

The Mountsorrel Beds

Since July 1948 our NHS hospitals have been funded through taxation and National Insurance. Prior to the foundation of the NHS voluntary hospitals like The Leicester Royal Infirmary relied on fee paying patients, fundraising and endowment of beds. There was a great sense of community involvement with the hospital in the city and fundraising was undertaken by communities all over the county of Leicestershire as well as within the city itself. Here we look at how Mountsorrel helped fund the work of The Leicester Royal Infirmary, specifically how they raised funds for donation and the endowment of beds.

Endowed Beds

The endowment, or financial support of beds, goes back to the dissolution of the Monasteries by Henry VIII. Monasteries provided rudimentary hospital care and after the dissolution local populations had to find ways to fund these same hospitals. This was done through endowments allowing alternate sources of funding to be used. During the Enlightenment funding through endowments became more common with wealthy businessmen contributing funds to allow the foundation of new voluntary hospitals. Indeed, this was the case in Leicester with the Infirmary being founded in 1771 following a successful campaign by Dr William Watts.¹



The Leicester Royal Infirmary

Fundraising for the first Mountsorrel Bed started around 1925. As well as the annual fundraising efforts contributions were made towards the endowment of a bed. For example, in 1926 the annual report of The Leicester Royal Infirmary recorded the sum of £100 raised “towards the permanent endowment of the ‘Mountsorrel’ bed” and gives the running total of £300. Each endowed bed required a sum of £1,000 to be raised to be permanently endowed and this was marked by the fixation of a plaque over one of the beds within the Infirmary. In addition to the funds towards the permanent

¹ Leicester City Council, *Leicester Royal Infirmary, Story of Leicester* , 2025 (<https://www.storyofleicester.info/a-place-to-live/leicester-royal-infirmary/#:~:text=the%20Leicester%20Infirmary%20was%20established%20in%201771%20after%20a%20successful,%2C%20labourer%2C%20porter%20and%20cook.>) [Accessed 11 January 2025]

endowment of the bed the village was required to raise £50 each year to continue the funding of each bed. Once the required funds had been raised these were invested and the Infirmary used the investment income to fund their work. One of the annual reports states that £928 11s was invested with the Grand Junction Company Ltd in their 4% Debenture stock.² This would have provided an annual income of £37 2s 10d per annum, equivalent to around £1,950 today.³

Mountsorrel raised additional funds towards further “Mountsorrel” beds getting as far as Bed No 4 in 1945. Details of the four beds are:

- Mountsorrel Bed No 1 – 1934 – Apreece Ward
- Mountsorrel Bed No 2 – 1940 – Froane Ward
- Mountsorrel Bed No 3 – 1943 – Apreece Ward
- Mountsorrel Bed No 4 – 1945 – Froane Ward⁴⁵

The endowment of Bed No 2 was confirmed in a ceremony on Froane Ward undertaken by the Revd F. H. Jerwood, assisted by the Revd J. W. Walker and the Revd E. G. Burland, with the unveiling of the plaque being performed by Mr F. Wykes. The bed was endowed with the sum of £1,000 raised by the residents through the work of the Mountsorrel Bed Fund Committee.⁶

The annual report for 1911 tells us that “The highest form of benefit conferrable upon the Infirmary is the Endowment of a Bed or Cot”.⁷ The cost of endowment is stated as £1,000 for a bed and £500 for a cot with an annual amount endowment required of £50 for a bed and £30 for a cot. Where a bed or cot was endowed the persons endowing had the privilege of naming the bed or cot and could nominate patients to occupy them.

Village Fundraising

Being a voluntary hospital The Leicester Royal Infirmary⁸⁹ was governed by a Board of Governors who produced an annual report each year. These have been preserved within the University Hospitals of Leicester (UHL) archive at Glenfield Hospital. The reports are a record of annual activity with patients seen as in and out patients, numbers of operations carried out plus the funds raised and subsequently spent. As mentioned above the reports record the sums raised by communities around the County and each community that raised and donated funds had their contributions listed in the reports.

² The Leicester Royal Infirmary/Leicester Infirmary, *Annual Reports of Leicester Infirmary/The Leicester Royal Infirmary*, Various years from 1900 to 1937, University Hospitals of Leicester (UHL) Archive

³ Bank of England, *Inflation Calculator*, 2025 [Accessed 17 January 2025]

⁴ The Leicester Royal Infirmary, *Annual Report for 1947*, UHL Archive

⁵ Apreece and Froane Wards were in the old part of The Infirmary in what is now called the Victoria Building.

⁶ Leicester Evening Mail, *Village's Bed at Infirmary Dedicated*, 6 April 1940

⁷ The Leicester Royal Infirmary, *Annual Report of The Leicester Infirmary For the Year 1911*, UHL Archive

⁸ The Leicester Royal Infirmary was granted its Royal status by King George V in 1912. Up to that point it was known as the Leicester Infirmary.

⁹ The definite article in the name of the hospital (“***The*** Leicester Royal Infirmary”) is formally part of the name and presumably dates back to the awarding of royal status in 1912.

These listings are very comprehensive through to the outbreak of the World War Two when paper rationing began to bite and the reports became much more truncated.¹⁰ As well as detailing the endowed beds and cots the reports detail donations from each community. An example from 1924 is below.

216

	Amount Contributed. £ s. d.	No. of Patients		Cus. £ s. d.
		In.	out.	
MOUNTSORREL.				
Mountsorrel Granite Co. Ltd. ...	1 1 0			
Mountsorrel Industrial Co-operative Society Ltd. ...	10 10 0			
Mountsorrel Granite Co.'s Accident Fund ...	21 0 0			
Mountsorrel Consolidated Charities ...	3 3 0			
Alexandra Day ...	8 10 0			
Maintenance of "Mountsorrel" Bed	50 0 0			
Bottrill, John ...	1 1 0			
Tacey, Miss Millicent ...	0 5 0			
Town Band ...	1 1 0			
Co-operative Women's Guild ...	1 0 0			
Christ Church ...	17 6 6			
Wesleyan Church ...	5 9 3			
Women's Adult School ...	1 0 0			
Employees of :—				
Granite Boot Co. ...	27 6 8			
Mountsorrel Granite Co. Ltd. ...	4 6 1			
Parker & Barlow ...	39 6 10			
Paulson & Paulson ...	8 19 8			(1) 379 7 8
Wholesale School Boot Co., Ltd. ...	76 18 3			(2) 7 8 8
Stapleton, P., Ltd. ...	19 14 4			(3) 11 1 1
	<hr/>	297 18 7	30 113	<hr/> 309 2 1

Also £100 for permanent Endowment of the "Mountsorrel Bed".

Extract from The Leicester Royal Infirmary Annual Report - 1924

As can be seen both individuals and organisations made donations. Of interest, and demonstrating that "every little helps" even then, the donation of 5 shillings (25p) from Miss Millicent Tacey is recorded as is the Guinea¹¹ donated by John Bottrill, a donation he made most years during the 1920s and 1930s, the donation increasing to 25 shillings (£1.12) in 1928. Collections were made and we can see that Christ Church donated £17 6s 6d (£17.32) in 1924 and they donated varying amounts most years as did St Peter's Church, the Wesleyan Chapel, the United Free Church and the Friendly Society.

Alexandra Rose Day ("Alexandra Day" in the entries) was a regular contributor too. This was an annual fundraising event to raise money, initially for those in poverty in London.¹² Money was raised from the sale of silk roses and donated to charities, in this case to The Leicester Royal Infirmary. Between 1915 and 1938 Alexandra Rose Day raised funds in Mountsorrel for The Leicester Royal Infirmary ranging from £4 10s (£4.50) in 1929 and 1930 to £10 2s (£10.05) in 1923.

¹⁰ Paper rationing was introduced from September 1939 and was formally sanctioned by the No 42 Paper Control Order of 4 September 1942 ("Our Welwyn Garden City", part of the Hertfordshire Community Archive Network) [Accessed 17 January 2025]

¹¹ A Guinea is a sum of one pound and one shilling.

¹² Alexandra Rose Charity, *Our history* (<https://www.alexandrarose.org.uk/about-us/our-history>), 2025 [Accessed 17 January 2025]

Of note also are the contributions from the employees of various companies. This is the start of Hospital Saturday Fund donations to fund care in the hospital and from 1925 these donations are listed as being to the Hospital Saturday Fund. Hospital Saturday Funds were so called because the majority of workers were paid weekly on a Saturday and these donations were deducted at source from their pay packets. The original Hospital Saturday Fund was set up after a meeting in Hyde Park, London on 15 June 1873. The appeal was for all those in employment to pay a weekly sum from their wages to assist with hospital maintenance.¹³ Locally, the Leicester and County Hospital Saturday Society was set up in 1900 at the behest of Alderman Lennard, at that time Mayor of Leicester. Alderman Lennard was determined, during his time in office, to improve the Infirmary in Leicester and in its first year in existence received promises of £30,000.¹⁴ In 1938 The Leicester Royal Infirmary published within the Annual Report a section on the work of the Hospital Saturday Fund. For those earning less than £1 a week 1 penny was donated, for those earning between £1 and £2, 2 pennies was donated and for those earning more than £2 a week 3 pennies was donated. In 1938 £63,453 was collected of which The Royal Infirmary received £44,000 (£2.5 million in today's value). This was used, partly, to build a new X-ray department, a new Casualty Department and for the provision of an ambulance service for members of the fund.¹⁵

The village raised money in a variety of ways; through the Saturday Fund contributions, through individual donations, through organised events and through fund raising sporting events. The first recorded "sporting" event is in 1906 when a whist drive held at the Oriental Café raised £1. In 1911 Mountsorrel Castle Cricket Club donated four Guineas with another £7 12s in the following year. In 1927 a football match raised £2 5s whilst in 1928 the same fixture raised 7s 6d. In 1930 a cricket match raised the grand sum of £64 whilst in 1934 the Mixed Hockey Club donated 2 Guineas. The Hockey Club repeated these donations in 1935 and 1936.

Lastly, when the good folk of Mountsorrel erred, there were alternatives to the usual punishments. For example, donations were made "in lieu of prosecution" ranging from 4 shillings (1927) to £2 10s (1930) although there is no indication of whether these are for single or multiple offences. In 1932 the library in the village donated the fines paid which amounted to 10 shillings and 6 pence.

On the 5 July 1948 the National Health Service Act, 1946, came into force and The Leicester Royal Infirmary, along with Groby Road Hospital, Leicester General Hospital and numerous smaller hospitals came under the umbrella of the NHS. Fundraising for hospitals ceased to be a necessity for the basics (wages, supplies, medicines, etc.) but fundraising has continued ever since supporting different needs. The Hospital Saturday Fund remains in existence but the Leicester Hospital Saturday Society is no more with fundraising now the preserve of the Leicester Hospitals Charity. Fines are now collected centrally and given to the Exchequer so there is no longer the option to donate to a good cause to escape a harsher sentence and our library fines go back to

¹³ Hospital Saturday Fund, *About us* (<https://hospitalsaturdayfund.org/about-us/#:~:text=At%20a%20meeting%20held%20in,HOSPITAL%20SATURDAY%20FUND%20was%20chosen.>), 2025 [Accessed 17 January 2025]

¹⁴ Hincks, W. E. "Leicester and County Saturday Hospital Society." *Charity Organisation Review*, vol. 50, no. 296, 1921, pp. 96–103. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43790746>. Accessed 17 Jan. 2025.

¹⁵ The Leicester Royal Infirmary, *Annual Report of The Leicester Infirmary For the Year 1938*, UHL Archive

the County Council. However, the financial burden of the NHS now requires far more than could ever be raised by football matches, private donations and worker contributions so perhaps this model of funding belongs firmly in the period before the NHS was formed.

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