



Hospital Records

Background

Most early hospitals were charitable foundations and were often linked with religious houses. From the mid 16th century many of these were replaced with almshouses and small hospitals. These were often funded by a bequest from a wealthy individual. Many towns had almshouses which provided accommodation for the elderly poor people.

By the end of the 19th century all the larger towns in Gloucestershire had at least one hospital. Some like the Infirmary in Gloucester had their origins in the 18th century and were funded by subscribers. They provided medical treatment for subscribers, their families and nominees but there was no universal provision of care. Other hospitals were founded by an individual person with an interest in public health or as a lasting memorial to a notable local figure. From the late 19th century specialist hospitals were built or evolved. For example, maternity or mother and baby homes and hospitals to treat specific diseases like smallpox and TB. Union Workhouses usually included an infirmary funded by the Poor Rate collected by the Guardians and open to inmates of the Workhouse.

For more information about Asylum Records see Mini Guide 61: *Asylum Records*

On 5 July 1948 the National Health Service came into existence and took over the running of many hospitals.

Data Protection and Hospital Records

Hospital and medical records contain sensitive information about patients and staff members. For this reason many records are closed to the public for 100 years after they were created.

- If you wish to access information in a closed medical record you will need to seek the permission of the appropriate NHS trust who owns the records. Please email archives@gloucestershire.gov.uk for more information.

What records are there and what information will they contain?

The types of records that have survived vary widely. Generally few pre-1900 records survive. Most patient records date from after 1920, but these will be closed (see above). You *may* find the following records exist:

Medical Records

- Admission and Discharge Records
 - Records some times vary in how much information they provide.
 - Usually give name of patient, age, residence, date of admission, condition, date of discharge and result (cured, relieved or died).
- Register of Deaths
- Midwives Registers

- Usually includes name, age and address of mother, number of previous labours/births, details of birth, date and time of visit and condition of mother and baby.
- Treatment Records
 - Including x-ray registers, prescription books, casualty patients and ward report books.

Administrative Records

- Minutes of Board Meetings
- Annual Reports
- Accounts
- Correspondence
- Buildings Plans

Visitors Books

These are periodic reports of visitors from the management board of the hospital. They are similar to short inspections. The visitors checked that everything was running properly. The amount of information they give in the books varies depending on who the visitor was. They could name new patients, or give information about staff and events at the hospital. More detail could be given in the minutes of the board.

Photographs

Occasionally you will find photographs of the buildings, staff or patients. These could be during special events or to show off a new ward. They do not survive for every hospital and it is rare for the names of those in the photo to be written down.

Staff records

These may include registers of staff, details of wages, employment dates, positions held. Some of these records may be closed for lengthy periods.

How to Find the Records

Most hospital records are held under the reference HO. Each hospital has its own HO number, e.g. HO1 is Bisley Infectious Diseases Hospital. To view a list of records in these collections please use our online catalogue, which can be found on our website at: www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/archives. You can find out more about how to use the online catalogue by looking at the Help page and FAQs. Or you can watch our short tutorial/s on YouTube.

Records relating to hospitals attached to workhouses will be in the Board of Guardians collections (Ref: G). See Research Mini Guide 15: *Board of Guardians and Workhouses*

Other places to look:

- Large family and estate collections (especially if they founded or funded the local hospital).
- Personal papers (including those of doctors and nurses – the description of the items should refer to the hospital they served in)
- The local studies collection (often includes reports and some early records deposited in the library – including records of Gloucester infirmary - D9125/1/4903-6)

To find these records try conducting a general keyword search in our catalogue. Try searching for the name of the hospital or the place name and the word 'hospital' e.g. Stroud hospital