

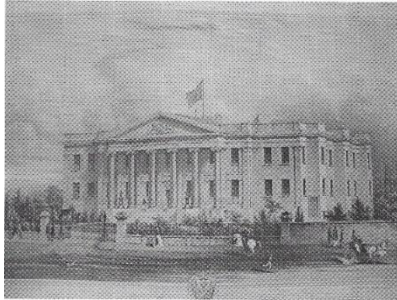


2016

CASE STUDY –
CONSERVATION STATEMENT
ROYAL BERKSHIRE HOSPITAL, READING

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Case Study 005

Case Study for:
Royal Berkshire Hospital, Reading – Conservation Statement



1- Sketch of original building

The Royal Berkshire Hospital is a working hospital dating from its original construction of 1837-1839.

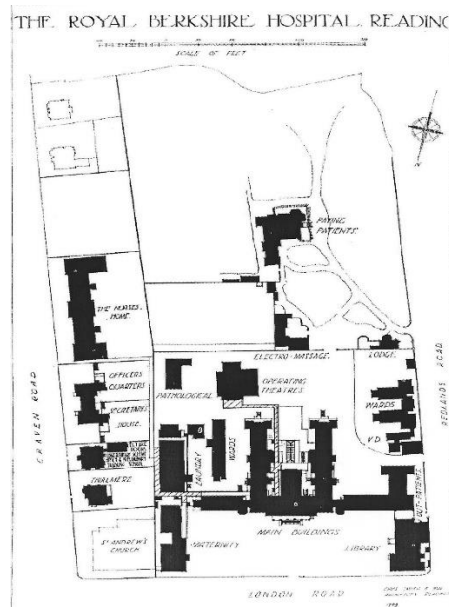
The building has developed and expanded over the years of original construction, and is now a leading hospital, offering a full range of services.

The Board were looking to developing a full development plan for the hospital, but were aware that the building was listed, and knew little more than that about this little heritage gem.

Work included:

- Conservation Statement, liaison with amenity societies and local authority for the Isolation Ward to allow for the new Cancer Treatment Centre to be constructed
- Heritage Statement to understand the importance and significance of the site and its associated buildings

	Significance	Rating
Social/ Historical	First purpose built Nurses Home (1872) – Later developed	Considerable
Social/ Historical	The hospital provides an understanding of the Industrial Revolution and the provisions given to the poor in the community, as free medical assistance was offered to the poor through donation from the richer classes. Shows class system through the treatment of the patients. Shows the changing injuries and improving medical procedures.	Considerable
Social/ Historical	Opening of New Nurses Home on 7 April 1925 by HRH Princess Mary, Viscountess La Salette	Some
Social/ Historical	Nuffield block opened by HRH Princess Alice, Countess of Athlone on 24 June 1939	Some
Social/ Historical	Connection with Sir Douglas Bader, WWII Hero.	Considerable
Contextual	Connection with Isambard Kingdom Brunel & GWR Construction – The GWR was known admiringly to some as “God’s Wonderful Railway”. In 1999, in recognition of the railway’s historical importance, parts of the original Great Western Main Line were added to UNESCO’s tentative World Heritage Sites list.	Some
Contextual	The hospital shows the development of medicine and medical services which can easily be read within the current setting.	Some
Archaeological	None noted at present.	
Landscape	None noted at present.	
Economic	Hospital offering free care to poor people prior to NHS from through the use of local sponsorship and donation.	Some
Environmental/ Wildlife	None noted at present.	



2 & 3- Sample of Conservation Statement, including sample of Assessment of Significance

Section 4
Understanding the Asset

4.1 Brief background history
The hospital occupies a long thin site, running gently uphill from London Road to Addington Road, and flanked by Craven Road and Reulands Road. The buildings of the hospital are of various ages, from the original building of 1839 to the latest ward block built in 2009. Despite the various ages and styles of building, almost all of the hospital’s departments are accessible from a single indoor pedestrian route that runs the length of the site. The original entrance on London Road still exists, but the main entrance is now situated in Craven Road.

One of the principle reasons for the hospital to be constructed was to offer assistance and deal with the large number of injuries of the workers constructing the new Great Western Railway under Isambard Kingdom Brunel. The first patient is reported to be George Easley, a fifteen year old railway worker who sustained a severe compound fracture to his upper arm, resulting in his arm being amputated.¹

The original section of the Hospital, now the centre of North Block on London Road, was designed in c.1836 by Rev Henry Brant, and constructed in 1837-39.

Brant, won the design competition for the hospital in 1837, after submitting two designs for the competition, one Gothic and the second Grecian. Both designs were initially selected by George Bovey, the assessor, but it was the Greek design that was chosen, but with internal modifications based on the Gothic plan. Brant designed other buildings within Reading, and had an exhibition at the Royal Academy in 1842-43. In 1843 he was ordained and moved to Queens College, Cambridge, prior to his death in 1884 in Manchester, at the age of 71.

King William IV had taken a keen interest in the hospital prior to its construction, and as a consequence his arms appear on the central pediment. He died before the hospital opened, therefore making this the last building to be built with William IV’s coat of arms displayed. The Royal Berkshire Hospital was given its own coat of arms in 1839.²

Mrs Hogg became the first Matron earning £30 a year. Nurses were paid £12.00 a year and all staff were to find their own tea and sugar. Ale was used in the hospitals at this time and the Royal Berkshire records 1,003 ½ gallons of beer for one year.³ Prior to paid nursing staff, patients were expected to bring their own nurses. Linen was also to be supplied by patients.

A report produced in 1863/4 for parliament⁴ highlighted that the hospital was ‘strictly country’ hospital, of good construction in the main, well managed, with rules for admission somewhat more liberal than those of country hospitals in general... Later commenting that operations were undertaken, and the results as successful as London, however, ‘it must not be forgotten, however, that neither the ventilation of some parts of the building, nor the arrangements for drainage [cesspools], are by any means perfect’.

The hospital served injured military men during World War II, including Sir Douglas Bader, a famous fighter pilot. Sir Douglas Bader is credited with twenty-two aerial victories during World War II. He was considered to be an inspirational British hero of the era, due to his bravery, fortitude, dogmatic and often highly opinionated views (especially against authority), coupled with his boundless energy and enthusiasm which inspired adoration and frustration in equal measures with both his subordinates and peers.

In 1931, the Douglas Bader had both legs amputated in the hospital by the surgeon Leonard Joyce, after an air crash at Wootton Bassett. The hospital features in the film Reach for the Sky, where these events are depicted.⁵

Client: Royal Berkshire NHS Trust

Project Costs: Confidential