

# **History of the Royal Free Hospital**

Professor Malcolm Rustin, Emeritus Consultant

In 1827 a newly-qualified surgeon William Marsden was deeply affected by the extreme poverty and disease affecting a large proportion of the working population. Coupled with the fact that hospitals were withholding medical attention to those patients who could not provide the required funds, he decided to establish a free hospital whose only criteria for admission would be the need for medical or nursing care. In rented premises at 16 Greville Street, Hatton Garden the fledgling hospital named the London General Institution for the Gratuitous Cure of Malignant Diseases opened its doors to the public on the 17<sup>th</sup> April 1828.

In the first year 926 patients were treated and by 1832 the number had risen to 4157. During the cholera epidemic of 1832 when all other London hospitals closed their doors the London General Institution remained open to treat the cholera victims and in the first five months of the epidemic 700 patients were admitted. Marsden recorded his experience with cholera which included intravenous infusion of saline fluids in "Symptoms and Treatment of Malignant Diarrhoea: better known as Asiatic or Malignant Cholera first published in 1834 (Figure 1).

William Marsden married Betsy-Ann Bishop in 1820 and she died of cancer in 1846. On the 10<sup>th</sup> February 1851 Marsden invited a number of influential people to his home with a view to establishing a hospital for the treatment of cancer and for the study of the disease. Three months later the Free Cancer Hospital opened at 1 Cannon Row, Westminster and following purchase of a site in Fulham Road and subsequent expansion the Cancer Hospital (Free) became the Royal Marsden Hospital in 1954. William Marsden's son Alexander was a surgeon at The Royal Free Hospital (1854-1873) and saw active service in the Crimean War. He worked at the General Hospital in Scutari where Florence Nightingale also worked and as a result of their friendship Florence Nightingale was appointed as an honorary governor of the Royal Free Hospital in 1857. William Marsden died at the Star and Garter Hotel in 1867 aged 71.

Largely due to the fact that William Marsden was friendly with the Home Secretary Sir Robert Peel, royal patronage of King George IV was secured in 1828 and later that year the Duke of Gloucester became the first president of the London General Institution. In 1833 it changed its name to the London Free Hospital and in 1835 following King William IV's approval it became the Free Hospital. Princess Victoria and her mother the Duchess of Kent had been patrons of the Free Hospital since 1835 but after having succeeded to the throne on 20<sup>th</sup> June 1837 Queen Victoria commanded that it should be known as the Royal Free Hospital in September 1837.

With the growing number of patients being attracted by the free medical services the numbers rose from 8000 in 1836 to 14,000 in 1839 and so the adjoining house 17 Greville Street was purchased for £833 and the number of inpatient beds rose from 30 to 72. In 1842 larger premises in Gray's Inn Road about ½ mile north of Greville Street were rented and the freehold was purchased in 1863. These new premises had formerly been the barracks of the Light Horse Volunteers.

In 1877 the Royal Free became a teaching hospital and became the first to offer medical training for women when it allowed female medical students into the London School of Medicine for Women (founded 1874) and to receive clinical instruction on its wards. The School of Nursing was started in 1889 and in 1895 the Royal Free became the first hospital to appoint an almoner the forerunner of the modern social worker.

During the first world war the new outpatient block was requisitioned as an officers' ward, and many staff and students went abroad to treat soldiers. After the war it became necessary to equip the hospital in line with advances in medicine to include a maternity wing, children's ward, nurses' home and dental clinic. Given the general poverty in England at this time and the fact that the hospital was still dependent on voluntary contributions, much of this was made possible by the generosity of three men Lord Riddell, Alfred Langton and Sir Albert Levy who saved the hospital from near-closure.

For much of the Second World War the hospital escaped serious damage but in 1944 it was hit by a flying bomb. Although there were not many casualties, extensive damage resulted and only 4 beds remained useable immediately afterwards. This led to a desperate need for more beds. The 1944 Goodenough report on the future of medical education then recommended that the Royal Free move to north London because there were too many teaching hospitals in central London when most Londoners were now living in the suburbs; also the Royal Free was too small to provide enough beds to teach students satisfactorily and there was no room in central London for it to expand. In 1947, the Dean of LSMW, Katharine Lloyd-Williams, suggested the site of the North-Western Fever Hospital in Lawn Road, Hampstead as an ideal spot for the new Royal Free.

On the inception of the National Health Service in 1948 the Royal Free joined with several smaller hospitals including the Children's Hospital Hampstead, the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital, the North-Western Hospital, Hampstead General Hospital and the London Fever Hospital to form the Royal Free Group. From this point there was much debate about whether the Royal Free should stay in central London or move out to Hampstead, and in 1958 the first plans for the Royal Free on its present site were produced. Construction finally began in 1968, the same year that Coppetts Wood and New End Hospital joined the Royal Free Group. Queen Mary's House joined the group in 1972. The new Royal Free was the most modern hospital in Europe and the first to be designed with the aid of a computer. In 1974 it opened to its first patient, a London taxi driver and in 1978 the 150th anniversary of hospital's foundation it was officially opened by the Queen.

In April 1991 the Royal Free Hampstead NHS Trust became one of the first NHS trusts established under the provisions of the NHS and Community Care Act 1990. On 1 April 2012 the trust was authorised as a foundation trust, under the name Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust.

## **Dermatologists at The Royal Free Hospital**

It is unclear exactly which consultants had responsibilities for the management of skin diseases in the early years but Mr Willmott Evans joined the Royal Free Hospital in 1895 as an assistant surgeon but he had the added responsibility at the Hospital for Skin Diseases at Blackfriars and taught dermatology. He wrote papers on Dermatology and A Handbook of the Diseases of the Skin. He died in 1938. The hospital did not then appoint another 'Surgeon for Diseases of the Skin' to replace Evans but subsequently appointed the first dedicated Dermatologist Dr Haldin-Davis.

Dr Harold Haldin-Davis - 1935

He was educated at Charterhouse, was a Scholar at Balliol College Oxford, passed his BA with first class honours in Physiology and qualified at St Bartholomew's Hospital London in 1905. He became FRCS in 1908 but after coming under the influence of the dermatologist Dr Adamson he became a physician and in the same year gained the MRCP followed by the FRCP in 1931. He worked as a dermatologist at Paddington Green Hospital and later was appointed to The Royal Free Hospital but continued undertaking clinical sessions at The Blackfriars Skin Hospital and in the Children's Hospital at Paddington Green and supervised the Willesden clinic for the treatment of scalp ringworm by X-ray. During World War I he served as a Territorial officer in the RAMC and saw active service in Palestine. He was President of the Section of Dermatology at the Royal Society of Medicine in 1937/9 and authored the textbook "Skin Diseases in General Practice: Their Recognition and Treatment" which was first published in 1913. He was known as an eloquent speaker and was frequently heard to say "Make haste to apply this new remedy while it still cures".

Dr Reginald Brain 1935-1960

At the outbreak of war in 1914 he enlisted as a Private in the Royal Army Medical Corps and rose to the rank of sergeant. While in France he worked in a field hospital laboratory and in 1917 he made a special grease for burettes and patented the formula which was later used in gas meters. He received royalties for this over the ensuing 40 years. After demobilization in 1919 he started in the First MB course at The London Hospital and qualified in 1924 having been a pupil of Dr Sequiera. He gained the MRCP in 1925 and was awarded an MD in 1928 for a thesis on phosphorus metabolism. During his period as a Research Fellow in the Freedom Laboratory under the direction of Professor Bedson he isolated the herpes simplex virus from a patient with Kaposi's varicelliform eruption.

He was appointed Physician to the Skin and Light Departments at the Evelina Hospital for Sick Children from 1927-32, Consultant Dermatologist to a group of London County Council Hospitals from 1928-1946 and in 1932 he was appointed Physician to St John's Hospital for Diseases of the Skin in 1932 and to the Hospital for Sick Children, Great Ormond Street in 1934 holding both of these posts until he retired.

He was President of the Section of Dermatology of the Royal Society of Medicine from 1954-6 and of the St John's Hospital Dermatological Society from 1938 to 1948. He delivered the Watson Smith lecture to the Royal College of Physicians in 1956 entitled "Clinical vagaries of the herpes virus" and in 1961 the Prosser White oration entitled "The Philosophical Dermatologist".

Dr Charles Calnan 1955-

He practised dermatology in Lahore during World War II and after training with Robert Klaber and David Williams, he was appointed Consultant Dermatologist at the Royal Free Hospital. He had spent time in Pilsbury's unit in Philadelphia where he had worked with Albert Kligman and Walter Shelley. One of his great mentors was Geoffrey Dowling. In 1953 with Dr Bob Meira he set up the St John's Contact Dermatitis clinic loosely based on his observations of clinical practice at the Finsen Institute of Copenhagen. The clinic has evolved into the world-renowned clinic we know today. Under his tutorship, such famous contact dermatitis specialists such as Etain Cronin, Richard Rycroft, Ian White and Chris Lovell learnt their trade and he also championed the cause of women in dermatology, promoting such eminent individuals as Etain Cronin, Yvonne Clayton and Elisabeth Ryan. In 1960 he became the first Professor of Dermatology of London University at the St John's Institute of Dermatology and passed the bulk of the clinical load at the Royal Free to Dr Sarkany.

A prominent founding member of the International Contact Dermatitis Research Group (ICDR) he started the Contact Dermatitis Newsletter which evolved into the journal Contact Dermatitis which became the leading European journal for Contact Dermatitis publications. He also became editor of the Transactions of St John's Hospital for Diseases of the Skin which developed a world-wide readership. He helped advance dermatology in countries such as Nigeria and Iran often sending his best registrars and was instrumental in assisting with the foundation of the Institute of Dermatology in Bangkok. He gave the Prosser White Oration in 1977 entitled "Dermatology and Industry".

Dr Imrich Sarkany 1960-1989

He was a remarkable man who overcame immense difficulties to fulfil his ambition to train in medicine. Born in Slovakia in 1923 he was sent by his mother at the outbreak of World War 2 to England where he enrolled in the Czech brigade of the British Army. On returning to Czechoslovakia after the second world war he began his medical studies at St Charles' University in Prague but with the advent of the repressive Communist regime in Czechoslovakia he slipped out of the country illegally, arrived in England and completed his training at St Thomas's Hospital. He became a registrar in Dermatology at St John's and Kings and subsequently spent a year as a research fellow with Professor Harvey Blank in Miami where he identified the organism which causes erythrasma before taking up his post at RFH. He was involved in the development of Griseofulvin

He established a research laboratory with Peter Gaylarde and developed an interest in the cutaneous manifestations of liver diseases working with Professor Dame Sheila Sherlock which was the subject of his Prosser-White Oration in 1987. He was Secretary and President of the Dowling Club, President of the St John's Hospital Dermatology Society, President of the Section of Dermatology of the RSM, President of the European Union of Medical Specialities, President of the BAD and President of the European Academy of Dermatology and Venereology. His international standing was evidenced by honorary memberships of dermatology societies in Italy, Norway, New Zealand, South Africa, and Germany

Professor Malcolm Rustin 1989-2014, Awarded personal chair UCL 2011

Honorary Consultant 2014-2019, Emeritus Consultant 2019-

Trained in medicine at the Middlesex Hospital and completed a BSc in Immunology under the direction of Professor Ivan Roitt. Completed an MD thesis from London University entitled "Vascular abnormalities in systemic sclerosis" in the laboratory of Professor Pauline Dowd. Trained in dermatology at St Bartholomew's Hospital and at the Middlesex and University College Hospitals, London and was appointed Consultant Dermatologist at The Royal Free Hospital in 1989. He developed a clinical and research interest in atopic eczema and cutaneous immunity working closely with Professor Len Poulter and then Professor Arne Akbar in the Department of Immunology and established the registered charity Dermatrust. He is author of over 200 papers in peer-reviewed journals and has supervised 4 MD and 8 PhD theses. He established the Clinical Trials Unit, the Eczema clinic and with Dr William Clayton the Skin Laser Clinic. He gave the 2005 Parkes Weber lecture at the Royal College of Physicians, the 2013 Gerald Levene lecture at the Royal Society of Medicine, has given multiple invited lectures and has lectured annually on the Biology of the Skin Course, Cambridge. He was Academic Vice-President of the British Association of Dermatologists, President of the Section of Dermatology of the RSM, Chairman of the JRCPTB Dermatology SAC and UK Dermatology UEMS representative. He is President Elect of the Dowling Club.

Stephen Wright 1989-1995

Joined the department working 3 days per week at The Royal Free and 2 days per week undertaking essential fatty acid research at Scotia Pharmaceuticals. Subsequently he moved to Glaxo with the title of 'Associate Medical Director - sumatriptan', but also with responsibility for the Glaxo dermatology portfolio. In 1995 he relocated to Chicago as Medical Director of Immunosciences at Abbott Laboratories, and subsequently became Venture Head of Neuroscience (responsible for neuroscience drug development there). In 2000 he returned to the UK and became Senior VP of Development for the Anglo-French company, Ipsen, before moving to GW Pharmaceuticals (GWPH) as Chief Medical Officer, Head of R&D and a main Board Director. At GW he was successful in heading up the efforts that led to the approval, and finally the positive recommendation from NICE for Sativex (in people with MS spasticity) and Epidyolex (in 3 childhood onset epilepsy syndromes). He has had a major role in the approval of more than 10 prescription medicines from different companies which has significantly contributed to improving patients' health.

Connor O'Doherty

Sean Whittaker 1994-2002

Set up the cutaneous lymphoma clinic with Clinical Oncology and a Melanoma service with Alison Jones and the plastics team. Left the Royal Free to become Consultant Dermatologist at Guy's and St Thomas' Hospital and has had an illustrious career. He was Clinical Director of the Genetics, Rheumatology, Infection, Dermatology, Allergy Directorate (2005-14), Joint Lead: GRIID (Genetics|Rheumatology|Infection|Immunology|Dermatology) Clinical Academic Group, Kings Health Partners (2010-2016), Clinical Director: South London Genomic Medicine Centre (2015-2018), CRG Chair and Lead for Skin Cancer: Specialist National CRG NHS England Commissioning (2014-16 and 2012-14), Secretary/Treasurer and President: International Society for Cutaneous Lymphomas (ISCL) (2009-11 and 2011-13) and Secretary and Chairman: European Organisation Research and Treatment of Cancer (EORTC) Cutaneous Lymphoma Task Force (1999-2005 and 2005-09). He has published extensively on the pathogenesis and treatment of cutaneous T cell lymphomas.

Cate Orteu 2001-

Has led and developed the connective tissue dermatology (CTD) service into a nationally and internationally recognised patient centred multidisciplinary service having a particular emphasis on severe morphoea and sclerotic skin diseases. Research has focussed on the genetic drivers and immunopathology of morphoea and this has led to publications in peer reviewed journals, dermatology and rheumatology textbooks.

In 2002 she joined the lysosomal storage disorders unit to set up a clinic documenting, assessing and treating dermatological manifestations of Fabry disease.

As service lead for the department from 2001 to 2004 she led a successful "Action on Dermatology" bid which resulted in the development of the Dermatology day treatment unit. Dr Orteu was a founding committee member of the British Society of Medical Dermatology (2008-2012), President of the St Johns Dermatological Society (2012-2013), member (2010-2012) and Chair (2012-2014) of the judging committee for the BAD annual meeting and currently Chair of the Specialised Dermatology CRG for NHS England (2019-2022).

Sandy McBride 2001-

Trained in Newcastle and set up the Psoriasis service which has developed into a multidisciplinary team including rheumatology, psychology and specialist nurses to provide patient centred care. She also established the weekly Inflammatory Skin MDT meetings and

together with Dr Alexandra Mizara (counselling psychologist) established a psychodermatology service providing counselling and support for patients and training for staff. She was a founding member of the See Psoriasis: Look Deeper campaign group, regularly collaborates with the Psoriasis Association to improve the lives of people with psoriasis and was a member of the British Association of Dermatologists Psychodermatology working party.

Fiona Child 2003-2011

Took over the Skin Lymphoma Clinic from Sean Whittaker and in addition established the Skin Renal Transplant Clinic. Left to take up Consultant post at Guy's and St Thomas' Hospital.

Victoria Swale 2004-

Consultant Dermatopathologist 2006-

Chair of the BAD Annual Meeting judges (2017-2020), member of the BAD Therapy and Guidelines Committee (2011-2016), member of the Speciality Question Group (SQG) for Dermatology, Royal College of Physicians from 2006 -2016, then member of the SQG writing group 2017-2020, then a member of the SQG examining committee.

Member of BSSVD executive committee for several years, organised the 2019 annual conference and member of British Society for Dermatopathology executive committee 2020. Teaches locally to Dermatologists and GPs, and on several annual national courses including the BASHH Genital Dermatology course for 10 years, and the Genital Dermatology Plus course for 4 years. Since 2016 on speaker panel for the annual Dermpath Made Easy course.

Jenny Jones 2006-

Co-supervises the dedicated atopic eczema clinic and runs the specialist hair disorder clinic and is assessing the value of Integrative Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for patients with alopecia areata and the atopic eczema clinic in which patients are enrolled in clinical trials of new biologics.

Ed Seaton 2007-2018

Trained in dermatological surgery and in 2009 started the micrographic surgery service which was the first in North London.

Ferina Ismail 2012-

Took over the running of the cutaneous lymphoma clinic, runs the transplant/immunosuppression clinic, is the lead for skin cancer Royal Free and is Chair of the skin cancer specialist skin cancer multidisciplinary team. Since 2012 board member and website editor for British Society for Skin Care in Immunosuppressed Individuals, a specialist group of the British Association of Dermatologists.

Mark Griffiths 2014-

Assistant Honorary Secretary BAD (2013-2015), Honorary Secretary (2015-2017)

Danielle Greenblatt 2014-2016

Led the Paediatric Dermatology service and then was appointed as Paediatric Dermatologist at Guy's and St Thomas's Hospital

Mahreen Ameen 2014-  
Runs the atopic eczema clinic and has supervised and expanded the Clinical Trials Unit.  
North Thames dermatology specialty lead for NIHR (2014-)

Tabi Leslie 2016  
Assistant Honorary Secretary BAD (2017-2019), Honorary Secretary (2019-2021)

Dr Laura Proudfoot 2017  
Dr Meena Arunachalam 2018-

In 2014 Barnet Hospital and Chase Farm Hospital joined the Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust and so the following consultants joined the Royal Free Staff:

Dr Ioulios Palamaras	2010
Dr Sohail Mansoor	2010-
Dr Howard Stevens	-2016
Dr Wanda Robles	-2016
Dr Virginia Hill	-2017
Dr Anna Kukula	-2016
Dr Adil Sheraz	2016-
Dr Senthil Murali Nachappan	2016
Dr Sohail Mansoor	2010
Dr Anneke Kai	2016
Dr Omair Hameed	2016
Dr Adil Sheraz	2016

#### References

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Ironwork above the main entrance to the Royal Free Hospital in Gray's Inn Road



The Sussex, Alexandra and Victoria Wings of the Royal Free Hospital, Gray's Inn Road 1895



The Royal Free NHS Foundation Trust viewed from Hampstead Heath