

# History of Royal Manchester Children's Hospital

The hospital at Pendlebury was the first in the UK to treat only children when it opened.

In **1829** Dr Alexander and surgeon Mr Stott, along with several other benefactors including Daniel Grant, established a small dispensary at No 25 Back King Street in Manchester city centre. Mr Grant was one of Charles Dickens' 'Cheeryable' brothers, a firm of solicitors mentioned in Nicholas Nickleby. The dispensary was supported by donations, annual subscriptions, and a very small income. It treated around 1,500 children each year.



By **1852** an abundance of donations enabled a small hospital with six in-patient beds for the treatment of urgent cases to be built.

Also at this time, a new Medical Superintendent, Dr Louis Bochart, was appointed, replacing Dr Alexander who left the Manchester area. Due to the fever prevalent in the over-crowded area of Salford, he sought more accommodation.

**1858** - The hospital moved to Bridge Street with 25 beds and a special ward for infectious diseases.

The five fever beds served the whole district and were soon seen to be woefully inadequate. It was decided to build a large hospital out of area with a dispensary still in town to provide medical relief.

**1868** - At Gartside Street, near the old dispensary a 'plain, but substantial' building was erected.

By now 7,000 patients were treated each year and 350 admitted into hospital. Almost six acres of land was then purchased in Pendlebury, costing £450 per acre.

In **1873** the new hospital was built. It had three wards taking 26 cots, with a smaller ward for specialised treatment.

**1878** - a bazaar in the Free Trade Hall raised £24,000 to build three more wards providing a total of 180 beds.

Over the next ten years, more than 80,000 patients were treated. A key policy was the dispensary not just being there to cure the patient but to prevent the onset of disease in the first place. Information on nutrition and personal hygiene was issued to try to reduce the appalling infant mortality in the district.

**1904** - The hospital went from strength to strength with an appeal raising £20,000 for a modern out-patients department and a new operating theatre.

A further £12,000 was raised with which land was purchased and the new facility built on the old site, but extended backwards from Gartside Street to double its size.

**1907** - The new building was opened in March.

**1911** - Six wards in the hospital had all been named:

**Borchardt Ward** - named after the medical officer whose efforts ensured the building of the hospital.

**Heywood Ward** - Mr O Heywood was the vice-president of the Board of Governors from 1860 to 1895 and was president until his death.

**Holden Ward** - was originally named South Ward but re-named in 1899 after a donation of £10,000 from the trustees of Mr Holden's will.

**Libert Ward** - after Mr B Libert who donated £300 to the building fund in 1872.

**Victoria Ward** - originally after the nursed home, but in 1902 altered to a medical ward and named after the late Queen.

**Wrigley Ward** - originally North Ward but renamed after Thomas Wrigley who left £10,000 in his will in 1881.

The Royal Manchester Children's Hospital saw major developments between the two world wars:

**1921** - Completion of well-equipped physio-therapeutic department

**1923** - The distinction 'Royal' conferred King George IV recognised valuable service to the community

**1925** - First private beds introduced

**1936** - Zachary Merton Convalescent Home opened

**1937** - Isolation block opened

During World War II, plans to evacuate children were never implemented.

**1946** - The US Army gave the hospital an ambulance to replace the existing and unreliable vehicle.



The hospital was a leading force in the training of nurses with any nurse in the Salford Hospitals Group wanting to qualify had to follow her three year's training with a further year at Royal Manchester to gain her Sick Children's Nursing Certificate.

**1921** The nurse training scheme introduced by the Royal Manchester Children's Hospital was approved by the recently formed General Nursing Council.

**1923** Nursing hours were reduced from 63 to 54 hours per week, which meant that more nurses were required.

**1924** A nurse's home accommodating 66 nurses, was completed with the building being extended in 1937.



When the NHS was born in 1948, the board were slightly doubtful whether this would benefit patients as they regretted the end of a small efficient, voluntary hospital, not bogged down in bureaucracy.

At the time of the NHS takeover, there were 256 beds, the average length of stay was 14.69 days, occupancy ran at an average of 210, the total number of operations was 4,325 and 49,908 patients attended the Dispensary.

Improvements continued:

**1955** - A new theatre autoclave was opened.

**1960** - Old laundry closed and converted into a teaching unit and a hospital school.

**1961** - New twin theatres, new admission unit and pharmacy were started.

However, in the early 1960s, the Ministry of Health suggested the closure of Royal Manchester Children's Hospital and a larger children's unit to be opened at Hope Hospital in Salford. This created an air of uncertainty hanging over its futures and general neglect and a lack of investment. But the hospital saw an upturn in its fortunes following the efforts of the then Chairman Mr F A Willink. A new biochemistry laboratory was opened and now carries his name.

**1978** - Plans were abandoned to move the Royal to Hope.

Open visiting was initiated at the hospital in the mid 1960s along with the idea of mother and baby staying in the same room during treatments. This grew and led to the building of a parents and accommodation block.



Since the move to the Oxford Road site (Manchester) in the Summer of 2009, it is now the largest children's hospital in the UK and provides services for 200,000 children each year across a range of specialities including oncology, haematology, bone marrow transplant, burns, genetics and orthopaedics.

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