbitz was the first and most influential. It is considered here, therefore, as the primary continental influence on Scottish and Irish colony asylums.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the majority of typological asylum studies do not take a comprehensive approach to sites and buildings, making comparison between asylum sites challenging. Because of this, it was decided to include in the study a traditional asylum built in Lancashire in the pre-war period, for the purposes of comparison. Whalley was chosen particularly because it was the result of a lengthy struggle within the Lancashire Asylums Board, many of whom wanted to build a colony asylum, and who were eventually over-ruled after some years, an asylum along more traditional lines being constructed instead. The decision-making process that took place with regard to Whalley clarifies some of the resistance to the colony system in England, and is included for comparison with Scotland. The overall layout used at Whalley was not typical of asylums constructed in England at this period, in fact, was comparatively old-fashioned, but the use of pavilions was typical and individual pavilions have been analysed as a comparator with asylum villas of the colony layout. Only further analytical study of asylum sites can clarify whether pavilions varied widely from site to site across England and Scotland.

Buildings – Desk Survey

The focus of the study is asylum buildings rather than landscapes. However, buildings are considered in their setting in terms of where the sites are situated and how buildings are distributed on the site. The location of all public asylums in Ireland and Scotland was determined and an approximate distance was plotted for each site from the

nearest centre of habitation. This was then compared with all other asylum sites in Ireland and Scotland (1815-1914) in order to establish changes over time in the positioning of asylum sites relative to urban centres. Using ARCGIS and datasets obtained from Land and Property Services (Ireland), and EDINA Digimap (Scotland and England) a relief map was constructed for each site, allowing the position of each building relative to the detailed contour pattern of each site to be determined. Historic map evidence was used to analyse the layout and distribution of buildings on each site relative to other major features and to each other. Map evidence was used to compare asylum sites with other types of settlement form such as the garden city.

Buildings - Field Survey

Field survey was informed by an understanding, suggested by contemporary literature and secondary sources, of what were likely to have been important considerations in building construction. The focus was therefore on the following building features:

- Building size and dimensions
- Architectural style and ornamentation externally and internally
- Building materials, externally and internally
- Ventilation features such as ventilation grilles and turrets
- Lighting, size of windows and presence or absence of internal glazing
- Height of rooms and cubic area of internal space
- Layout of rooms internally

Although access was available to techniques such as photogrammetry and laser scanning, it was decided that less time-consuming and potentially disruptive techniques were more suitable, given such issues as the sensitivity of the sites (where still in use by psychiatric patients, or where the sites have been converted into housing) and the poor condition of many of the buildings. All of the required information was therefore obtained through direct observation, photography and measurement. In many cases, due either to the condition of the buildings or their occupancy, it was not possible to access interiors.

- Photographs were taken of all elevations, individual features and interior rooms where possible
- Measurements were taken of exterior wall lengths and heights, window and door sizes, ceiling heights and room sizes (where possible)
- Notes were taken on the phenomenology of the sites, vistas from various points and views through windows.

The data thus obtained was analysed in terms of two major principles:

- Function – how were the buildings constructed in order to perform their purpose both as homes for the mentally ill and as therapeutic environments?

- Implicit meanings – how could the building spaces, layouts and architecture be seen as connected to contemporary cultural values?

1.6.2. Textual and other non-material sources

The wider social and cultural context for the buildings was examined through the use of textual and other non-material sources, with the aim of exploring the connections of asylum buildings with concepts of:

- Insanity: how it was conceived of, dealt with and/or treated
- Class difference: how the poor were constructed through medical and other discourses
- Social utopianism: the connection of the asylum project with utopian social movements such as the labour colony and the garden city

Primary Records

For each asylum site a wealth of primary records was consulted, as set out in Table 2.

These primary records provided important data for site and building biographies, building construction and furnishings, building functions, and attitudes of architects, management committees and medical staff to the buildings, patients and staff.

Contemporary published material

A significant source of information for this study was a variety of contemporary published material which may be organised into the following categories:

- Government reports – The separate lunacy administrations of England and Wales, Scotland and Ireland produced separate annual reports, allowing approaches to be compared across jurisdictions. Reports of general government enquiries into insanity and the ‘feeble minded’ were also useful.
- Contemporary newspapers and journals – including national and local newspapers, and architectural journals.
- Medical Journals – particularly the *Journal of Mental Science*, *British Medical Journal* and *The Lancet*
- Longer contemporary works on medical topics, architecture and social and cultural themes

Published material was approached from both a quantitative and a qualitative perspective. Digital searches of books and journals established the frequency of occurrence of important terms, and the ways in which they were used and understood. Published material was qualitatively analysed as part of the relevant discourse. In other words, it is assumed that textual material is part of institutional (e.g. medical, class etc) attempts to constitute human subjects whether these be the insane, the working classes or any other group or class. A discursive approach

Table 2. Primary records consulted.

Site	Item	Where held
Purdysburn	Original plans of asylum buildings	Knockbracken Healthcare Park Estates Dept
	Asylum Annual Reports	Queen’s University Belfast (QUB) Medical Library
	Management Committee Minutes	Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI)
	Miscellaneous brochures, photographs etc	PRONI
Kingseat	Asylum Annual Reports	NHS Grampian Archives, University of Aberdeen
	ACDLB Minutes	Aberdeen Central Library
	Site photographs	Historic Environment Scotland
	Garden city archives	Herts Archives and Local Studies; Garden City Collection, Letchworth
Bangour Village	Asylum Annual Reports	Lothian Health Services Archive, University of Edinburgh
	EDLB Minutes	Lothian Health Services Archive, University of Edinburgh
	Site photographs	Historic Environment Scotland
	Historic photographs	Lothian Health Services Archive, University of Edinburgh
	Plans	National Records of Scotland
Dykebar	Asylum Annual Reports	NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde Archives, Mitchell Library, Glasgow
	Renfrew District Lunacy Board Minutes	NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde Archives, Mitchell Library, Glasgow
	Site photographs	Historic Environment Scotland
Alt Scherbitz	Site photographs and maps	Altscherbitz Traditionskabinett
Whalley	Lancashire Asylum Board Minutes	Lancashire Archives, Preston
	Plans	Lancashire Archives, Preston
General Background	Contemporary publications on madness, architecture and cultural and social movements	QUB Medical Library, British Library, Wellcome Library, RIBA Library, Linenhall Library, archive.org

to texts is sceptical about their claims to truth and assumes that the way we think and act is structured by them. It assumes that texts (and indeed images) can be analysed for their use of words or other representations in constructing a particular social world (Rose 2011: 136). For example, characterisations of the insane poor as ‘animal-like’ or lacking in individuality are a part of a discursive formation which entails certain kinds of practices in addressing the ‘problems’ that have been discursively created. Sources were analysed using the methodology outlined by Gillian Rose, which sets out the following steps:

1. looking at your sources with fresh eyes
2. immersing yourself in your sources
3. identifying key themes in your sources
4. examining their effects of truth
5. paying attention to their complexity and contradictions
6. looking for the invisible as well as the visible
7. paying attention to details (Rose 2011: 158)

Having identified contemporary discourses, links were made to asylum materiality, while recognising that the ‘meaning’ of any text or building is unlikely to be amenable to linear, correlative strategies which connect, for example, the specific shape and size of windows to ideas such as ‘health’, ‘surveillance’ or ‘economy’.

Discourse analysis acknowledges the complexity of the connections between material practices and texts and the tendency of both words and built structures to be resonant, evocative and discursively powerful.

1.7. Discussion and conclusion

The methodology was chosen in order to achieve several objectives. A systematic, analytical approach was taken to the physical evidence, namely buildings and their setting, with due weight given to material remains. This allows some of the claims made by medical discourses to be assessed against what was constructed and how it was constructed, noting the precise ways in which medical priorities were enacted. Although archaeological method, in terms of site visits and analysis of materiality, is the means of investigation chosen, this study is interdisciplinary in the sense that previous scholarship from many disciplines has been built upon, and, in particular, a spatial awareness familiar to historical geographers has been vital for the understanding of spatial location and layouts. The firm grounding given by assessment of buildings through site visits, which allows the authenticity of photographic and documentary representations of asylum buildings to be assessed, and the gaps in these representations to be filled, is used as a starting point for the evaluation of the ways in

which asylum environments are connected both to medical discourses and to wider social currents. Documentary and contemporary published evidence has been used in order to seek and pinpoint links to broad cultural trends such as Enlightenment approaches to insanity, individual liberty and Improvement and to particular early twentieth-century manifestations of movements such as degenerationism and environmentalism. But buildings themselves are also considered as part of medical and social discourses relative to the poor insane. In this sense, buildings are not only functional, but also symbolic and representational, and these two aspects frequently overlap and intertwine. An assessment of buildings in the field is of particular use in assessing historiographical claims that asylums were built as warehouses for the unwanted. These claims depend on the assumption that asylum authorities glossed over the true nature of asylum accommodation and that therefore documentary sources must be viewed with some suspicion as self-serving. An assessment of the material nature of asylum accommodation allows these claims to be tested.

The analysis of medical discourses entirely through published and documentary material tends to lead to an understanding of psychiatric thought at this period as uniform and monolithic. The appearance of substantial regional differences in the type and styles of asylum being built is a starting point for an awareness of potential local variations in discourses relating to the insane poor. Although segregation of accommodation is understood to be a feature of asylum evolution during the early twentieth century, site visits provide a much more immediate and direct means, than the study of plans and elevations, of understanding the effect that was intended by asylum builders. However, the effects and uses of asylum buildings as cultural objects cannot solely be attributed to intentions and a synthesis of material and documentary evidence is used to access more implicit meanings of architecture and spaces. Materiality is seen here as representing discourses of various kinds, going far beyond the medical, and adding a deeper dimension to a textual study of the early twentieth-century moment in the social organisation of the insane poor.