

London Metropolitan Archives

Information Leaflet Number 34

Hospital records



Introduction

Before the National Health Service was established in 1948, health care for those unable to afford private treatment was provided either through charitable institutions such as hospitals and dispensaries or under the Poor law or by local authorities. Over 80 hospitals, many now closed, have deposited their records in London Metropolitan Archives (LMA). The extent of our holdings for each hospital ranges from one volume or document to hundreds of feet of archives. Some more recently deposited collections have not yet been fully catalogued. Special arrangements can be made in advance to view uncatalogued records.

The Royal Hospitals

After the dissolution of the monasteries in the 16th century, some of these religious hospitals were re-established as secular institutions, known as the Royal Hospitals, and placed under the administration of the City of London by the Crown. The archives of the City of London Corporation include some administrative records relating to the management of these Royal Hospitals, especially before 1782, amongst the Repertories (proceedings) of the Court of Aldermen, London. However most of the archives of the Royal Hospitals were kept by the individual hospitals. St Thomas' Hospital has deposited its archives at LMA as have Christ's Hospital (for the education of poor children – see Information Leaflet No. 29) and Bridewell (which became King Edward's School, Witley – see Information Leaflet No. 30). The archives of St Bartholomew's Hospital are in the care of St Bartholomew's Hospital Archives and Museum, North Wing, St Bartholomew's Hospital, West Smithfield, London EC1A 7BE. The archives of Bethlem Royal Hospital are in the care of Bethlem Royal Hospital, Archives and Museum, Monks Orchard Road, Beckenham BR3 3BX. LMA has microfilms of the minute books of the Court of Governors of Bridewell and Bethlem (CLC/275/MS33011) and General Committee (CLC/275/MS33016) as well as other records relating to Bethlem amongst the Bridewell archives.

Voluntary Hospitals

During the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries many charitable hospitals and dispensaries were founded to provide free health care for the poor. With the exception of Guy's Hospital which was founded by Thomas Guy and endowed with landed estates to pay for running the hospital, the income to maintain these hospitals came mainly from annual donations from subscribers who had the right to nominate patients. Medical staff gave their services free of charge. In addition to St Thomas' Hospital, LMA holds the archives of three other major London teaching hospitals - Guy's, St George's and Westminster Hospitals - as well as archives of many smaller

local hospitals such as Battersea General Hospital, Brentford Hospital, the Miller Hospital at Greenwich, Putney Hospital, the Royal Northern Hospital, and Woolwich Memorial Hospital. Other hospitals provided treatment for particular types of patients or for people suffering from specific diseases.

Dispensaries

Dispensaries were a means of providing free or inexpensive medical treatment and advice for the poor who did not need (or could not afford) a stay in hospital. By 1802, dispensaries in London were serving over 50,000 patients annually. LMA holds the records of a number of dispensaries, many of which developed into hospitals, such as Brentford Dispensary (later Brentford Hospital), the Royal Kent Dispensary (later Miller General Hospital) and the Royal Universal Dispensary for Children (later Royal Waterloo Hospital). Records for these dispensaries will be found in the relevant hospital collections. Records also survive for the London Dispensary (A/LD), Surrey Dispensary (A/SD) and Metropolitan Dispensary (P69/GIS/D/051-054, MS06472, 08473, 09358 and 10945) which remained independent. Of these, substantial patient records only survive for the Surrey Dispensary. On the creation of the National Health Service in 1948 many of the dispensaries closed.

Hospitals for Women and Children

Records of four maternity hospitals founded in mid-18th century London have been deposited in LMA. These are the British Lying In Hospital, Holborn, the City of London Maternity Hospital, Finsbury, the General Lying In Hospital, York Road, Lambeth, and Queen Charlotte's Hospital. However registers of births and baptisms at the British Lying In Hospital from 1749 to 1868 are held by The National Archives, Kew, Richmond, Surrey TW9 4DU. Other maternity hospital records deposited here are the archives of the British Hospital for Mothers and Babies, Woolwich, 1904-1972, minute books of Annie McCall Maternity Hospital, Clapham, 1888-1959 and patients' registers and casebooks for Bushey Maternity Hospital 1938-1959.

We also hold the records of two hospitals founded by female doctors where women could be treated entirely by women - Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital and the South London Hospital for Women and Children - as well as the records of two specialist gynaecological hospitals - Chelsea Hospital for Women and the Grosvenor Hospital. Other hospitals for women and children whose records have been deposited in LMA are the Evelina Hospital, Royal Waterloo Hospital, St Thomas' Babies' Hostel, Santa Claus Home, Victoria Hospital for Children, and Westminster Children's Hospital.

Special Hospitals

Special hospitals treating particular types of diseases whose records are held by us include the Metropolitan Ear, Nose and Throat Hospital, Moorfields Eye Hospital, the National Heart Hospital, Royal Chest Hospital, Royal Dental Hospital, Royal Eye Hospital, St John's Hospital for Diseases of the Skin and the Smallpox Hospital. Also of interest are the records of Queen Mary's Hospital, Roehampton, founded in 1915 to treat and rehabilitate sailors, soldiers and airmen who had lost limbs in the 1st World War. We also hold the records including patients' case books of the Royal London Homoeopathic Hospital opened in 1850 by Dr Frederick Hervey Quinn.

Workhouse Infirmaries

Under the 1867 Metropolitan Poor Act the London Boards of Guardians had to provide infirmaries for the treatment of the sick poor which were administered by a medical superintendent separately from the workhouse. In 1930 these hospitals were taken over by the London County Council and Middlesex County Council whose records are also in our care. In 1948 most became NHS hospitals. Many former workhouse infirmaries, including Edgware General Hospital, Lambeth Hospital, the North Middlesex Hospital, St Giles' Hospital, Camberwell, St Mary Abbot's Hospital, St Olave's Hospital, Rotherhithe, and West Middlesex University Hospital have deposited their archives in LMA which also holds the records of the Boards of Guardians for London and Middlesex. The records of the Boards of Guardians frequently, but not always, include registers of patients and staff as well as administrative records.

Psychiatric Hospitals

The records of St Luke's Hospital for Lunatics which opened in 1751 and moved to Old Street in 1786 have been deposited in LMA.

The Middlesex Justices built and managed three county lunatic asylums between 1827 and 1889. These were Hanwell Asylum (now St Bernard's Hospital), Colney Hatch Asylum (later Friern Hospital) and Banstead Asylum. All three hospitals have deposited their records in LMA. Records of the administration of these asylums may be found amongst the Middlesex Sessions records, which are in our care. They include the minutes of the County Lunatic Asylum Visiting Committee 1827-1831 (MA/A/J), reports on Hanwell, Colney Hatch and Banstead and on the proposed asylum at Claybury 1839-1890 (MA/RS/01/015-147), plans, building contracts and deeds 1828-1887 (MA/D/A, MA/DCP) and returns of pauper lunatics 1825-1889 (MA/A/RL). We also hold the records of Stone House Hospital, Dartford (formerly the City of London Asylum) which was opened by the City of London Corporation in 1866 (CLA/001).

When the London County Council was formed in 1889, it took over the Middlesex County lunatic asylums as well as Cane Hill Asylum from the County of Surrey. Middlesex County Council acquired Wandsworth Asylum (now Springfield Hospital) also from Surrey. Both councils built several more mental hospitals situated outside London in Hertfordshire, Kent and Surrey. Records of Springfield Hospital, Bexley Hospital (opened by the London County Council in 1898), Horton Hospital (opened by the London County Council in 1902), Napsbury Hospital (opened by Middlesex County Council in 1905) and Shenley Hospital (opened by Middlesex County Council in 1934) have also been deposited in LMA.

The Metropolitan Asylums Board was formed in 1867 with the responsibility of providing asylums for the care of pauper lunatics who were considered harmless and incurable and therefore not suitable for treatment in the county lunatic asylums. Their first two asylums opened in 1870 at Leavesden in Hertfordshire and Caterham in Surrey (later St Lawrence's Hospital). Other asylums followed including Darenth in Kent for the care and treatment of children. The records of the Metropolitan Asylums Board which are held by LMA are mainly administrative, but they include registers of staff employed at some of their hospitals and asylums. Leavesden and St Lawrence's Hospitals have deposited their archives in LMA which also holds a few records of Darenth Asylum, St David's Hospital, Edmonton (formerly Edmonton Epileptic Colony), and Tooting Bec Hospital. The Metropolitan Asylums Board was abolished in 1930 and its functions were transferred to the London County Council.

LMA also holds the records of Normansfield Hospital, Teddington, which was established in 1868 by Dr John Langdon-Down and his wife, Mary, as a private institution for the care and treatment of the mentally handicapped specialising in the education of children with learning difficulties. The archives include registers of patients at Royal Earlswood Hospital 1855-1868, where John Langdon-Down was medical superintendent 1858-1868. In 1951 the Minister of Health purchased Normansfield from the Langdon-Down family and it became an N.H.S. hospital.

Fever, Smallpox and Tuberculosis Hospitals

The Metropolitan Asylums Board was also responsible for providing hospitals for the treatment and isolation of patients from the whole of London who were suffering from smallpox, diphtheria, scarlet fever, measles, typhus, typhoid and other infectious diseases. From 1912 it also built and maintained sanatoria for the treatment of tuberculosis. Records of former MAB fever and smallpox hospitals deposited in LMA include the Brook General Hospital at Woolwich, Hither Green Hospital, Joyce Green Hospital, Dartford, the North Western Hospital, Hampstead and the South Western Hospital, Stockwell.

In Middlesex the parishes and later the municipal boroughs, urban district councils and rural district councils were responsible for providing infectious diseases hospitals.

They frequently combined to share joint facilities. LMA holds records of two such hospitals, St John's Hospital, Uxbridge, and the South Middlesex Hospital, Isleworth. Middlesex County Council maintained two sanatoria for the treatment of tuberculosis at Harefield and at Clare Hall, South Mimms (using the former Smallpox Hospital). Small quantities of records from two former tuberculosis hospitals (Clare Hall and Grove Park) have been deposited in LMA.

As the Port of London Health Authority, the City of London Corporation built the Denton Isolation Hospital (the Port of London Sanitary Hospital) at Denton, Gravesend, Kent in 1883, to treat cases of infectious disease coming into the Thames on incoming ships. Diseases treated there included typhoid, smallpox, chicken pox, measles, scarlet fever, enteric fever, malaria, bubonic plague and dysentery. This hospital was handed over to the National Health Service in 1948. Surviving patient records, mainly late 19th-early 20th centuries but incomplete, are held by LMA (CLA/064).

Hospital Records Database

A hospital records database compiled by The National Archives and the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine can be searched on The National Archives website. For each hospital this gives brief details of records known to have survived and where they can be found, though coverage of records still held by hospitals is limited.

The database can be found at www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/hospitalrecords

Access to Patients' Records

Hospital records are subject to a period of restricted access in order to protect the confidentiality of living individuals. It may therefore not be possible for you to consult all the records yourself. We are able to undertake research on behalf of an individual to provide information from hospital records but we do have to ensure that the information is only being released to either the individual concerned or in the case of a third party request that the patient concerned is deceased. We do charge for undertaking such searches within our records.

We suggest that in the first instance you contact the enquiry team who will be able to advise you on how to proceed with your particular enquiry.

Other sources of information about hospitals

Charity Organisation Society (A/FWA)

The C.O.S. Enquiry Department investigated charities, including some London hospitals. Investigations resulted either from a complaint from a patient, or through concern about the way in which a hospital was managed, or in order to advise a C.O.S. subscriber whether a charity was worthy of support. The C.O.S. Enquiry Department files on charities have been deposited in LMA. The files relating to hospitals, dating mainly from 1870 to 1900, have been included in the subject index on cards under the headings "Health and Medicine: Hospitals". Files containing papers less than 60 years old are closed to public consultation unless written permission for access is obtained from the Director of the Family Welfare Association.

King Edward's Hospital Fund for London (A/KE)

This was founded in 1897 as "The Prince of Wales's Hospital Fund for London to Commemorate the Sixtieth Year of the Queen's Reign". The money raised produced an annual income which was distributed to the London voluntary hospitals. Teams of visitors were sent to each hospital which had applied for a grant from the Fund to report on the state of the institution and advise whether the grant should be given. After 1948 hospital visiting and the offer of grants for non Exchequer purposes were extended to virtually all N.H.S. hospitals in the Greater London area, as well as independent hospitals, convalescent homes, and charitable institutions. The archives of King Edward's Hospital Fund for London which have been deposited in LMA include the following:

Printed reports of hospital visitors with statistical reports on the expenditure of London hospitals 1905-1945 (A/KE/301/2-42)

Maps showing the location of hospitals within the Metropolitan Police District 1944-1961 (A/KE/636-640). A copy of the 1944 map is available in the plan chest in the Information Area.

Papers and reports on individual hospitals and convalescent homes 1898-1968 (A/KE/245-286, A/KE/446-566, A/KE/724, A/KE/734-738).

A series of annual reports of various London voluntary hospitals 1897-1947 originally part of the archive of King Edward's Hospital for London has been transferred to our Library and combined with other collections of hospital annual reports. These can be ordered from our strong rooms by using the detailed list (SC/PPS/093/1-85).

Nightingale School and Nightingale Collection (H01/ST/NTS and H01/ST/NC)

These archives include correspondence and papers relating to nursing in many hospitals in the second half of the 19th Century. Most of the Nightingale Collection, including Henry Bonham Carter's papers, can be searched on our computerised catalogues. There is a separate card index to much of Florence Nightingale's correspondence (H01/ST/Index5).

Health Authorities

Records of the former North East Thames, North West Thames, South East Thames, and South West Thames Regional Health Authorities, including records of the four former metropolitan regional hospital boards, have been deposited in LMA. We also hold records of Camden and Islington and Greenwich and Bexley Area Health Authorities and of Riverside and West Lambeth Health Authorities. These are mainly administrative records and do not include patients' records.

Printed sources

LMA Library has a considerable collection of publications on the history of London hospitals. The following list includes only a small selection of relevant works. To ascertain the full extent of our holdings please consult the Library Catalogue. Library references are given in brackets at the end of each entry.

Guides to charities and hospitals

LOW, Sampson. *The metropolitan charities: charitable and benevolent and religious societies, hospitals, dispensaries, penitentiaries, annuity funds, colleges and schools in London and its immediate vicinity*. Sampson Low, 1844. (20.2 LOW)

LOW, Sampson. *The charities of London, new ed corrected to April 1867*. Includes Low's handbook to the charities of London. Sampson Low, 1867. (20.2 LOW)

ANNUAL CHARITIES DIGEST. *The annual charities register and digest; being a classified register of charities in or available for persons in the metropolis*. 1895 (some gaps) - 1969. Family Welfare Association. (20.2 CHA)

BURDETT'S hospitals and charities; being the year book of philanthropy and the hospital annual 1895, 1903-1904, 1906-1915, 1917-1930. (26.1 BUR)

HOSPITALS YEAR BOOK. The hospitals year book; an annual record of the hospitals of Great Britain and Northern Ireland incorporating "Burdett's Hospitals and Charities"... 1931-1976, 1978-1992. (26.1 HOS)

INSTITUTE OF HEALTH SERVICES MANAGEMENT. *The IHSM health and social services yearbook: an annual record of the health and social services of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, incorporating "Burdett's hospitals and charities"...* 1994-. The Institute 1994-. (R26.1 INS)

The LONDON register of nursing homes and medical institutions, 1939-40. Baynham, 1939. (26.7 LON)

Official Publications

- **Parliament:**
 - Reports from the Select Committee of the House of Lords on Metropolitan Hospitals, etc; together with the proceedings of the committee, minutes of evidence, and appendix. H.M.S.O., 1890-1892. 4 volumes (26.1 MET)
- **London County Council.**
 - Annual reports of the Asylums Committee and the subcommittees of [various] asylums... 1889-1890 - 1910. L.C.C., 1890-1910. (26.1 LCC)
 - Annual reports of the Council 1910-1937, including reports of the County Medical Officer of Health and reports on asylums, public health, general and special hospitals, hospital finance, and mental health services. L.C.C., 1910-1939. (18.7).
 - Annual reports of the County Medical Officer of Health and School Medical Officer...1938-1964. L.C.C., 1939-1966. (18.7(5)LCC).
 - Joint survey of medical and surgical services in the Administrative County of London Part 2: municipal hospitals, clinics and dispensaries L.C.C., 1933. (26.04 LCC)
 - The LCC hospitals: a retrospect. L.C.C., 1949 (26.04 LCC)
- **London Voluntary Hospitals Committee:**
 - Joint survey of medical and surgical services in the County of London: part I: voluntary hospitals, clinics and dispensaries. P.S. King & Son, 1933. (26.04 LVHC)
- **Metropolitan Asylums Board:**
 - Annual reports of the Chairman of the Board 1875, 1885-1897/8. The Board, 1876-1898. (26.03 MAB)
 - Annual reports, 1898-1929/30. The Board, 1899-1930. (26.03 MAB)
 - Annual reports of the medical superintendents of the several infectious hospitals and imbecile asylums for the year 1886 and summaries of the tables attached to such reports with observations thereon by the statistical committee. The Board, 1887. (26.03 MAB)

- Annual reports of the statistical committee, 1887-1897. The Board, 1888-1898. (26.03 MAB)
- The Metropolitan Asylums Board and its work, 1867-1930, compiled by Sir Allan Powell. The Board, 1930. (26.03 MAB)
- **Middlesex County Council:**
 - Reports of committees 1889-1948, including annual reports of the County Medical Officer of Health for 1930-1946. M.C.C., 1889-1948. (97.091)
- **Middlesex Sessions.**
 - County lunatic asylums: accounts and reports 1843-1851, 1856-1859, 1864-1871, 1874-1879, 1882-1889. Middlesex Sessions, 1843-1889 (26.21 MID)

Historical and General

ABEL-SMITH, Brian. *The hospitals 1800-1948: a study in social administration in England and Wales*. Heinemann, 1964. (26.1 ABE)

AYERS, Gwendoline M. *England's first state hospitals and the Metropolitan Asylums Board 1867-1930*. Wellcome Institute of the History of Medicine, 1971. (26.03 AYR)

BARTLETT, Peter. *The Poor Law of Lunacy. The administration of pauper lunatics in mid-nineteenth-century England*. Leicester University Press, 1999. (26.2 BAR)

EMRYS-ROBERTS, Meyrick. *The cottage hospitals, 1859-1990*. Tern Publications, 1991. (26.1 EMR)

JONES, Kathleen. *Asylums and after : a revised history of the mental health services: from the early 18th century to the 1990s*. Athlone Press, 1993. (26.2 JON)

PARRY-JONES, William L. *The trade in lunacy: a study of private madhouses in England in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries*. Routledge, 1972. (26.21 PAR)

PINKER, Robert. *English hospital statistics, 1861-1938*. Heinemann, 1966. (26.1 PIN)

PROCHASKA, F.K. *Philanthropy and the hospitals of London: the King's Fund, 1897-1990*. Clarendon Press, 1992. (26.04 PRO)

RICHARDSON, Harriet ed. *English Hospitals 1660-1948. A survey of their architecture and design*. Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England, 1998. (26.1 RCHME)

RIVETT, Geoffrey. *The development of the London hospital system 1832-1982*. King Edward's Hospital Fund for London, 1986. (King's Fund historical series No.4). (26.1 RIV)

SCULL, Andrew T. *The most solitary of afflictions: madness and society in Britain, 1700-1900*. Yale University Press, 1993 (26.2 SCU)

SHOWALTER, Elaine. *The female malady: women, madness, and English culture, 1830-1980*. Virago, 1987. (26.2 SHO)

SMITH, Leonard D. *'Cure, Comfort and Safe Custody.' Public lunatic asylums in early nineteenth century England*. Leicester University Press, 1999. (26.2 SMI)

TAYLOR, Jeremy. *Hospital and asylum architecture in England 1840-1914: building for health care*. Mansell, 1991. (45.615 TAY)

WOODWARD, John. *To do the sick no harm: a study of the British voluntary hospital system to 1875*. Routledge, 1974. (26.1 WOO)

The library also holds many histories of individual hospitals, annual reports of hospitals, hospital management committees and regional hospital boards, studies of particular aspects of public health and the provision of medical services, biographies of medical practitioners, King's Fund publications on health care in London, and Department of Health reports.

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