

A hot bath, a cool customer, a satisfied explorer and a terrified protector

When we moved to Broadmoor in 1959 we were allocated to a five-bedroom house in a half acre garden, no more than 50 yards from the Main Gate of the hospital and the security wall that surrounded the hospital buildings.

Not long after we moved there a patient who was working on the gardens and verges, outside the wall but on the estate, decided to do a bunk. As soon as he was missed rolls were checked and those of us who had specific duties in the event of an escape set the procedures in motion, sirens were sounded, schools and nursing homes in the area notified and I made sure my bunch of official keys were strapped to my belt. Then I decided I would go across the road and see that my dear Dorothy and our precious little daughter – aged 2 – were all right. I walked up to our front door and pushed against it. It was open. I called out to Dorothy something to the effect of ‘Why is the front door open? Don’t you know a patient has escaped? And he has a knife. And everyone for miles around has gathered his or her children up, brought them indoors and bolted and barred the doors and probably armed themselves with a poker or something.’ Dorothy emerged from the bathroom upstairs wrapped in a big bath towel and said ‘When the siren sounded I had nearly filled the bath with hot water and I didn’t want to waste any.’ As for our precious daughter, she had long been able to get out of her playpen and had enjoyed herself sorting through a drawer in Dorothy’s dressing table.