

Barts and The London: 60 years in the NHS

The hospitals of Barts and The London NHS Trust transferred to National Health Service (NHS) at the time of its creation in 1948. This exhibition gives a glimpse of St Bartholomew's, The Royal London, The London Chest and other related hospitals in the context of the NHS and its history.

It has been created by Barts and The London NHS Trust Archives & Museums and the images you see are part of our collection. We care for the richest and most extensive NHS hospital archives in the United Kingdom, with records dating back to 1137. These include patient, clinical research and business records, as well as important estate records, collections of personal papers and the records of other organisations.

If you would like to discover more about the history of the Trust and its hospitals, you can visit the museums and contact the Archives. Please visit our web site for information (www.bartsandthelondon.nhs.uk/museums) or see the leaflets displayed with this exhibition.



The Museum at St Bartholomew's Hospital has a permanent exhibition of original archives and objects from the Hospital's unique historical collections. It includes works of art, surgical instruments and medical equipment used in the hospital.

Barts possesses one of the finest collections of hospital records in Britain and the oldest record of the hospital dates from 1137. The Archives also hold the records of other related hospitals, institutions, organisations and individuals.



The Museum at The Royal London Hospital has a permanent exhibition of artefacts and archives relating to the hospital and the history of health care in the East End. Works of art, surgical instruments, medical and nursing equipment, uniforms, medals and written archives and printed books are included.



The archives of The London (now Royal London) Hospital date back to 1740, although patient records are only complete from 1883. The Archives hold records of numerous other hospitals, charities, training institutions and individuals.



Waiting for the NHS

The early twentieth century saw many hospitals under financial strain. The hospitals which today form Barts and The London NHS Trust all faced this problem. St Bartholomew's Hospital received no paying patients and no money from the taxpayer, and was dependent on its endowments and voluntary donations for its survival - as it had been since its foundation in 1123.

The London Hospital, founded in 1740, was not free from such financial worries either: as the largest voluntary general hospital in Britain it also had the highest expenditure. The hospital had to ask those with a little money to contribute towards the cost of their treatment. This was also the case at the London Chest Hospital, where admission had to be restricted to patients with a governor's recommendation. In the 1930s the Queen Elizabeth Hospital for Children expanded its facilities to accommodate a steadily rising number of out-patients, but struggled to meet the resulting costs. Treatment at Queen's was free, but those who had means were expected to contribute towards the cost.

The demands placed upon the hospitals by new medical techniques and developments, together with the additional patients that these brought, were increasingly difficult to meet. Beds were in great demand, and voluntary hospitals like Barts and The London could not provide for the chronically sick or the mentally ill.

It was against this background that the NHS was planned.



▲ A horse-drawn float appeals for funds during 'Fleet Street Week for Barts', c1925 (SBHX8/608).



▲ A crowd of visitors waiting outside Barts, 1939. Visitors had to obtain admission cards, and for many years were only allowed access to the wards on Wednesdays and Saturdays (SBHX8/600).

▶ Appeal leaflet issued by the London Chest Hospital in 1936 (RLHLC/A/7).



▶ An appeal for funds for The London Hospital, c1900 (RLHLH/A/26/11).

▶ Barts appeals for funds to rebuild the hospital, 1939 (SBHX8/1483).



▶ Queuing silently at the Barts out-patients Dispensary, 1929. Patients collected medicine in their own bottles (SBHX8/195).



▶ Clock collecting box, c1910. Collecting boxes such as this would have stood in public places across London (RLHINV/67).

▶ 'Ward closed' sign being hung outside Yarrow Ward, London Hospital, closed due to lack of funds, 1920 (RLHLH/P/1/14).



The establishment of the NHS



Bomb damage at The London Hospital resulting from a V1 flying bomb which fell in August 1944 (RLHLH/P/5/4). Barts too suffered several strikes during the Second World War.

The threat of the Second World War, and particularly of bombing, compelled Britain to reorganise its hospital service. The Emergency Medical Service, set up to treat troops, evacuees and bombing casualties, proved that a state organised health service could be run. Voluntary hospitals such as Barts and The London benefited greatly from payments under the Emergency Medical Service, and became used to state co-ordination. The concept of a national health service was becoming acceptable.

Based on an Act of Parliament passed in 1946, the National Health Service came into being on 5 July 1948. 'Vesting day', as it was known, was one of the great days of British history: the Minister of Health, Aneurin Bevan, declared that the new service would 'lift the shadow from millions of homes'. The rush for National Health glasses, dental treatment and hospital care which followed proved him correct.

However, Bevan had also been right when he predicted 'we shall never have all we need. Expectation will always exceed capacity'. Within months, the NHS faced a great financial crisis: initial spending was two-thirds higher than had been predicted. This was not to be the last such difficulty.

Portrait of Bertard Dawson, Viscount Dawson of Penn (RLHLH/P/3/23 DAWSON). A London Hospital and royal physician, Lord Dawson was a powerful advocate of a national approach to health care and his ideas influenced the White Paper which preceded the National Health Service Act of 1946.



Plaque commemorating gifts towards re-equipping the Pathological Department of the London Chest Hospital following bomb damage by branches of 'Bundles for Britain, USA, 1941 (RLHLC/P/5/2).



Aneurin Bevan, sketch by Low, 1935 (National Portrait Gallery, London, no. 4529 - 23). As Minister for Health in 1948, Bevan introduced the National Health Service.

Portrait of Clement Atlee (1883-1967), 1st Earl Atlee, by George Harcourt, 1946 (National Portrait Gallery, London, no. 4593). Atlee became Prime Minister in 1945 with a huge Parliamentary majority. His Labour government carried through a series of major reforms which included not only the NHS, but nationalisation of air, road and rail transport, the coal industry and the Bank of England. His government also granted independence to India in 1947.



Rebuilding plans for The London Hospital, 1947. Expectations were high, but capital spending was not an initial NHS priority (RLHLH/A/27/1).

View Day at Barts, 1943 (SBHX8/824). The hospital's Treasurer, George Aylwen (pictured 2nd from right), was closely involved in planning the place of Barts in the NHS.

The last meeting of the governors of The London Hospital, 1948. The Court had been the governing body of the hospital since its establishment in 1740. At The London and at Barts, people who had held senior posts retained them after the establishment of the NHS, doing much to ensure a smooth transition from voluntary to national hospital. As teaching hospitals, they retained their charitable property and other endowments, the income from which is still used, by Barts and The London Charity, for the benefit of patients of the hospitals and to support medical research (RLHLH/P/5/5).



Editorial from the journal 'The Hospital' commenting on the introduction of the NHS and reminding readers that 1948 marked the centenary of the Public Health Act of 1848 (RLH Archives reference library collection).

NHS patient care

With the establishment of the National Health Service, the clinical services of St Bartholomew's and The London hospitals were nationalised, and as taxpayers the patients were now part owners. This was a vast change from the previous voluntary hospital system, whereby patients were the recipients of subsidised charity. However, the spirit of service that had characterised Barts and The London remained, and treatment was of the highest standard.

These pictures tell two stories: the first, a day in the life of a London sister in 1948; the second, of the progress of a 1950s Barts patient through operation, recuperation and on to discharge.

Ward round of Clifford Wilson, Professor of Medicine, Helene Raphael Ward, London Hospital, 1948 (RLHLH/P/1/15).



A patient receives a visitor on Helene Raphael Ward at The London, 1948 (RLHLH/P/1/15). Before the introduction of the NHS, Helene Raphael and Rothschild wards received considerable support from the Jewish community.



Sister stays with a patient about to have an operation until she is anaesthetised (RLHLH/P/1/15).



Sisters eat dinner in the Sisters' dining room (RLHLH/P/1/15).

London Hospital Matron Clare Alexander chairs a meeting of the Sports Association in a nurses' home sitting room (RLHLH/P/1/15).

Sister reads The London Hospital prayer, Helene Raphael Ward, 1948 (RLHLH/P/1/15).



A casualty patient is wheeled to the theatre, prior to an operation (SBHX8/491).

Careful feeding soon after the operation (SBHX8/497).

The process of recuperation. The first antibiotic, penicillin, had been developed to treat troops during the war, but antibiotics were expensive and scarce. Without such drugs, recovery was a slow process (SBHX8/498).



A handshake of thanks, and the patient leaves Barts (SBHX8/500).

The staff of the NHS

St Bartholomew's and The London, which had previously governed themselves, received newly appointed Boards of Governors with the introduction of the National Health Service. The London Chest's governors formed a joint Board with the Brompton Hospital. Many worried that the start of the new system would bring unwanted changes to their hospitals, but these fears proved to be unfounded. Those people who had held senior posts retained them after the establishment of the NHS, doing much to ensure a smooth transition. The hospitals' less eminent, but equally important, staff remained too, and daily life continued much as it had for them. These pictures give an impression of the range of people involved in the running of the hospitals, before and after the establishment of the NHS. Varied as they are, there are still many not represented here - gardeners, photographers, drivers, and cashiers - all of them crucial to the smooth running of the hospitals.

London Hospital Orthopaedics Department staff, c1952, including: Mr Bill Wells (back far left), Miss Robson (back 2nd left), Mr Christopher Attenborough (back 3rd left), Miss Vaughan (front far left), Miss Bevington (front centre) and Miss Bright (front far right) (RLHLH/P/6/10).



Group of Barts medical students, April-June 1949 (SBHX8/1309).

Sir John Mann, Chairman, addressing 300 medical staff in the out-patient hall at The London, 2 February 1954 (RLHLH/P/3/21/MANN).

Nurses at Bethnal Green Hospital at a training certificate and badge awarding ceremony, c1962 (RLHBG/P/12).

Night duty at the telephone exchange, Barts, 1940 (SBHX8/796).



Lay staff canteen at The London, 1951 (RLHLH/P/2/20).



'The London's many faces' - an artist's impression of some of the occupations and professions represented in the hospital, 1989 (RLHLH/P/6/30).



Clerical staff welcoming patients and dealing with their appointments, c1950 (SBHX8/571).



Head porter beside consultants 'in the house' panel in the refurbished front hall of The London Hospital, 1969 (RLHLH/P/6/12).



A staff dance at the German Hospital, c1970 (SBHG/HP/9/2/2).

Group photograph of senior nursing staff of the London Chest Hospital, 1988 (RLHLC/P/4).



Recipients of 25 year long service awards to staff at The Royal London, 1993 (RLHBL/P/4).

Royalty and the NHS

Nurses eagerly await the arrival of royal visitors at the laying of the foundation stone of Queen Mary's Nurses' Home at Barts, 1921 (SBHX8/722).



Queen Alexandra visiting the Garden Fete at The London Hospital, 1923 (RLHLH/X/12/48). She is accompanied by Hospital Chairman Sydney Holland, 2nd Viscount Knutsford.

Each of the hospitals which together now form Barts and The London NHS Trust have had, and retain, strong links with the Royal family. The foundation of Barts in 1123 was dependent on royal support, and the King, Henry I, gave his protection to the monks and poor of the hospital. King Henry VIII is also particularly associated with Barts, as he was responsible for the re-founding of the hospital in 1546/7. The first royal President of Barts was the Prince of Wales, later Edward VII, who was elected in 1867. The establishment of the NHS did not bring an end to these strong ties, and the present President is HRH The Duke of Gloucester.

The London Hospital too has a long tradition of royal patronage: the first President (in 1741) was the grandson of Charles II, and successive Presidents and Patrons have always been members of the Royal family, including Queens Alexandra and Mary. Queen Elizabeth II is the Patron of the Hospital today. On The London's 250th anniversary in 1990, Her Majesty granted it a royal title - The Royal London Hospital - and it is one of only two hospitals so honoured during her reign. The other royal title was granted to the Brompton group of hospitals, of which the London Chest Hospital formed a part. The Chest has enjoyed royal support since its inception in 1848.

The Royal family continue to support the work of Barts and The London NHS Trust. For instance, Her Majesty The Queen visited The Royal London Hospital to personally thank staff for their role in treating people injured in the 7 July 2005 London bomb attacks.



Princess Elizabeth makes her first public speech as President of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital for Children, 1944 (RLHQE/P/3).

The Duke of Gloucester, President of Barts, visiting a casualty of the Second World War, 1941 (SBHX8/690).



Queen Mary, President of The London Hospital, stands beside a statue of her predecessor as President, Queen Alexandra, in the hospital garden, 1945 (RLHLH/P/3/5).

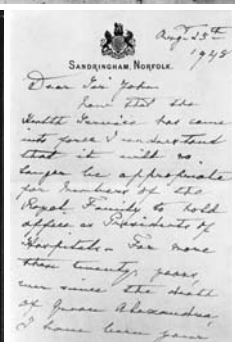
King George VI and Queen Elizabeth are greeted by the Lord Mayor of London, 1946 (SBHX8/830). They were visiting Barts on the 400th anniversary of its re-foundation by King Henry VIII.



Part of a letter from Queen Mary to Sir John Mann expressing her regret at having to give up the Presidency of the London Hospital under the arrangements for the introduction of the NHS, 1948 (RLHLH/A/25/29).

First visit as Patron to The London Hospital by Queen Elizabeth II, 1952 (RLHLH/P/3/6).

Queen Elizabeth II at the opening of the Queen Elizabeth II Block at Barts, 1961 (SBHX8/750).



Queen Elizabeth II visiting Grosvenor Ward, The Royal London Hospital, at the opening of the Queen Elizabeth Children's Service, 1988 (RLHLH/P/3/6).



Queen Elizabeth II thanks Helicopter Emergency Medical Service staff at The Royal London for their role in treating people injured in the 7 July 2005 London bomb attacks (RLHLH/P/3/6).