



THE LISTER HOSPITAL

chelsea

A History of The Lister Hospital





The life of Joseph Lister: **a timeline...**

1827

Born on 5 April in
Upton, Essex

A history of The Lister Hospital

The Lister Hospital opened in 1985 but the history of the hospital goes back much further, and its world-class reputation owes everything to its namesake, the father of antiseptic surgery, Lord Lister.

Joseph Lister was born in Upton, Essex on 5 April 1827. His father was a wine merchant who spent his spare time designing innovative new lenses for microscopes. He passed on his inquisitive nature and love of the sciences to his son.

As a boy, Joseph attended Quaker schools and excelled at German and French. He entered The University of London to study for a Bachelor of Arts, but he soon decided that his true calling was medicine.

In 1852, at the age of 25, Lister graduated with honours from The University of London and was elected a fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons in the same year.



Joseph Lister (above) had two sisters and three brothers. Their parents raised them as Quakers; however, Joseph joined the Episcopal church as an adult.

1835

Attends Quaker schools in Hertfordshire and Tottenham

1844

Studies at the University College



A short stay in Edinburgh...

In 1853 Joseph left London for Edinburgh to study under the brilliant surgeon, Professor James Syme. The following year he became Professor Syme's first assistant at The University of Edinburgh. It was during this time that Lister fell in love with the art of surgery. He began to give lectures and he took up research in earnest, studying the causes of inflammation and infection.

Joseph married his mentor's daughter, Agnes, in 1856 and the two spent their honeymoon visiting the leading medical centres of Germany and France. Agnes was fascinated by medical research and she quickly became his research partner as well as his wife.

Joseph originally intended to stay in Edinburgh for just a month, but he lived there for 24 years.



Edinburgh Castle

1852

Graduates with a
Bachelor of Medicine

1854

Is appointed first
assistant to Professor
James Syme

In search of a germ-free environment

In the mid-19th century doctors were still unsure about what caused infections. Hand washing was uncommon and sterilisation was unheard of in hospitals. Surgeons often didn't wash their hands before operating on patients.

Lister was inspired by the work of renowned French chemist Louis Pasteur, whose research showed that infections were caused by organisms that were invisible to the naked eye. The only way to get rid of the micro-organisms, Pasteur found, was to filter them out, heat them up or destroy them with chemicals. Because the first two methods weren't feasible for treating people in hospital, Lister began research on the use of chemicals to prevent infection.

Professor James Syme was not only Lister's mentor, he was also his father-in-law; Joseph married Agnes Syme on 23 April 1856.



photo: Carl von Furst

1856

Marries Professor
Syme's daughter,
Agnes

1860

Appointed Regius
Professor at the
University of Glasgow



In search of a germ-free environment

In 1865, after years of research, Lister was ready to test antiseptics in a real surgical setting. He had learned that carbolic acid might be an effective means of killing bacteria and so he began using it as an antiseptic in the operating theatre. After two years of successful treatments, Lister was satisfied that carbolic acid was an effective antiseptic and could save lives by preventing infections.

Lister now saw that the conditions in hospitals were unacceptable; wards were often unsanitary and his colleagues didn't believe that simple measures such as hand washing and sterilisation would help reduce infections. Other surgeons felt that cleaning instruments was a waste of time and they were unwilling to use his carbolic acid spray because it burned their hands. It was going to take more than just his faith to convince the medical establishment that antiseptic treatment could reduce hospital infections. He was going to need to prove himself in the operating theatre.

Scientific pedigree. *Joseph Lister's father, Joseph Jackson Lister, was a successful wine merchant and a microscope enthusiast. He developed a lens that enabled scientists to see micro-organisms more clearly.*



photo: Carl von Feust

1865

Uses carbolic acid as an antiseptic for the first time

1865

Experiments with antiseptic-treated surgical equipment

A sceptical world embraces antiseptics

A major turning point in Lister's campaign to clean up the world's hospitals came after he was made Chair of Surgery at King's College, London. Lister decided to undertake what was then an unheard of surgical procedure; he would open a man's knee in order to repair his kneecap. This type of open surgery was uncommon because of the high risk of infection. However, Lister's use of sterile equipment in a sterile environment proved to be the key to preventing the patient from acquiring an infection. The surgery was a success and helped convince the medical community that antiseptic treatment could truly save lives.

Joseph Lister pioneered practices that we take for granted today. He encouraged surgeons to wash their hands before and after surgery and wear gloves during procedures. He also concluded that surgical instruments should not have porous handles because this type of handle allowed bacteria to spread.



Joseph and Agnes never had any children but they left an astonishing medical legacy which we benefit from to this day.

1871

*Operates on
Queen Victoria*

1877

*Conducts open surgery on a
man's knee, proving the effec-
tiveness of antiseptic treatments*



The royal seal of approval

In 1871, Lister operated on Queen Victoria. Eleven years later the Queen honoured the doctor with a knighthood. He was again called upon by the royal family when, in 1902, King Edward VII was diagnosed with appendicitis. Sir Frederick Treves operated on the King, but he felt that the surgery could not be done without the support and advice of England's greatest surgeon and so, Joseph Lister, then aged 75, was called upon to provide support.

Lister was very popular with his students, who gave him the nickname 'The Chief'.

photo: Carl von Furst

1882

Joseph Lister receives a knighthood

1893

Joseph's beloved wife Agnes dies

The birth of The Lister Hospital

In 1903, the British Institute of Preventative Medicine was renamed The Lister Institute in honour of the great surgeon and medical pioneer. This building, along with another adjacent building, forms what is now the world-renowned Lister Hospital.

Joseph Lister died in 1912 after a long and illustrious career, but his legacy lives on in The Lister Hospital, where we are committed to providing the highest quality healthcare available.

When he died, Joseph Lister was honoured with a service at Westminster Abbey. Many felt he should be buried there, but he was buried alongside his wife at Hampstead Cemetery as he had wished.



View from south of Chelsea Bridge in 1902

photo: Carl von Furst



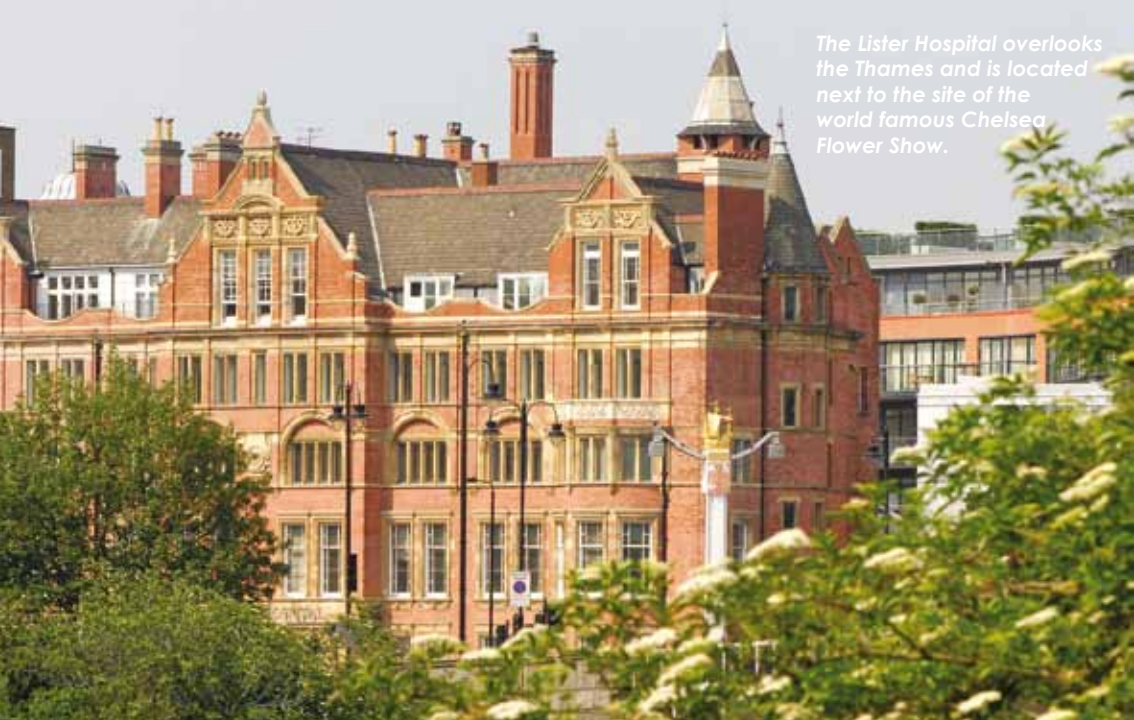
View of Chelsea Bridge from The Lister Hospital in 1902

photo: Carl von Furst

1897 Joseph becomes the first medical peer

1903 The British Institute of Preventative Medicine is renamed The Lister Institute in his honour





The Lister Hospital overlooks the Thames and is located next to the site of the world famous Chelsea Flower Show.

The Lister today

The Lister Hospital has always been a centre for medical innovation. It continues to attract some of the most eminent consultants in the UK because of its dedication to providing the most advanced facilities in which to practise

medicine. In 2000, The Lister Hospital became part of HCA's award-winning group of six hospitals: The Harley Street Clinic, London Bridge, The Portland, The Princess Grace and The Wellington.

1912

Joseph Lister dies at the age of 85

1947

The Lister Institute pioneers preparation of dried blood plasma for transfusion



At The Lister Hospital we believe in providing our healthcare professionals with the best environment to practise in, investing in cutting-edge technology that enables our consultants and nurses to provide the best care in the world.

In addition to providing quality care we aim to make your stay here as pleasant as possible. We know that a stay in hospital can be a stressful time, which is why all of our staff are committed to making you comfortable for your entire stay with us.

1985

*The Lister Hospital
opens*

2000

*Joins HCA network
of award-winning
private hospitals*



The Lister Hospital

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