Introduction

This historical walking tour is available in audio format. It can be downloaded from the iziTravel app: https://izi.travel/app or the Queen Mary University of London website: www.smd.qmul.ac.uk/about/history

This walking tour was produced by staff at The Royal London Hospital Museum, and the English Museum, produced by staff at The iziTravel app: https://izi.travel/app.

Access Information

The Royal London Hospital Museum

The iziTravel app: https://izi.travel/app

Introduction

Sir Frederick Treves
(1853-1923)

Frederick Treves was born in Dorchester in 1853. His father William was a cabinet maker and upholsterer. He was educated at the Merchant Taylors’ School and The London Hospital Medical College where he qualified in 1875. He became a House Surgeon and then Assistant Surgeon to the hospital by 1879. As well as a talented surgeon, Treves was a keen sportsman and was instrumental in establishing the Clubs Union at the Medical College. He published many important works on surgery and anatomy pioneered the operation to remove the appendix. He served in the Boer War with his own surgical unit and famously operated on Edward VII before his coronation. He retired in 1908 and wrote popular travel literature as well as his reminiscences of Joseph published shortly before his death in 1923.

Joseph Carey Merrick
(1862-1890)

Joseph was born in Leicester in 1862. His mother and father ran a haberdashery shop. His younger brother, William died aged 4 and his mother died when Joseph was only 10. He went to school until aged 13 and worked until this impossible. After time in the workhouse, Joseph returned to London, destitute, having been operated on Edward VII before his coronation. He remained a resident there until his death in 1890. His skeleton was preserved by the Medical College under the terms of the Anatomy Act for the benefit of medical science.

Eva C E Lückes
(1854-1919)

Eva Lückes was born into an upper middle-class family in 1854. She began her nursing career in 1876 at the Middlesex Hospital and completed her training at Westminster Hospital in 1878. After appointments at The London Hospital, Manchester General Hospital and Great Ormond Street she was successful in applying for the position of Matron at The London Hospital at the age of just 26. She immediately set about introducing reforms to improve the standard of nursing at the hospital. Probationer nurses were expected to complete two years of training with another year following the examination. Eva Lückes established the Private Nursing Institution in 1885, the Preliminary Training School in 1895, and ensured that the nursing staff were provided with improved accommodation. She remained as Matron even through ill health until her death in 1919.

Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1740</td>
<td>Foundation of The London Hospital</td>
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<tr>
<td>1757</td>
<td>The Hospital is given a Royal title by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II</td>
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<td>1785</td>
<td>First operation conducted under anaesthetic</td>
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<td>1847</td>
<td>Medical College building opened</td>
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<tr>
<td>1887</td>
<td>First X-rays used at the hospital</td>
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<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>Out-Patients department opened</td>
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<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td>Hospital becomes part of the newly formed NHS</td>
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<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>Hospital merge with Queen Mary University of London</td>
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<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Royal London Hospital (former London Hospital) on Whitechapel Road admits patients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Blue Plaque ceremony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Royal London Hospital building opened</td>
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Credits

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Project partners

Catherine Cusack

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– Dr Angharad Eyre

– Christopher Adams

– Richard Meunier and Dr Nadia Valman

Discover more

The Royal London Hospital Archives has a wealth of information about the history of the hospital and Medical College.

Appointments must be booked in advance of visiting.

www.bartshealth.nhs.uk/museums-and-archives

Centre of the Cell is a science education centre based in working biomedical research laboratories.
The London Hospital and the market

We begin our trail in 1884, in the heart of Victorian Whitechapel. A young London Hospital surgeon, Frederick Treves, is informed of a curious exhibit in a former shop at what is now 259 Whitechapel Road. This chance encounter would alter his life forever and that of Joseph Carey Merrick, ‘The Elephant Man’.

Joseph was born in Leicester in 1862 and his early life was filled with tragedy and hardship. He spent time in the workhouse in Leicester before joining a travelling freak show which brought him to the East End of London.

Frederick Treves had been a student at The London Hospital Medical College in the 1870s and was a rising star in the medical profession, destined for greatness.

Direction: cross over Whitechapel Road and walk down Turner Street towards the Garrod Building, part of Barts and The London School of Medicine and Dentistry.

The London Hospital Medical College

In 1785, the first purpose built Medical College in England opened. In its first century it had trained many notable doctors and surgeons such as John Langdon Down (who classified Down’s syndrome) and Thomas Barnardo (founder of the children’s charity).

The College kept an extensive collection of specimens as part of the pathology and anatomy museums. Former curators of the collection include Frederick Treves and Thomas Horrocks O’Shaw.

Joseph was first taken to this building in 1884 and studied by Treves who was interested in his condition. Joseph’s skeleton is still part of the collection today but only accessible to researchers who have an interest in medical humanities, the genetics of Proteus syndrome (believed to be Joseph’s condition) or the changing social attitudes to disability.

Direction: you may enter the building through the main entrance. There is a display of historical material in the foyer and a portrait of Frederick Treves visible by the staircase. Exit the building and walk back up Turner Street, then turn right when you reach Whitechapel Road.

The London Hospital in the 1880s

Since its foundation in 1740, The London Hospital had grown in size and reputation to become the largest voluntary hospital in the country. The Hospital was at the forefront of medical innovation in the nineteenth century.

In 1880, a young woman named Eva Lückes (bottom left) was appointed as the new Matron. During the 1880s she set about reforming and professionalising the nursing school. Her pioneering work had a lasting impact on the training of nurses.

By 1886, Joseph was destitute and, having made his way back to London from Europe, he arrived at Liverpool Street Station where an excited and curious crowd gathered. Treves was called by the police as fortunately Joseph was still carrying Treves’ calling card. At the behest of Treves and the London Hospital Chairman, Francis Carr-Gomm, Joseph was admitted as an in-patient.

Direction: pass along the front of the old hospital until you reach East Mount Street. Follow signs for the main entrance to the new hospital and walk past a café area, then pass through the long corridor which brings you to the Stepney Way entrance/exit. After exiting the building, cross the road and walk up to the statue opposite.

Joseph’s life at the hospital

The appeal to keep Joseph at the hospital raised a considerable sum of money and he was moved from Cotton Ward to his own rooms in the basement of the East Wing of the hospital (see right). He was not always confined to the hospital. On occasions he was taken to the countryside and also the theatre. His relationship with Frederick Treves became much closer; Treves grew to understand Joseph as a person rather than a patient and his visitors included notable members of society such as the actress Madge Kendal and even royalty.

Direction: Walk through the main entrance to the new hospital and walk past a café area, then pass through the long corridor which brings you to the Stepney Way entrance/exit. After exiting the building, cross the road and walk up to the statue opposite.

Queen Alexandra

In 1887, the Prince of Wales (later Edward VII) and Princess Alexandra (opposite) visited the hospital to open the Medical College building and nurses’ home. Alexandra paid a visit to Joseph which touched him deeply.

This statue also features a relief which shows the Finsen Light department (bottom right), made possible by Princess Alexandra who acquired the first Finsen lamp for the hospital in 1900. She became the hospital’s President in 1904.

In 1902, shortly before Edward VII was to be crowned, he was diagnosed with appendicitis. Treves performed the very risky operation which saved the King’s life.

Direction: Continue up to Newark Street and turn right until you reach the museum entrance. If the museum is open (please see access information) then continue through the gate and down the ramp to the entrance.

The Royal London Hospital Museum

We end our journey at the former church of St Philip with St Augustine. The building is now the Medical Library and has been extensively restored. The church was completed in 1892 shortly after Joseph’s death.

The museum is located in the crypt at the eastern end of the church and tells the story of the Royal London Hospital and the development of medicine in the East End.

Joseph Merrick is featured in the display amongst notable figures such as Edith Cavell, Eva Lückes and there is material on the Whitechapel Murders of 1888.