

## Broadmoor Revealed: Some patient stories

### Henry Dodwell (1825-1900)

The Reverend Henry John Dodwell was a Clerk in Holy Orders, and an example of the 'superior' education of some of the Victorian Broadmoor patients. He was also a prime example of the persecuted lunatic, who imagined a system of injustice with himself at the heart of its prosecution. Using his higher learning to articulate his case, he noisily protested his sanity and gained some support for his cause. As Dodwell's personal maelstrom whirled around the legal system, he temporarily sucked in other conspiracy theorists from Victorian England, while garnering attention from members of both Houses of Parliament.

Dodwell was born in Shepperton, Middlesex, on 7<sup>th</sup> October 1825. He attended Bedford Grammar School, and then went to Exeter College, Oxford, where he studied until 1858. He was ordained in 1859. His early career appears to have been rather peripatetic - *Crockford's* described him as being assistant master at Bedford Grammar School 1859-1860, then curate at All Saints Church in Ravensden, Bedfordshire, in 1860. By the 1861 census he was living in St Mary Abbott's Terrace in Kensington, described as a curate and tutor. It appears that he was running a small private school. Kensington remained home for some time, and it was St Mary Abbott's parish that paid towards his upkeep in Broadmoor.

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His next known position was as Chaplain to the Brighton Industrial Schools between 1868-1873. These schools were run by the poor law guardians for the town, and had been built in 1859 as alternative accommodation for children who might otherwise have been in the workhouse. It was in Brighton that Dodwell published his *Corrections of the Public Schools Latin Primer*. But it was here also that, if they hadn't before, things began to go awry for Dodwell.

He would later write that in 1872, he had been told that the Guardians had employed women who had criminal convictions and illegitimate children to train girls at the school. It was also reported to him that the schoolmaster and schoolmistress had been discovered in bed together. The matron had objected to this immoral behaviour, and Dodwell contended that the Guardians had insulted her. He took up the cause, dismissed the offending individuals and remonstrated with the Guardians.

It is difficult to follow exactly what Dodwell thought happened next, but he stated later that the Guardians then sought to alter the time of his Sunday services, and to that end falsified certain returns to the Local Government Board - though he also stated at other times that the falsification was to hide the dismissals of the inappropriate staff. At some point after this he sued the Guardians for libel. Things rapidly got out of hand, and the Local Government Board became involved. Dodwell alleged that the chairman of the Board, James Stansfield MP, demanded Dodwell's resignation due to the

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breakdown in relations between him and the Guardians. What seems more likely is that the Local Government Board implored Dodwell to resign due to his irreconcilable differences with the Guardians. When Dodwell refused to resign, he was removed from his post in March 1873. Dodwell's cause now took on a new form. He appealed to the Board to be re-instated.

Meanwhile, in need of employment, in 1875 he took up the post of headmaster at Colyton Grammar School in Devon. Colyton was a charitably endowed school, close to the south Devon coast and which had recently re-established itself for boarders. By now Dodwell's behaviour must have caused almost immediate concern, as he was dismissed from his post almost as soon as he had begun work. Dodwell's only reference to what happened at Colyton is in one of his letters from around 1888. This letter infers that he was accused of being drunk, and turned out of his appointment by the governors. An appeal to the Charity Commissioners by Dodwell was unsuccessful.

He refused to leave his schoolhouse, and in 1876 the governors of Colyton took action to recover possession of it. At his later trial it was said that Dodwell had instructed a solicitor to represent him, but had then quarrelled with him and dismissed him, neglecting to inform anyone. When the solicitor put in no defence to the school's claim, a judgement was made against Dodwell, and so began Dodwell's close relationship with the English legal system.

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As part of his continuing action, ostensibly about Colyton, he met Sir George Jessel, the Master of the Rolls, for the first time. Jessel was to become a hate figure for Dodwell. This hatred never left him, and when the judge died in 1886 Dodwell penned a sarcastic epitaph which survives in his Broadmoor file. At this first meeting, Jessel was sympathetic to the mistake Dodwell had made with his representation, and set aside the judgement to give Dodwell another chance to defend the governors' action. Jessel subsequently heard the case itself. It was here that Jessel experienced Dodwell's approach to the law for the first time: the governors presented their case, and Dodwell presented a list of grievances, mostly about Brighton. Jessel agreed with the governors that Dodwell had not presented a successful defence to their action, and on this occasion he decided for the plaintiffs.

Undaunted, Dodwell kept his desire to seek legal redress for his dismissals. He pursued his case in other civil courts. In 1877 he and Jessel met again. This time Dodwell had presented a petition of right to the Court of Appeal, asking to be re-instated to his post at the Brighton Schools. Jessel and the other judges had to inform him that they could not make such an order based on a petition. The next week Dodwell tried to introduce a similar case without notice, and the week after he asked for an earlier judgement to be set aside as he had discovered the judge to be corrupt. Every week he would turn up with a new action. Every action failed.

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A frustrated man, and viewed increasingly as a vexatious litigant, Dodwell would later argue his conclusion that he would only have his day in court if he broke the law, and then used the opportunity to draw attention to his plight. To that end, on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1878 he waited for Sir George Jessel to arrive at court in Chancery Lane. As Sir George got out of his cab, Dodwell stood close by. He produced a pistol, pointed it towards Jessel and fired once. Immediately afterwards, as court officials rushed to the scene, he approached the judge and introduced himself, whereupon he was arrested.

Dodwell was charged with two offences - shooting with intent to murder, and common assault. The former depended on a bullet being found - and it was not. Some witnesses testified that something must have been jammed into the pistol - wadding, a stone - but it was all conjecture. It was difficult to prove that Dodwell intended to physically harm Jessel with shot, even if Dodwell had fired a pistol at him.

But this fairly central point gradually became lost in the mist of Dodwell's requisition of the trial for his own use. Dodwell, as was to be expected, conducted his own defence, and he made the most of the opportunity it afforded him, refusing to become bogged down in legal detail and instead intent to prove that the witnesses against him were all unreliable men. His cross-examination of witnesses at the full trial was designed to discover any

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inconsistency in their testimony, no matter how irrelevant to his case. This, together with any evidence of ungentlemanly conduct, would provide proof of the growing conspiracy to deny him justice.

At his committal appearance in Bow Street he had objected strongly to Sir George Jessel speaking to the press about the incident and also about not being able to receive and read the newspapers in prison. It was pointed out to him that one of these objections might not be correct. This first hearing at the magistrates was long, full of Dodwell's interruptions, with the occasional emotional break as he sobbed his way through his injustices. The full trial was much the same. The court sat largely patient as first the witnesses to the event (including Jessel, and, pleasingly for us archivists, the superintendent of works at the old Public Record Office) and then the man who sold the pistol were cross-examined at length by Dodwell. Dodwell stood before the jury and attempted to best one of England's highest judges. He displayed an excellent memory, a keen sense of argument, and the irresistible urge time and time again to try and return the court's business to the Brighton livings of which he had been deprived.

The Governor of Newgate Prison established that Dodwell had sent out reams of Latin verse to various judges, and a scholar was produced in court to translate one. The example read:

'Thus spoke lately the Master of the Rolls. Oh, Press, enable me to deceive, enable me to appear just and upright, throw the darkness of night over my

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sins, and a cloud over my frauds; and let not the shouting boys and hoarse girls vend their wares in Fleet Street or the Strand, lest the Queen, as she runs through the evening papers, may read the unjust judgment, and the well-founded complaints of the oppressed suppliant, and the words of Her Majesty despised; and lest the Lady, who rules over Asia, as an avenger may demand satisfaction both for outraged shame and broken faith. May you suppress with me all rights, divine and human. The Press: Here is your suppressor, if I can be, oh excellent Judge! you who grant one measure of justice to the powerful, another to the needy. Thus have we determined to help the side that is strong.'

The prosecution rested. At this point, Dodwell had his final day in court. In his defence he made what the court transcript describes as 'a long address' to the jury. Newspaper reports indicate that he spoke about the Brighton affair at length, before being encouraged to move on to the crime with which he was charged. He said that within the pistol was not shot, but a ball of paper upon which he had written 'Unfaithful to the true interests of the Crown of England', and it was this that he had fired at Jessel. He then attempted to call one of the Queen's sons-in law as a defence witness but was denied; and then he called the MP for Brighton but asked no questions which could be considered admissible as evidence. Two friends appeared on his behalf to testify that yes, Dodwell was quite obsessed with judges but really not at all cross with them, and finally the old matron at the Brighton

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Schools appeared to say that he had told her he would not rest until he had his inquiry.

Dodwell failed to prove his conspiracy to the court - rather, he was able to increase the list of those who were party to it. Although the jury found him entirely not guilty of attempted murder, he was not guilty of assault only due to his insanity. Just before the verdict was delivered, he attempted to change his plea to guilty of assault. But he had left it too late: the HMP verdict was delivered as it was legally bound to be, and Dodwell arrived in Broadmoor on 30<sup>th</sup> March 1878.

Dodwell may have been suffering from delusions, but the delusions were based on real events, and his suffering struck a chord with a small number of observers. As a result he gained support that was usually not offered to delusional monomaniacs. Immediately that Dodwell was sentenced, views were expressed by these supporters that here was a man ill-treated by the system. No medical witnesses had been called at his trial. He had effectively been given a life sentence for using direct action in his cause, when the usual conviction for assault carried a very short sentence. No one had died; no one had been hurt. He had even been prepared to accept his guilt. What were the rights of an Englishman to protest his legal case, when the courts denied him fair hearing?



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His case was taken up by two eminent physicians, Dr Lyttelton Stewart Forbes Winslow and Dr James Michell Winn. These men wrote letters to *The Times* protesting Dodwell's situation. They were friends and colleagues from slightly outside the mainstream of Victorian psychology. Dr Winn had also been a friend of Forbes Winslow's father, a controversial practitioner called Forbes Benignus Winslow, who had established private lunatic asylums and acted as an expert witness in many celebrated Victorian cases. The junior Forbes Winslow would be most famously part of a plan to section Mrs Georgina Weldon, a society lady who proved an embarrassment to her husband, and who was in reality both sane and a very effective publicist. He was attending to Mrs Weldon at roughly the same time as he attended to Dodwell, and neither case would help his career. When Mrs Weldon sued Winslow for libel and false imprisonment in 1884 the case effectively finished him as a serious doctor. Subsequent to Weldon and Dodwell, and by then largely discredited, Winslow went on to publish works which attempted to solve the Jack the Ripper murders independently of the police. But back in 1878, he believed passionately that Dodwell was a 'sane man...incarcerated in a living tomb.'

Winslow first saw Dodwell while he was in Newgate, awaiting transfer to Broadmoor. He was convinced that the calm, collected clergyman was the genuine victim of legal frustration, brought to a desperate position by the neglect of the judicial system. He sent an independent report to the Home Secretary in April stating that Dodwell had legitimate grievances, that he

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was sane and that he should be released. The Home Office wrote to Broadmoor asking that 'special attention may be directed to Mr Dodwell's case'.

Other likely suspects rallied to the cause. One of these was Edward Kenealy, MP for Stoke-on-Trent. Kenealy had previously been involved in another celebrated legal controversy, that of the Tichborne claimant. The Tichborne case was effectively one of fraud. A gentleman called Arthur Orton pretended to be Sir Roger Tichborne, who had been lost at sea but was heir to a vast fortune. Orton subsequently declared himself to be Tichborne and succeeded in convincing Tichborne's aged mother. Kenealy had acted for Orton after the latter was found out and prosecuted. After losing the case, Kenealy had been disbarred from the legal profession, a fact seized on by radicals as an abuse of power by the state; and it seems reasonable to assume that he would have seen parallels between Orton's case and that of the Dodwell David being threatened by the Jessel Goliath. The Tichborne case gave rise to a whole anti-establishment movement, albeit not a very big one, and Dodwell was aware of it. There are Tichborne pamphlets either sent to or received by Dodwell in his Broadmoor file.

Needless to say, Dodwell's collection of susceptible friends was not the most likely to succeed. Though Kenealy managed to ask questions in the House, they were quickly dismissed. Dr Forbes Winslow continued his letter-writing campaign to *The Times*, but the newspaper itself was convinced that the

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right verdict had been reached, feeling it clear that Mr Dodwell would continue his campaign if left free to do so, and with possibly more serious consequences. This opinion proved to be correct.

The small campaign continued without ever really winning any popular approval. Forbes Winslow visited Dodwell again at Broadmoor in June, together with Dr Winn. The former had his unofficial report on Dodwell's sanity published by the *Journal of Psychological Review* (his house journal) as 'The Case of the Rev Mr Dodwell'. He succeeded in having a further question asked in the House of the Home Secretary in July 1878, this time by Thomas Burt MP - a champion of the miners from Northumberland. The case, as stated now, raised a point about the MacNaughton Rules, the guidelines by which the legal system determined insanity. The principal MacNaughton Rule was that an insane person was not aware that they were doing anything wrong. But Dodwell clearly was aware that he was doing something wrong, and that the consequences were that he would appear in court to answer for it.

The Broadmoor authorities contended that this was too literal an interpretation of MacNaughton. Dodwell had an irrational view of the world, and was not aware of the harm he was causing himself. He did not understand that his actions made it increasingly likely that he would never gain satisfaction. Here was an obsessive person who was a nuisance to himself, and was also now exhibiting his capacity to be a nuisance to

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society. The doctors' view was that if Dodwell were released, he would re-offend. To give him the opportunity to do so would be to fail in their duty of care to protect the public from dangerous lunatics. Dodwell's case can be contrasted with William Chester Minor's, where the authorities had also received warnings about his behaviour. With Minor, those warnings were ignored until he committed murder. With Dodwell, the same delusions of conspiracy were this time used as an alarm signal about future conduct. It had been apparent to everyone in court that Dodwell was insane, and no judge connected with his case wished to be the one to die to prove Dodwell's murderous intent.

Mindful of the small-scale controversy surrounding Dodwell's detention, the Broadmoor doctors had examined him in some detail when he first arrived, and the staff kept up this detailed observation until the end of 1878. They were in no doubt that he was insane. His initial examination concluded that 'the following is the practically insane outcome of his perverted judgment: whoever is not for me is against me and whoever is against me is a liar, a perjurer and no gentleman'. In July 1878, Dr Orange was asked to compile a detailed report for the Home Office, in conjunction with Dr R M Gover, the Medical Inspector of Prisons. This report concluded that Dodwell suffered from 'numerous delusions', was 'unable to estimate the value of acts' and was a dangerous lunatic. Circumstances had shown that Dodwell would pursue his grievance regardless of the consequences either to himself or others.

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Dodwell was placed in Block 2, where William Chester Minor and Richard Dadd also had their rooms. Block 2 was the privilege block, where patients enjoyed comparative freedom and access to facilities and visitors. Once settled, Dodwell asked to be seen by Broadmoor's Council of Supervision, who held the Superintendent accountable to government. Dodwell complained about the violence of the other patients; he complained that an attendant had grabbed him one day by the collar. The Council listened but declared his complaints to be 'trivial, and substantially groundless'. Back in London, the Home Office had two reports to digest on Dodwell's mental condition; one declared him to be the victim of injustice, the other to be a threat to public safety. It was thought best to try and gain an independent view. A third report was commissioned: in September 1878 the Home Office appointed Drs George Fielding Blandford and Henry Maudsley to hold a 'medical enquiry into the mental condition of Mr Dodwell'.

Dr Blandford was a renowned psychiatrist who practised privately in London, as well as being a visiting physician at a private asylum. He had just spent a term as President of the Medico-Psychological Association, and argued strongly that insanity could be attributed to physical causes. Dr Maudsley was one of the most famous names in Victorian mental health care. He had been Superintendent at Manchester Royal Lunatic Asylum, and later took up academic roles at St Mary's Hospital in London, and University College London. He founded the Maudsley Hospital which is now joined to the

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modern Bethlem. Like Fielding, he believed in a physical basis for mental illness, and also that the mind was capable of degenerating. They were well-respected and independent men, and their lengthy report supported the Broadmoor authorities. It concluded that Dodwell was 'undoubtedly a person of unsound mind'. The debates of 1878 were at an end. The noise surrounding Dodwell diminished into the background.

This low-level, but persistent background noise to Dodwell's confinement would continue for most of his stay. Dodwell for one had no intention of stopping his campaign. He believed passionately in his own infallibility, and those who were not with him could be lined up as part of the conspiracy against him. He maintained that the courts had been wrong to deny his petition of right, and that his open-ended punishment did not fit his crime. From the moment he arrived in Broadmoor, he petitioned the managing Council of Supervision monthly to grant him a discharge. He also found a new line of attack - that he was detained in Broadmoor illegally, as the proper paperwork had not been completed (it had). This new line became an equal partner to his obsession with Brighton.

He also took up further grievances against his treatment. The medical staff and management of Broadmoor took the place of Jessel as the principal target of Dodwell's contempt. As early as 20<sup>th</sup> May 1878 Dr Orange reports that Dodwell ignored his attempts at conversation, instead walking away talking loudly and with his fingers in his ears. By June Dodwell was accusing

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Dr Orange of receiving secret orders from the Home Office. In his file survive the many detailed complaints he would subsequently make against the attendants, doctors and the Medical Superintendent himself.

His supporters carried on for a while too. Keneally continued to represent Dodwell in Parliament, and Joseph Cowen MP, another Tyneside industrialist and radical, also wrote in sympathy. The Home Secretary should set a tariff, it was argued, rather than simply detain Dodwell indefinitely. There were however the first signs of trouble to come. Dr Winn was alienated, writing that he would no longer help Dodwell now the latter had 'adopted a course diametrically opposed to my suggestions.' Dodwell also began a campaign of disruption at Broadmoor. He was particularly fond of passing notes, and evidence survives that he attempted to bribe the attendants and other patients to help him escape.

To fill his time he also returned to scholarly work. He had some Latin poetry published in the *Ecclesiastical Art Review* prior to his assault on Jessel, and he now began composing and translating again. He had a high opinion of himself - he made regular reference to a translation he made of Gray's *Elegy* being the finest ever. Though a man of intellectual ability, not everyone agreed that he was creatively gifted. A letter to him about one submission to *The Standard* in 1880 says 'The translation would do credit to a public school boy, but I can find no exceptional excellence in it'.

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We will never know whether Dodwell's story might have had a different ending. As it is, his time in Broadmoor can be neatly divided into before 6<sup>th</sup> June 1882 and afterwards. This was the day when it became apparent that the establishment had been right all along. On that evening Dr Orange came to the Principal Attendant's room in Block 2 to meet Dodwell. Dodwell had requested a meeting in private to discuss a letter he was writing to his brother. This was not uncommon, as Dodwell often wished to go through his case, and from time to time the Superintendent would indulge him. On this particular occasion, Dodwell presented the Superintendent with the letter and other papers to read. While Dr Orange was scanning the dense lines of Dodwell's small and angular italic script, Dodwell suddenly struck him forcibly on the temple with a stone swung in a handkerchief - the Broadmoor weapon of choice for any patient when an assault was required. He tried to strike again but Dr Orange was able to deflect him. Bleeding and badly hurt, the Superintendent managed to stagger away from Dodwell and out into the corridor, whereupon other staff came to his aid. Dodwell followed him out of the room and managed to aim further blows at Dr Orange's head, until he was finally overpowered by two attendants. Pinned to the corridor wall, he dropped his weapon voluntarily.

Initially Dodwell claimed he was within his rights to attack the Superintendent, as the latter was the agent of his unlawful detention. He admitted that it had been a premeditated attack. He stated that the Home Secretary and the Chairman of Broadmoor's Council of Supervision were also



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on his hit list. A few days later, he dropped that reasoning and instead claimed the motive for his attack was to force his elder brother to return from Nova Scotia to fight Dodwell's case for his discharge. He now alleged that it was his brother who had forged the warrant which had conveyed Dodwell to Broadmoor. The attack on Dr Orange became therefore another act that he had been compelled to carry out to bring attention to his case.

He was removed to Block 1, one of Broadmoor's 'back blocks' for dangerous patients, where he would stay until his final illness. One of his supporters wrote that 'as might be expected all your friends have withdrawn from the case.' Dr Orange recovered, but barely. He remained on sick leave for around 8 months until late February 1883, and only then returned full-time for a few years, retiring early in 1886.

Though the assault may have altered Dr Orange's life, it made little difference to Dodwell. He continued his increasingly personal campaign as before. He took up an interest in the case of the Earl of Mar, who had been denied his disputed title by a House of Lords committee in 1875, only to have it restored by the Act of a sympathetic Parliament in 1885, and attempted to extend the Earl's injustices to his own case. A note in his file indicates that as well as his letters to Broadmoor staff, he sent out 84 letters in 1883, 120 in 884 and 62 up to May 1885. A log was kept of the letters he sent. Most letters were long and repetitive, detailing his history and his grievances and setting out his case; many contained Latin poetry; all

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were addressed 'Broadmoor Criminal Lunatic Asylum'. One even made it to the Prince of Wales in 1888, who returned the enclosures politely, while mentioning the weather and the Whitechapel Murders. Dr Nicolson would write in 1891 that 'Mr Dodwell sends a large number of letters of this description to his friends and public officials and personages. Some take no notice, the majority acknowledge the receipt and regret that they are unable to help him - adding perhaps a word of favourable comment upon Mr Dodwell's power of translation and versification'.

The censoring of his correspondence gave Dodwell a new opportunity for complaint, and he began a further campaign to allege his persecution by the Broadmoor authorities. Those authorities had to find the time to read every letter he wrote. They allowed through what they felt safe to do so, sent other letters with covering notes, and only blocked the ones that they felt they would be criticised for letting out. There are various letters on Dodwell's file from people who had received letters from him, and wished Broadmoor to ensure that they would not do so again.

Sadly, Dodwell's behaviour also gradually alienated his family. His eldest brother, who initially helped with his campaign, had joined the ranks of conspirators after the assault on Dr Orange, and Dodwell urged other family members to try and bring him round. Yet in fact his brother remained supportive, as much as he could be without supporting Dodwell's delusions.

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He wrote in 1888 asking if Dodwell could be restored to the privilege Block 2, and he came over from Nova Scotia to visit Dodwell in 1890.

By 1884 Dodwell's case notes record that he now believed his wife Eliza was part of the conspiracy against him. By 1886 he was writing to her as a 'base, dishonourable woman'. Eventually her visits to him stopped completely, and he began to write to his children accusing her of being unfaithful to him. The children wrote back to admonish Dodwell; their mother had brought them up dutifully despite his absence. His four children themselves had endured a socially difficult life. They had been sent to schools for the children of well-to-do folk who had fallen on hard times, and money was tight at home. He tried to cash in an insurance policy but fell foul of its terms and conditions. In his file there is even a begging letter written to the wealthy Dr Minor in Block 2, asking whether the latter could provide some money to help one of his sons in his career. The letter was intercepted and Minor never saw it.

Dodwell kept up correspondence with all of his children, even if his purpose was usually to ask for help with his case. Sometimes the children wrote to Broadmoor, or to the newspapers, or other officials on his behalf. He often tried to smuggle out campaigning letters in his correspondence to them. His sons, Henry and Edward, would write and state their father's delusions as their own, though whether out of conviction or duty is unclear. Only his youngest son, Edward, continued to visit him to the end. In 1885 the

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authorities noticed that Edward had visited him 35 times in 27 days. Something was afoot. It turned out that Dodwell had convinced his son to try and seek an audience with the Queen at Osborne - Her Majesty would be bound to give him justice as she too had been wronged by Dodwell's scandalous treatment. But Edward never got to see the Queen (it is unclear whether she was in or not) and all the planning came to nought.

The other children all fell away over time. A note survives of a visit his eldest daughter made to him in 1891, when she was reduced to tears by his inability to conduct himself in a less cantankerous way. The Superintendent records her saying that 'father was a great trial to them and they did not know what to do as they could not please him'.

And in that brief statement is a summary of Dodwell's unhappy condition. You could not please him, and would never be able to. As he got older and more frail, the question became, as for Minor, whether he would be any longer in a position to harm anyone if he were discharged. The authorities thought so, right to the last. It was Dodwell's keen sense of revenge that worried them. His relationship with his family may have influenced them too. Minor was discharged to a loving brother and extended family; Dodwell remained at war with his own. A petition from his wife when he was unwell in 1898 was taken as being against the run of play - his 'very poor' relations with his wife and outbursts against her causing concern that she might be in danger herself.

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Most people who met Dodwell did not give his sanity a moment's thought. In the Broadmoor archives is a newspaper cutting from *The Referee* in November 1890 which records a reporter's visit to the asylum. During his tour the reporter visits the back block airing court and meets 'a clerical gentleman, who attempted to shoot a high legal dignitary some years ago'. The reporter says that Dodwell immediately came over to him and insisted on being introduced. After the formalities had been completed, Dodwell launched into a broadside against Dr Nicolson, saying that he was 'one of the most awful scoundrels of modern times'.

Nevertheless, there remained attempts to try and gain a discharge. Significantly in 1894 Lord Clifton (later Earl of Darnley) took up his cause, on the grounds that Dodwell had now been in Broadmoor for 19 years for committing a minor assault. Darnley had become aware of Dodwell's case through Harry Wyndham Carter, another Broadmoor patient. Wyndham Carter had been sentenced to five years' imprisonment in 1887 for shooting at two gamekeepers in Kent. He had been transferred to Broadmoor in 1891 and was discharged at the end of his sentence. He had subsequently been detained in Hoxton Asylum but escaped. He believed that he was entitled to be known as Lord Wynchcombe, and that the Queen was part of a conspiracy that was denying him his right to an estate. In 1894 he had written a threatening letter to the Queen, and this time was detained as a pleasure man in Broadmoor. His case was not dissimilar to Dodwell's, as he

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too was from a superior social background and protested that his detention was illegal. His case notes remain closed until 2015.

Darnley was an active member of the House of Lords, as well as being a painter, musician and pacifist. He lived at Cobham Hall in Kent. His father had captained an Ashes winning cricket team, and his daughter, Lady Marguerite Tangye, became a renowned 1930s socialite.

Darnley took up Dodwell's old complaint that the proper legal process had not been followed when Dodwell was removed to Broadmoor. He wrote to the newspapers, he wrote to the Superintendent, he engaged a solicitor and sought legal opinion. When that proved unsuccessful, he attempted to get the original 1878 judgement overturned and sort a retrial. But by 1897 he had given up on that too. He had become another person caught up in Dodwell's vortex. He implored Dodwell to moderate his language and to proceed in a gentler fashion if he had any hope of a successful outcome. Finally despairing of that, he suggested to Dodwell that rather than try for discharge, they might try for a move to a private asylum instead. Even this was to prove a step too far for the authorities.

Dodwell's campaign was gradually coming to an end. And what a campaign it had been. He petitioned for his discharge every year without fail, and every year he found himself rebuffed. Sometimes he would have a petition published in one of the newspapers, sometimes letters would be printed

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from his supporters. He had written thousands of letters himself, to friends, family and prospective supporters; he had been considered by many medical minds; he had questions asked in the House on his behalf and he had peers on his side.

By 15<sup>th</sup> August 1898 he had been removed to the Broadmoor infirmary. He still sent in his petitions, and he took to writing about his case to anyone he had ever worked with, but his health was failing, and he died on 15<sup>th</sup> June 1900 of heart failure. He is buried in Woking Cemetery. His younger son Henry took one last broadside at Broadmoor - 'the place that has so cruelly held him over 22 years' - writing to them that his father had finally been released not by his captors, but by death. Dodwell would have applauded the spirit.

Dodwell's case would probably not warrant more than a footnote in Broadmoor's history were it not for his energetic creation of the written word. Many delusional patients at Broadmoor would repeat their grievances over and over again to anyone they met. Similarly there were other highly-educated patients who found themselves in straitened circumstances at Her Majesty's Pleasure, and yet other patients who remained in care for decades after committing seemingly trivial offences. Their stories can also be found amongst the files. But Dodwell's energy and commitment made him impossible to ignore during his lifetime, and it is his application to his task that is the defining factor in his story. Like Sisyphus, he would push his

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legal rock uphill in a perpetual re-enactment of pointless labour, from which he was as equally unable to escape. He was as industrious as Edward Oxford, as dedicated as William Chester Minor, and had as perfect a recall as Richard Dadd, but ultimately could only channel these abilities into the cancerous consumption of the rest of his life.

Mark Stevens, Berkshire Record Office

### Sources:

Dodwell's story is largely to be found in the Broadmoor archives at the Berkshire Record Office. His case file has been divided into 3 parts (D/H14/D2/2/1/936A-C) due to its size. His case notes can be found in books D/H14/D2/1/1/4 and D2/1/3/1. There are various newspaper cuttings about his case in D/H14/A5/1/1 and 2 (including one letter from him that got through to *The Standard* in 1881). Reports of correspondence with the Home Office about his admission and assault on Dr Orange can be found in the Council of Supervision minute books D/H14/A1/2/1/2 and 3, and the original in-letters are copied into letter books D/H14/A1/2/5/3 and 4.

You can see a transcript of his Old Bailey trials at <http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/browse.jsp?id=def1-365-18780311&div=t18780311-365#highlight> and <http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/browse.jsp?id=def1-366-18780311&div=t18780311-366#highlight>.