

History of the Manchester Royal Eye Hospital

The decision that brought Manchester Royal Eye Hospital into being was taken at the Bridgewater Arms in the centre of the city, on 21st October 1814. Recent increased interest in the blind and eyecare in general led one William James Wilson to start the ball rolling on the now-fashionable King Street. 194 years ago, the general public were trailing to a tiny house with rent of £25 a year to have their inversion of the eyelids and strumulous inflammation attended to - footballers parading with oversized shopping bags were a world away.

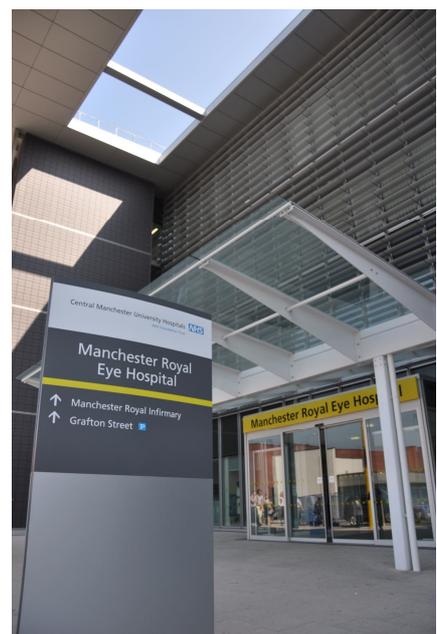


The first house surgeon was appointed in 1883, but these were humble beginnings for the institution. The surgeon also had to act as secretary for the hospital, which at the time housed 24 beds. 3,000 patients were treated per year, including 155 in-patients and 470 victims of accidents. Ailments ranged from the exotically named 'eversion' and 'lippitudo' to the less exotic 'wounds of the eyeball'. Annual expenditure ran to £200, with essential, cutting-edge treatments such as leeching and cupping taking up almost a quarter of the budget.

The hospital moved to Faulkner Street in 1827, Princess Street in 1874, St John's Street in 1882, and finally to its present site on Oxford Road in 1884. Here, expansion quickened. There was an extension in 1909 which meant the annual number of outpatients hovered around the 35 000 mark, with around 2 500 in-patients being treated each year.

The hospital continued to grow throughout the 20th Century, surviving two world wars and thriving under the National Health Service, eventually becoming the world-renowned Service it is today.

Currently, the Hospital boasts a multitude of services at patients'



disposal, including The Emergency Eye Centre, The Acute Referral Centre, Ophthalmic Imaging, Ultrasound Unit, Electrodiagnosis, Laser Unit, Optometry, Orthoptics, Manchester Eye Bank and the Ocular Prosthetics Department. These services are to be expanded once again once the new redevelopments come to fruition in 2009.

A long way from a surgeon/secretary performing leeching and cupping for the populace's wounded eyeballs.



Photos (from top): The Eye Hospital when it moved to the Oxford Road site; the Eye Hospital from 2009; Official opening of the new Manchester Royal Eye Hospital on 23rd March 2012.

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