# Mabel Cooper’s Life in St Lawrence’s Hospital

## Clothes

The worst thing was I couldn’t wear my own clothes, you had to wear other people’s. Because you never, you never got your own, because the beds were so close together, so you didn’t have a locker or anything, you just went to this big cupboard and helped yourself. There might be six piles of dresses in this big cupboard. They had all the clothes in and you just went and helped yourself. I didn’t like it, that you weren’t allowed to wear your own clothes in them days.

Of course, they had their own shoes. You couldn’t wear your own shoes in them days, you had to wear their shoes and they were horrible. They made them there in the hospital. You never went out for anything, they did everything in the hospital. The clothes were made in the hospital, in the sewing rooms.

## Separation of men and women

On the male side, you see they’re different. The male side was different to the female side, there was a lot more on the female side than there was on the male. You couldn’t mix with the men. You could go to a dance but you’d have men on the one side, women on the other. You could dance with them, but they had to go back, men on one side, women the other side. Even in the dance hall there was two loads of staff in the middle, one full of women and one full of men, and you just danced around the staff in the middle.

### Money

In them days you didn’t have proper money. If they give you any money it’s green, it’s like little green coins. You can’t use it outside, you can’t buy anything outside, you could only use it in their canteen. It was only for sweets.

### Life on the ward

Loads of people used to live in St Lawrence’s. There were loads of them there. In a ward there was about 75, men or women – you couldn’t get men with women. I was in a ward with 75 other women, and the beds were that small, they were that close to one another.

Because there were so many in the hospital, they did no cooking in the kitchen. If you think, 75 in one ward, they couldn’t do cooking in the wards. They had a kitchen there but they did no cooking. They couldn’t teach you to do anything because there wasn’t enough time for the nurses.

The ward was blocked off there were doors. You weren’t allowed to sit on your beds. The beds were that close to one another so you couldn’t have anything private. I didn’t have anything of my own because it would get pinched, the other patients would pinch them.

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