

Heritage and History Update

April 2019

The Trust has made an application to The Woodmansterne Art Conservation Awards to fund the conservation of the largest and most significant painting in the Royal National Hospital for Rheumatic Disease's collection.

Why is this painting important?

The painting, which can be seen hanging on the wall above the main staircase is titled 'Dr Oliver and Mr Peirce, Physician and Surgeon Examining Patients Afflicted with Paralysis, Rheumatism and Leprosy' by W.T. Hoare.

It is listed in the 1761 Society of Artists exhibition catalogue as 'A picture intended to be given to the Mineral Water Hospital'. (Mr Peirce is the figure on the left in brown and Dr Oliver in red in the foreground.)

In his twenty years as hospital visitor, Hoare would have had plenty of opportunity to study disease at close quarters and it is likely that he was able to use patients of the hospital as models.

What will happen to the painting?

If the application is successful, following conservation work the painting will be installed on the main hallway of the new RNHRD and Brownsword Therapies Centre. This means patients, visitors and staff can continue to experience and enjoy the rich cultural heritage of our City's medical past.

What is happening to artworks that have been removed from the Mineral Water Hospital site?

Three portraits were removed earlier this year to receive extensive conservation treatment. They now form part of an exhibition at No 1 Royal Crescent called 'Image Control' which runs until January 2020.

Once the exhibition is over, we are planning to bring two of the portraits to the new RNHRD and Therapies Centre. The third, a pastel self portrait of William Hare, will go on loan to the Victoria Gallery who can provide the appropriate conditions to preserve this fragile work of art.

What is happening to other artworks at the Mineral Water Hospital site?

We are in the process of reviewing and prioritising the paintings that have a medical history.

If the application to conserve the Dr Oliver painting is successful, we can then investigate the conservation of many of the smaller portraits. We may be able to bring many of these paintings to the RUH to install in the new RNHRD and Brownsword Therapies Centre as well as other areas of the RUH such as the original entrance to the RUH known as the Lansdown entrance.

Art at the Heart of the RUH

Art at the Heart supports the RUH with an award winning art and design programme that stimulates healing and well-being and creates an uplifting environment for patients, visitors and staff.

The team are supporting the integration of new and existing art works into the RNHRD and Brownsword Therapies Centre and Bernard Ireland House – the new home for many of the staff and services from the Mineral Water Hospital site.

If you would like to find out more please visit artatruh.org or contact ruh-tr.ArtatRUH@nhs.net

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