High Royds Hospital, Menston, Ilkley
Richard Mindham

High Royds Hospital was the third of four large hospitals built by the West Riding of Yorkshire County Council to accommodate "pauper lunatics". The hospital was designed by the county engineer J. Vickers Edwards, work began in 1884 and the hospital was opened in 1888. Pavilions were arranged in an echelon formation with the administrative block, which included a tower and clock, at the centre and the service area behind, the whole linked by covered corridors. There were wards designated for the care of patients with epilepsy and other special groups. Subsequently there were many additions to the hospital which included an infirmary, long-stay wards detached from the hospital and a 'neurosis unit' built in the modern style in 1938.

High Royds Hospital photographed by Norman Hodgson, 1995.

The hospital was set in an elevated site about 10 miles from both Leeds and Bradford, surrounded by its own extensive gardens and farm, with high moors on all sides. The hospital was built in a subedued Arts and Crafts style in sandstone from local quarries, with a splendid roof of Westmorland slate with elaborate lead work and finials. Internally, the woodwork was of oak and pitch-pine, the walls were glazed to dado height and the floors were of marble mosaic. The hospital was served by its own water supply, railway line and burial ground. Facing south overlooking its grounds the hospital gave an impression of considerable grandeur.

In 1958 the hospital achieved a population of 2500 patients; thereafter it declined until its closure in 2003. It is a listed building grade II and is in a green belt. The site is being redeveloped for residential use.