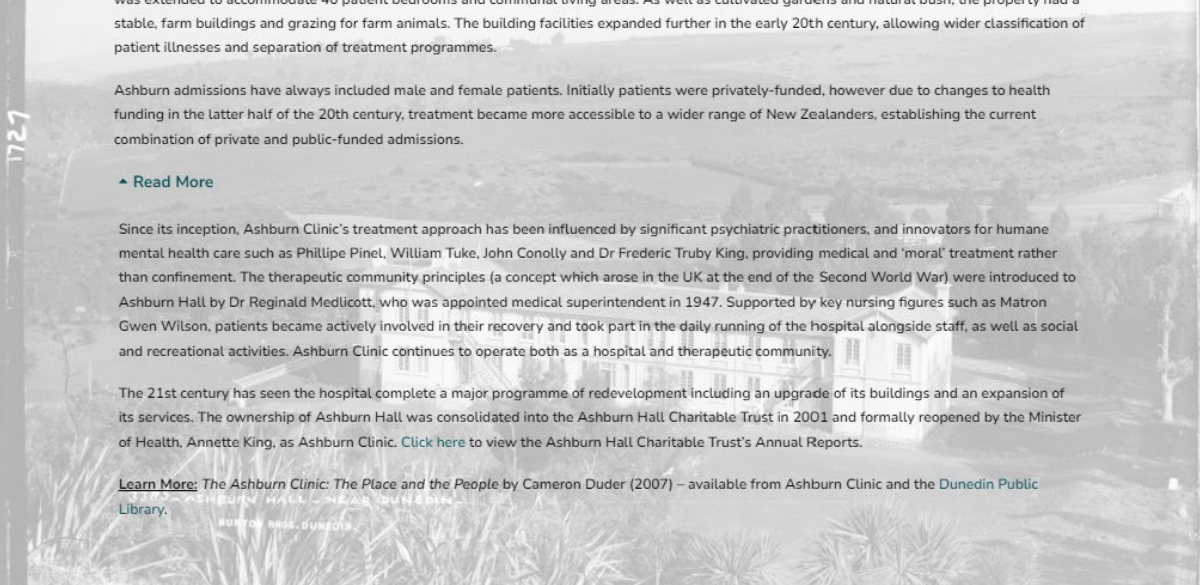




Ashburn Clinic History

1727



In 2012 Ashburn Clinic celebrated its 130th anniversary as New Zealand's oldest private psychiatric hospital. Ashburn Hall (as it was first known) was established by Dr Edward William Alexander and James Hume in 1882, as a humanitarian alternative to state hospital care of the day (eg. public asylums such as Seacliff). Named after the stream running through the estate, the original stone homestead (designed by William Henry Clayton) was extended to accommodate 40 patient bedrooms and communal living areas. As well as cultivated gardens and natural bush, the property had a stable, farm buildings and grazing for farm animals. The building facilities expanded further in the early 20th century, allowing wider classification of patient illnesses and separation of treatment programmes.

Ashburn admissions have always included male and female patients. Initially patients were privately-funded, however due to changes to health funding in the latter half of the 20th century, treatment became more accessible to a wider range of New Zealanders, establishing the current combination of private and public-funded admissions.

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Since its inception, Ashburn Clinic's treatment approach has been influenced by significant psychiatric practitioners, and innovators for humane mental health care such as Phillipe Pinel, William Tuke, John Conolly and Dr Frederic Truby King, providing medical and 'moral' treatment rather than confinement. The therapeutic community principles (a concept which arose in the UK at the end of the Second World War) were introduced to Ashburn Hall by Dr Reginald Medicott, who was appointed medical superintendent in 1947. Supported by key nursing figures such as Matron Gwen Wilson, patients became actively involved in their recovery and took part in the daily running of the hospital alongside staff, as well as social and recreational activities. Ashburn Clinic continues to operate both as a hospital and therapeutic community.

The 21st century has seen the hospital complete a major programme of redevelopment including an upgrade of its buildings and an expansion of its services. The ownership of Ashburn Hall was consolidated into the Ashburn Hall Charitable Trust in 2001 and formally reopened by the Minister of Health, Annette King, as Ashburn Clinic. [Click here](#) to view the Ashburn Hall Charitable Trust's Annual Reports.

[Learn More:](#) *The Ashburn Clinic: The Place and the People* by Cameron Duder (2007) – available from Ashburn Clinic and the Dunedin Public Library.

**Ashburn
Clinic**

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