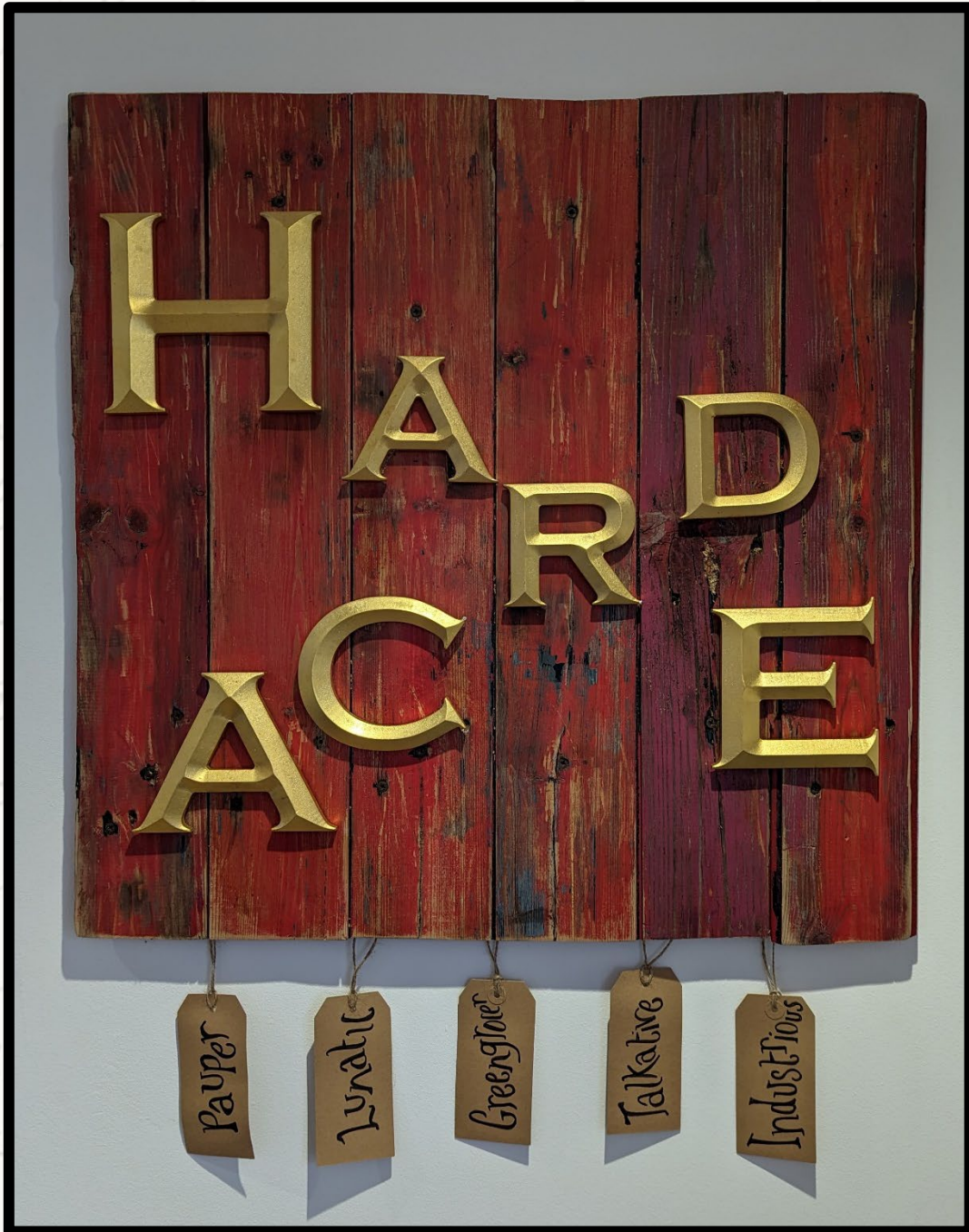


Hardacre

Labels for a Greengrocer.



Reclaimed materials from The Groves, York, including part of an old backyard door, and signage letters from, the now closed, Castle Howard Ox pub on Townend Street, 65 x 65 cm, Stephen Lee Hodgkins, 2023.

In 1873, in The Groves, York, Charles Hardacre, a **greengrocer** seeks help. And within records from the York Poor Law Union Workhouse Committee at that time, under the entry for 'Quantity and Description of Relief in Kind' its states he is offered 'examination and assistance', at the cost of 24 shillings. The 'description of disability' penned in an inky script as '**lunatic**'.

On December 11th 1873 Charles is admitted to Bootham Lunatic Asylum and the 'Registry of Admissions Book (Pauper Patients)' records;

'... Charles Hardacre, admitted as a city pauper patient, is a short, feeble looking man, a greengrocer and by religious persuasion, a Baptist. He has rather small head, brown hair, hazel eyes, with small pupils, and a dull, heavy, unintellectual expression of countenance. Temperament nervous. Complexion pale. General health apparently, very feeble. Appetite bad. He obstinately refuses food. He has a simple [...] hernia which, it seems he has not worn a truss. He has also an inflamed spot on his left ankle apparently from [...] a tight boot, which will probably become an ulcer. He stoops a great deal - and has the aspect of an infirm feeble man. There is no evidence of disease with vascular, respiratory or abdominal. He is fairly clean in his habits. Is unusually quiet and orderly. He is epileptic to the extent of having had 2 fits 4 years ago - but none since. He has attempted to hang himself. He is not considered dangerous to others. He is very taciturn, can be easily induced to speak - save under the influence of an excitement which seems to alternate with great depression, almost assuming the character of [...] he then becomes noisy and talkative. He talks at such times feebly and in a childish manner but fairly coherently. When depressed he says he should like to die. This is said to be the first attack and to have lasted only three weeks - but his wife assures me that he has

*been practically unfit to attend to business for more than twelve months. The disease is hereditary, father, brother, sister having been insane or very eccentric. He has been unfortunate in his business, but no other depressing moral influences seem to have operated upon him. He is fairly educated, has always been and **industrious**. Has had no serious illness. No blows on the head ...'*

On January 30th 1874 Charles is transferred to North Riding of Yorkshire, Lunatic Asylum. On February 1st they write he '*gradually died this morning*'. And on the following day, February 2nd, it is noted that his cause of death was '*disease of the brain and pneumonia*'.

Made from remnants of a reclaimed backyard door and disused letters from the Castle Howard Ox pub on the corner of Townend Street, that Charles may have passed on his way to Bootham Asylum, this piece is a tribute to humans in mental health institutions, past, present and future. While York can boast some innovation in treatment in Victorian times, with 'The Retreat' and its driving of reform for institutions, developments in mental health have been prolific in cataloging, labeling and ostracising, what is essentially a very human experience. Reading through Charles' records and reflecting on the current crisis in support, I wonder what has really changed and think about how it is that we can better frame, respond to, and record our inevitable experiences of mental distress and health.

By Stephen Lee Hodgkins, March 2023. Made as part of the 'Heritage Hunters' community heritage research project with York Castle Museum and The Groves Association.