



# Our origins from down under

The first known  
ANZAC-Harefield  
wedding some time  
around the First  
World War

## Harefield's medical ancestors



Thomas  
Wakley

The Harefield estate dates back to the 14th century and was previously owned by Thomas Wakley, medical and social reformer and founder of The Lancet, who trained as a surgeon at St Thomas' Hospital.

“ All the Australians have been put into a hospital that is entirely Australian. Harefield Park, the place where I am at present, is only 14 miles from London but you can hear no sound at all. Saturday we were given a concert and a party. ”

George Murray wrote this to his father in Australia from Harefield in 1915 – he died in France in 1918, aged 23

Letitia and Charles Billyard-Leake, the Australian owners of Harefield Park, moved out so it could be used by wounded ANZAC soldiers in World War One – which is how the hospital started. Some soldiers married into the local community, whose links with Australia and New Zealand remain strong to this day.

### DID YOU KNOW...

A wallaby called Jimmy, and a cockatoo, were both brought to Harefield to make ANZAC troops feel at home. Jimmy used to roam freely around the village.

#### THE COCKATOO GIVES HIS VIEWS OF THE WAR





# World-changing research

*TB patients benefitting from Harefield's balconies specially designed to catch the sun*



Penicillin is known the world over for being the first really successful antibiotic medicine.

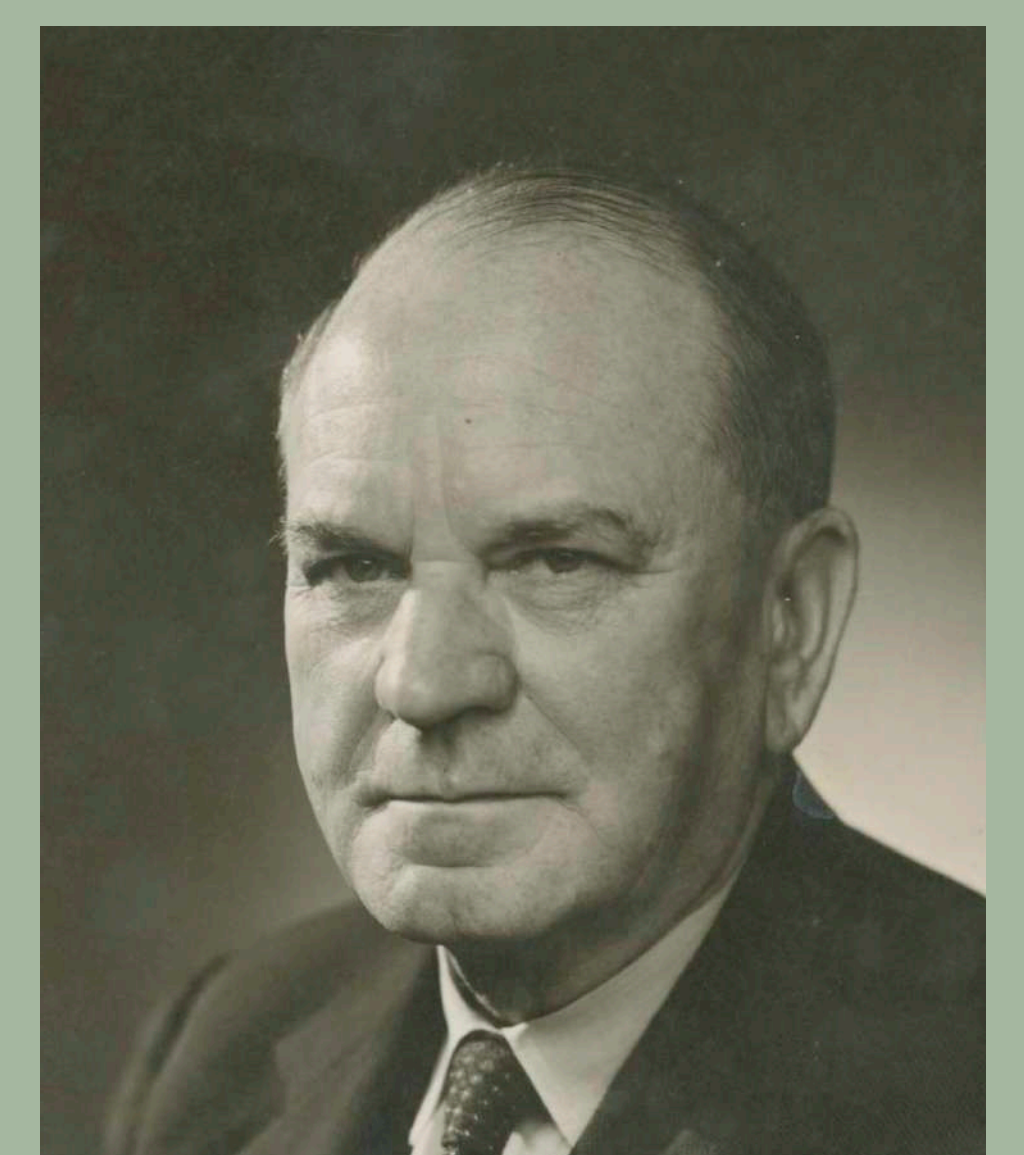
Nobel prizewinner Alexander Fleming worked at Harefield after his famous discovery at St Mary's in Paddington. His research here during the Second World War led to penicillin becoming widely available for infections like TB (tuberculosis).

Today, our research links with academic institutions – particularly King's College and Imperial College – have been critical to our world class reputation as a clinical-academic institution.

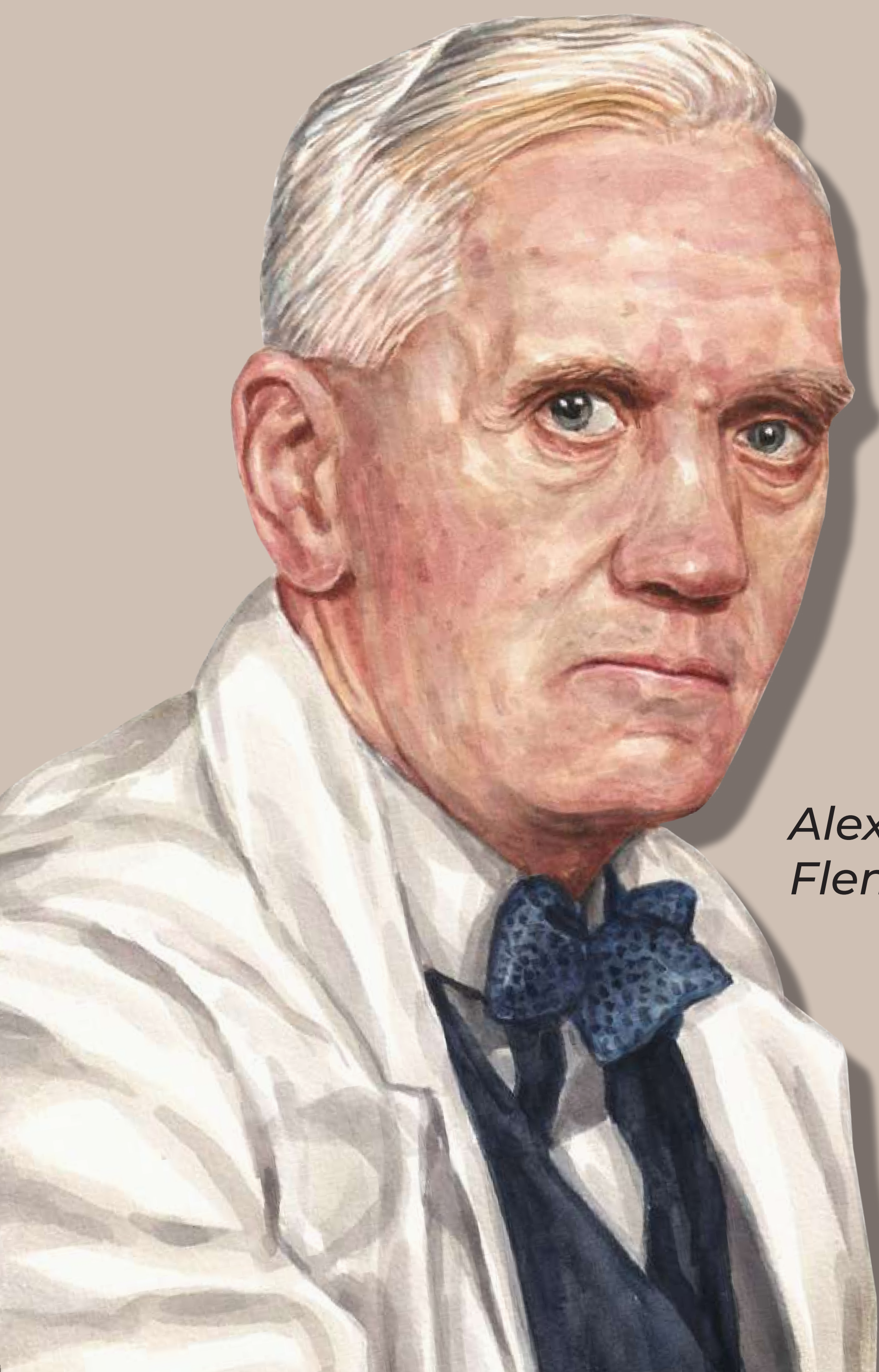
Our research discovered the genetic variants that can lead to a more severe, life-threatening reaction to COVID-19 for example, and in 2022, we opened a new clinical research facility here at Harefield.

## DID YOU KNOW...

In the late 1940s, Guy Scadding became famous for his research on chest diseases at the Brompton. Harefield radiologist Leslie Blair (right) joined Scadding's group on lung cancer in the 1950s.



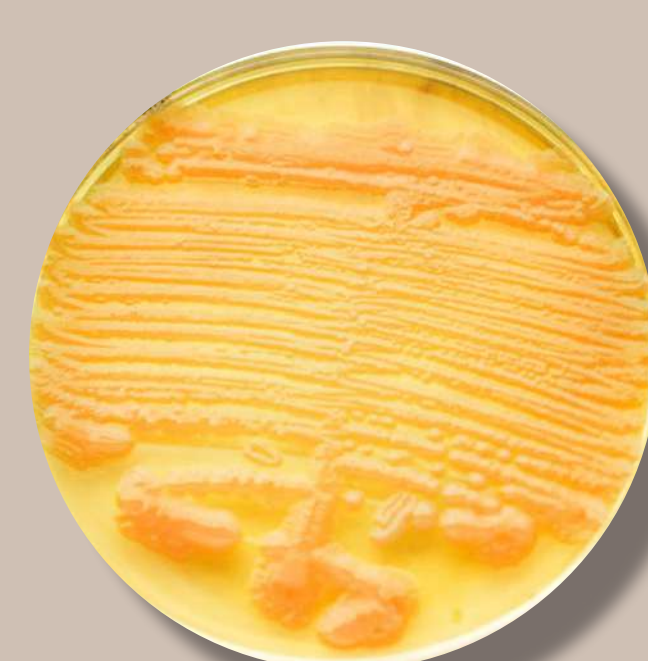
Other research staff there included Lynne Reid (right), the first woman in the UK to become a professor of experimental pathology.



*Alexander Fleming*

**“ Penicillin was like a bit of mouldy bread in the bottom of this little bottle and you'd have a bottle of saline water, shake it up, and give them thirty thousand units every 4 hours. ”**

*George James, medical orderly at Harefield, describes early methods of producing penicillin in 1947*





# Designed for lungs

The semi-rural Harefield estate was redeveloped in 1935 with a new hospital designed to help TB (tuberculosis) patients, using a 'double crossbow' curved shape to allow sunlight and fresh air onto wards with outdoor balconies.

Fresh air was considered important for treating TB so patients were kept outside in all weathers.

## Thoracic innovation

Harefield pioneered the use of the artificial pneumothorax, where a lung is collapsed deliberately, to isolate and treat areas affected by disease.



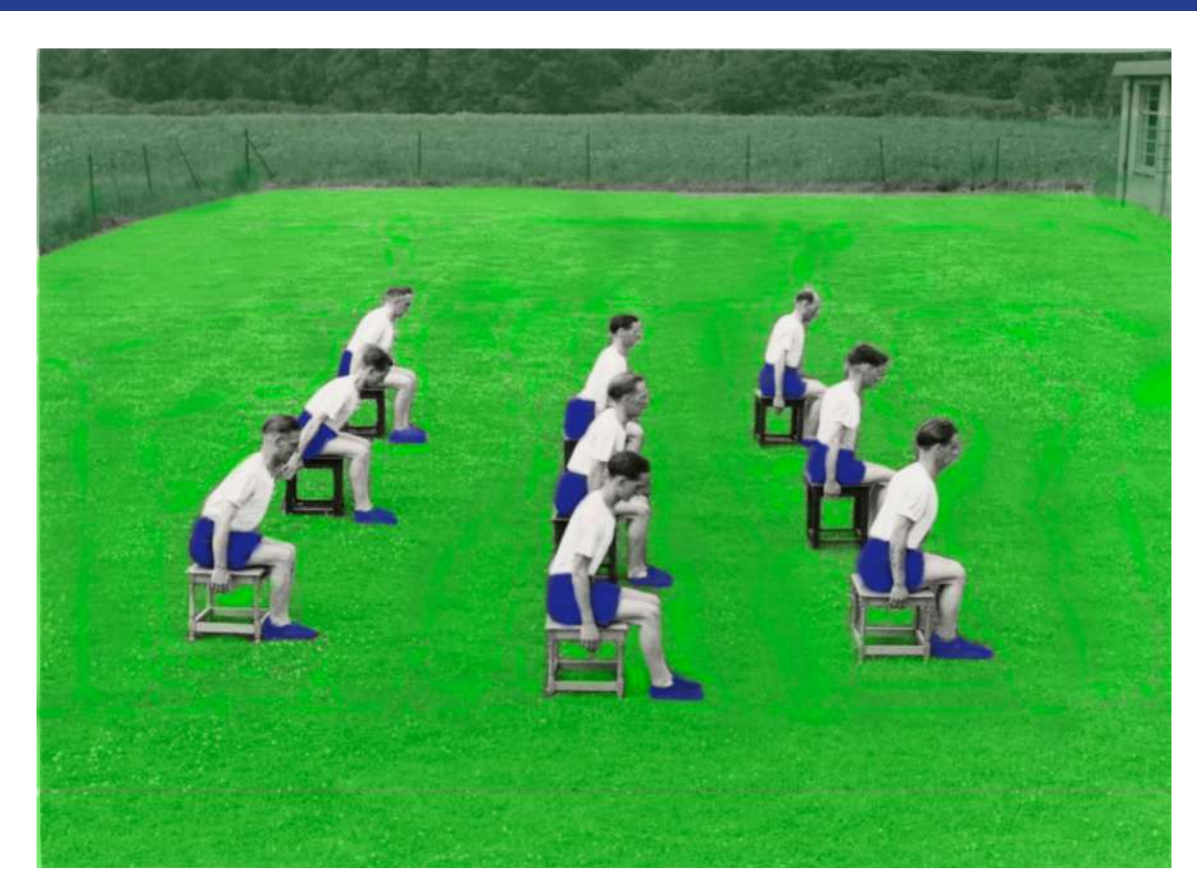
*An artificial pneumothorax being carried out at Harefield*

Physiotherapy and occupational therapy were central to TB recovery. Harefield's head of physiotherapy Jocelyn Reed developed post-operative exercises and even invented a 'total suspension apparatus' to prevent pressure sores.

In more recent years, Harefield was the first in the UK to perform minimally invasive lung transplant surgery, and today has one of the largest lung transplant services in the country.

**❄ No matter how cold it was, the beds were wheeled outside during the day. One day I visited to find Hugh covered in gently falling snowflakes! ❄**

*Edna Irish talking about her brother, Hugh, a patient at Harefield in 1945, shown below in sunnier times*



*Harefield patients performing their physiotherapy exercises in the 1940s*





# Urgent investigations

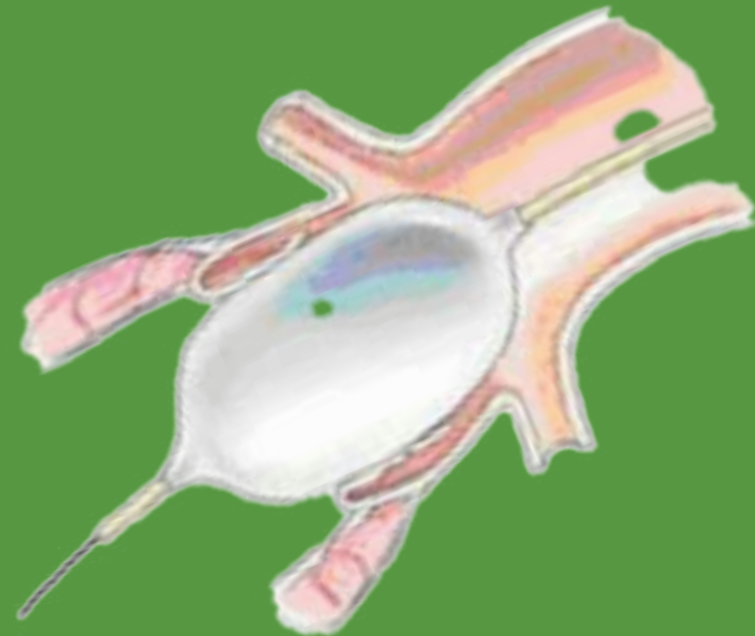
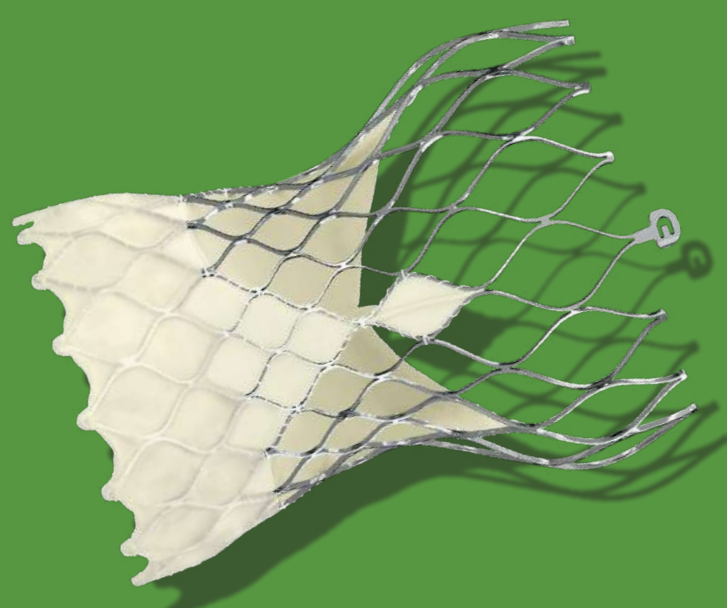
Treating illness often depends on knowing what is going on inside the body. In the early days, it was all about X-rays. Harefield's X-ray department opened in 1937. After World War Two, Harefield introduced blood tests, respiratory function tests and skin tests.

Today we are a leading centre for cardiac magnetic resonance imaging (CMR or MRI), producing detailed images of the heart with magnets and radio waves. Our CMR centre at Royal Brompton was one of the first when it opened in 1984 and, in 2022, it was succeeded there by a new Diagnostic Centre.



## DID YOU KNOW...

Harefield has four 'cath labs' – and Royal Brompton five – often used for unblocking arteries or repairing heart valves. The 'cath' or catheter is a thin tube inserted through a small cut, usually in the groin or wrist. Guided through blood vessels, this enables a replacement valve to be put in place, or a metal mesh, called a stent, to keep the blood vessel open.



## Speed is key

Harefield's helipad is used by medical helicopters for the most urgent cases and in another UK first in 2023, we teamed up with local air ambulance services to treat cardiac arrests even faster.

As a specialist hospital treating very ill people, Harefield has always prioritised the speed of care.

In 2004 Charles Ilsley and his team were the first in the UK to set up a 24-7 primary angioplasty service at Harefield's Heart Attack Centre – a specialist emergency service to treat heart attacks that remains one of the fastest in the country.

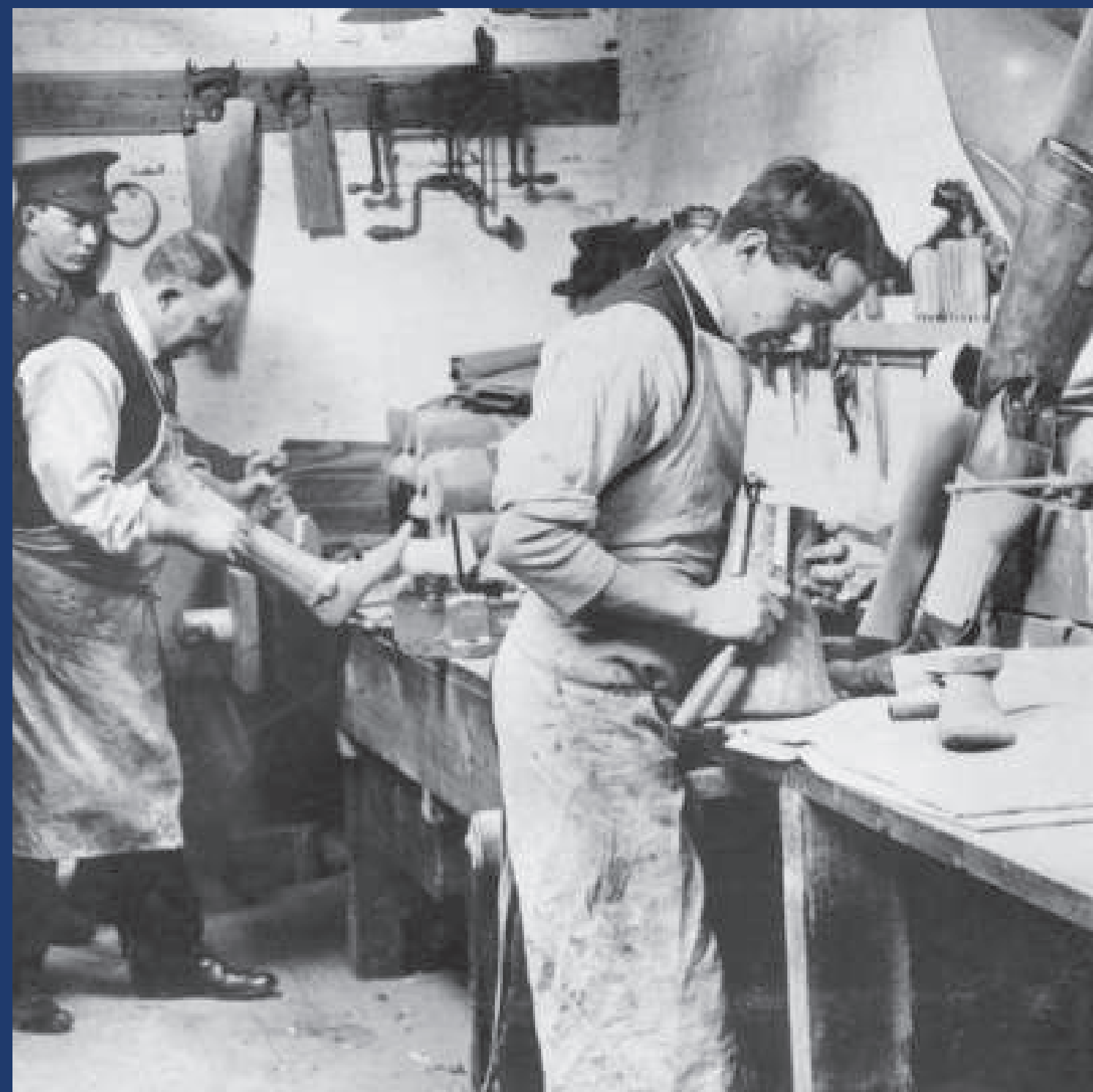




# A HISTORY OF INNOVATION

From groundbreaking procedures and therapies to major innovations, our hospital has established a global reputation for medical advances over the decades.

As a hospital for troops from Australia and New Zealand in the First World War, Harefield developed one of the first artificial limb workshops, in 1915.



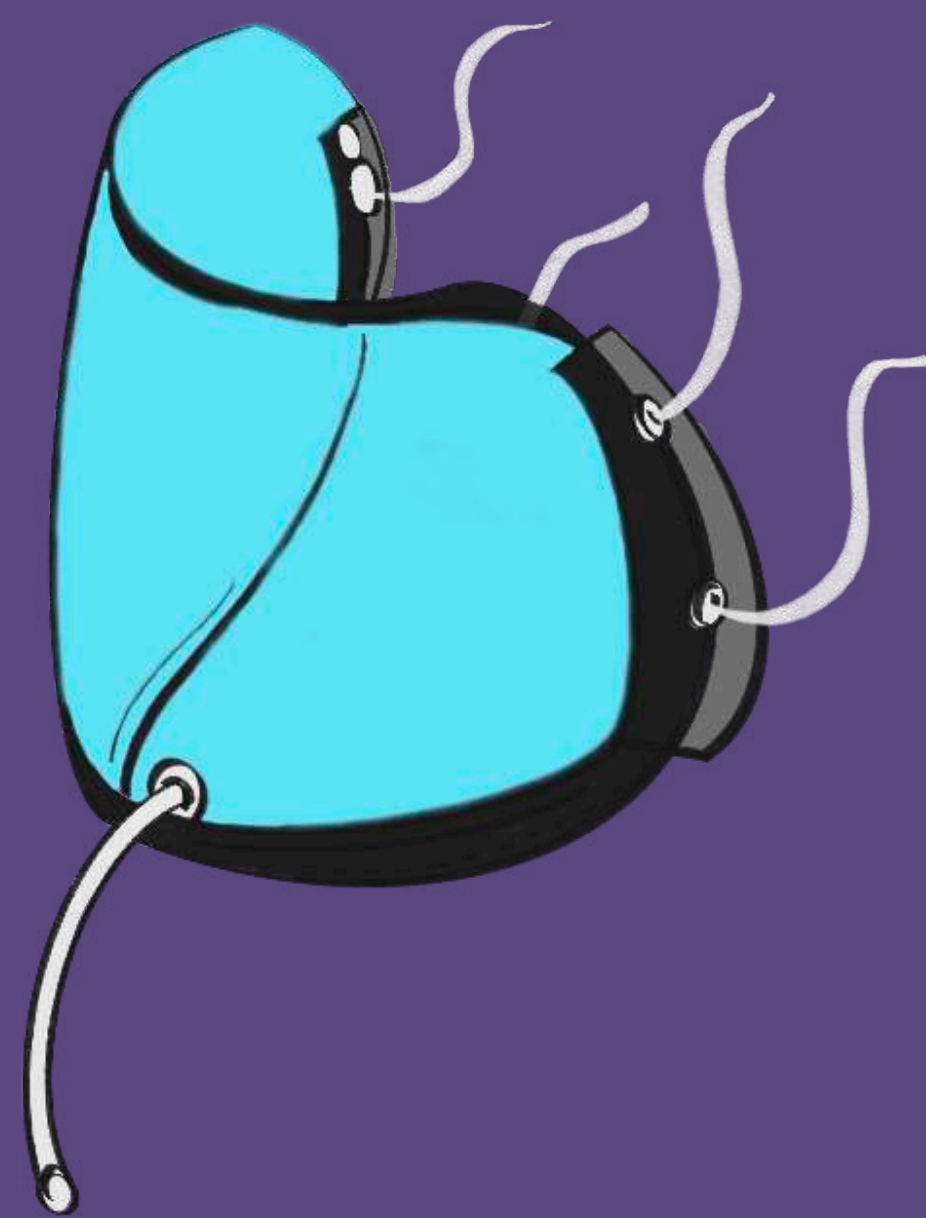
Harefield had one of the earliest most extensive occupational therapy departments, set up by Eric Sparrow in the 1930s, with leatherwork, bookbinding and printing.



*Harefield's innovations include early prosthetics, a DIY oxygen mask, and printing workshops*

## HAREFIELD FIRSTS

In 1940, wartime shortages led Harefield surgeon Thomas Holmes Sellors and colleague Alice Rose to design an oxygen mask using recycled X-ray film. Sellors also performed the first ever direct pulmonary valvotomy (surgical incision of a heart valve) here.



Cardiologist Rosemary Radley-Smith helped Magdi Yacoub save babies with congenital heart defects through the innovative 'arterial switch' operation at Harefield in the 1970s-80s.



## DID YOU KNOW...

In 1926, Clara Novello Davies, mother of famous entertainer Ivor Novello, started singing exercises to help patients with their breathing. 'Singing for Breathing' remains a popular physiotherapy exercise at Harefield today.

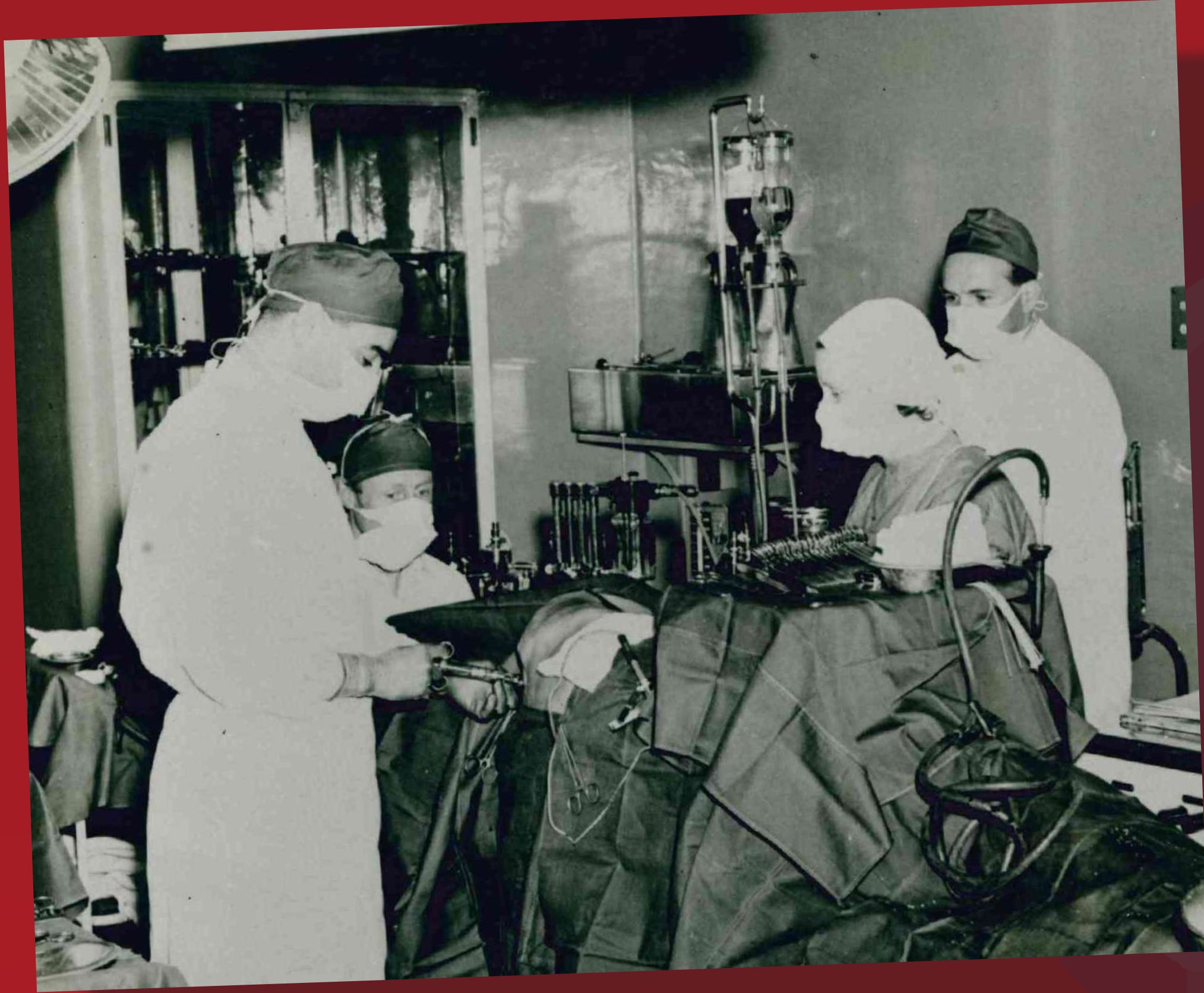


Harefield hosted the first heart-lung transplant in Europe in 1983 and in 2004, established the first 24/7 coronary angioplasty service in the UK at its Heart Attack Centre.





# Mending broken hearts



Renowned thoracic surgeon Vernon Thompson operating at Harefield in the 1950s

Today we are among the leading centres in the country for 'keyhole' surgery to repair heart valves, and have specialist heart attack and cardiac arrest services.

Harefield has often made the headlines and the world's media beat a path to our doors when Princess Diana watched a 7-year-old boy have his heart repaired here in our operating theatre.



“ When I was a child they wouldn't let me walk upstairs, or laugh, or get angry, or anything because that would aggravate my heart. ”

*Susan Followell was born as a 'blue baby' with a hole in her heart, and valves and arteries blocked. She was two when she had her first operation at Harefield.*

As well as pioneering transplant and heart attack care, Harefield has led the way in operating on children and babies with heart defects. In the late 1960s, around 100 open heart operations of this kind were undertaken every year. In the 1990s, our cardiologists developed devices to avoid 'hole in the heart' surgery altogether.



Nurses from our hospital designed a bra that helps wounds heal after heart surgery. It won a National Patient Safety Award in 2017

## DID YOU KNOW...

**Harefield took delivery of an exercise bike in 1973 – then a novel idea – so that patients' hearts could be tested. It was custom-built for the hospital by young apprentices at an engineering company.**

**In a more recent innovation, Harefield was among the first to use the 'heart in a box' system, to keep a donor heart beating until it can be transplanted.**





# At the centre of it all



Harefield's more than 40 acres of grounds are part of the 'NHS Forest' and include a lake, healing garden, and beehives, whose honey raises funds for patient support

How patients are looked after in every way is central to effective treatment. The Harefield 'Almoners' Department' was set up in 1940, to support patients going home. Today we have dedicated patient experts, providing feedback on every aspect of care, ensuring we always put the patient at the centre.

Radio Harefield was set up in 1968 and broadcast across the hospital, taking requests from patients.



By 1971, the hospital had its own TV studio, based in the concert hall. Today the radio station is still going and the hospital also has its own podcast on Spotify.



## DID YOU KNOW...

Thanks to our hospitals' arts programme, one of the UK's most renowned artists, Grayson Perry, made one of his signature ceramics after watching heart surgery and sold it to raise funds for Harefield – where his vase is now on display.



“ He literally saved my life, though you shouldn't hold that against him! ”

Comedian Eric Morecambe had life-saving surgery at Harefield, started the very first Harefield Hospital fun run in 1981, and has a department named after him

### Actual patient comments

Biggest thank you for saving my life

I wanted to say thank you to the NHS

We greatly appreciate you

Outstanding, delicious & nutritious thank you

The skill is mind-blowing

I'm in awe of the amazing work

Thank you for the homely home-cooked food

I am thankful every day for the care

My husband and I will be forever grateful

Thanks for your care, kindness and support

Everlasting thanks to the hospital

Thanks for taking care of my father



Eric Morecambe



Ethel Gray and her four nursing colleagues  
who set up Harefield Hospital in 1915

# Nursing our talent

Our nurses have always been at the heart of what our hospital does – developing services, keeping pace with innovation, and introducing new specialist skills.

Harefield was created from scratch by nurses. Australian matron Ethel Gray arrived in 1915 with four other sisters and bought furniture, organised laundry, and set up wards for wounded soldiers.

Ever since, our nurses have re-organised wards, services and teams to manage new medical developments. As a specialist hospital, our advanced nurses today – nurse consultants, lead nurses, clinical nurse specialists, and advanced nurse practitioners – all have postgraduate qualifications.

“ I enjoy nursing as it is a call within me to help others. I get the opportunity to make a difference to my patients and their relatives even in tough times. ”

*Harefield Sister Julia Gangata won a national Rising Star award in 2021*

## DID YOU KNOW...

Australian nurse Ruby Dickinson, who helped to set up Harefield, died of pneumonia in 1918 aged 32 and is buried at St Mary's church here. She also has a plaque at St James's church in Sydney.



Matron Ann Monteith rehomed more than 30 kittens born to the hospital's stray cats in the 1960s, relying on friends and local villagers to adopt them.

From 1938-1960, matron Beatrice Shaw managed post-war staff shortages, improved nursing skills, and developed specialist training in TB for student nurses from other hospitals.



Julia  
Gangata

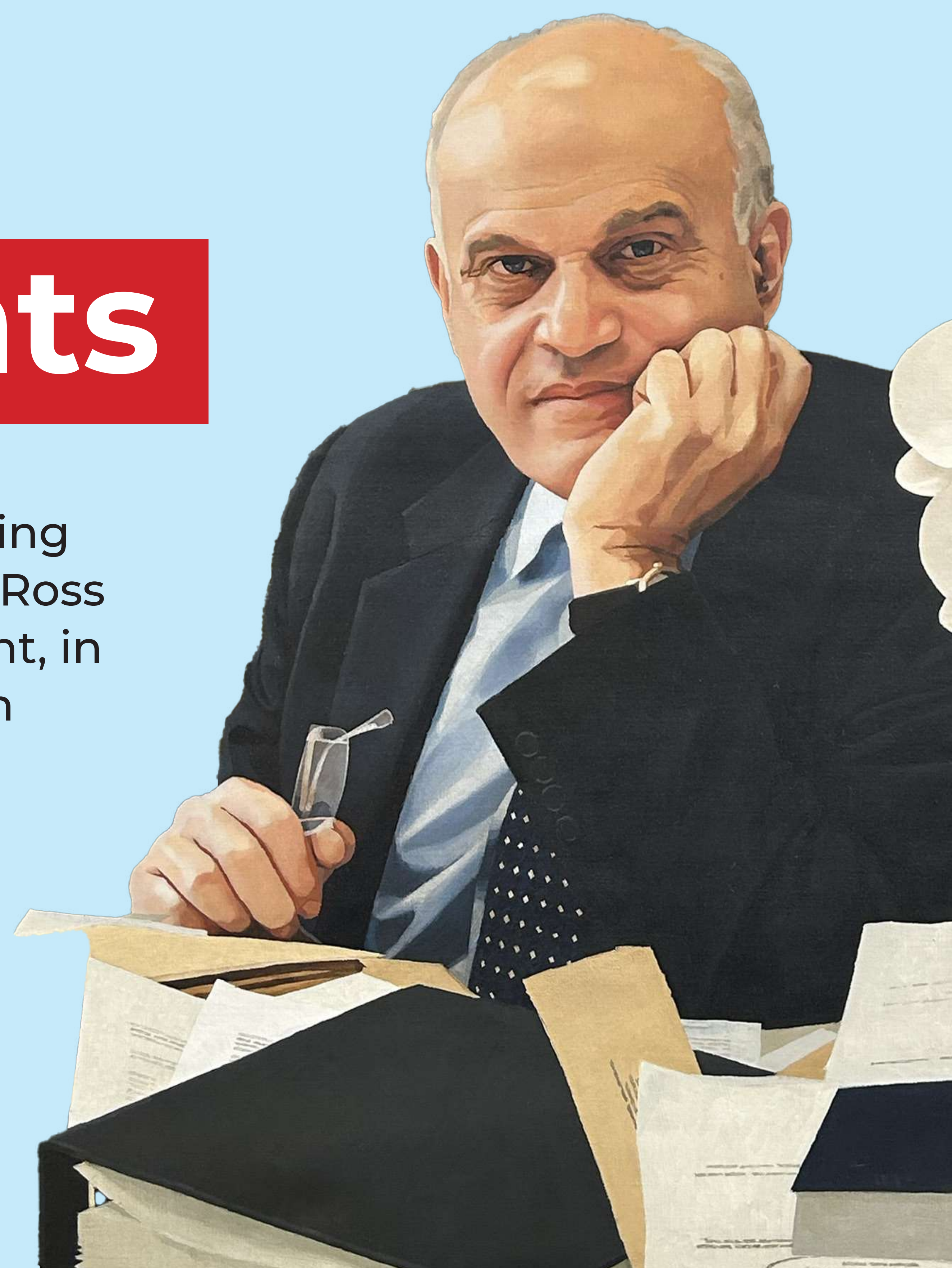




# The miracle of transplants

When we think of pioneering surgery, transplants often spring to mind. Harefield surgeon Keith Ross worked with Donald Ross (no relation) on the UK's first ever successful heart transplant, in 1968 at the National Heart Hospital which later merged with Royal Brompton.

Here in Harefield, Magdi Yacoub carried out the first heart-lung transplant in Europe in 1983. A year later, he performed the first transplant here on a newborn baby and also gave a new heart to Bert Janssen, who in 2024 broke world records as the longest-living heart transplant recipient.



Magdi Yacoub

Pam Baldock was the very first transplant coordinator at Harefield Hospital from 1973 until she retired in 2003. She remembers having only 3 hours to retrieve and transport a donor heart.



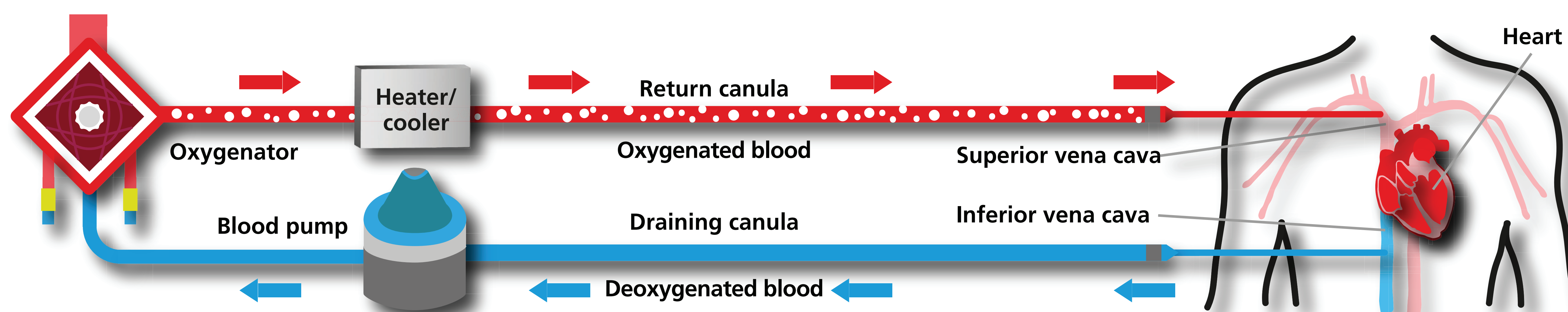
*It took about 20 minutes to take a heart out and perfuse it and pack it, change out of your scrubs, get into your car or plane, and get back here. And then to stitch it in would take the boss about 30 to 35 minutes.*



In 2015, to mark the hospital's centenary, Harefield hosted the largest gathering of heart transplant recipients in Europe

## DID YOU KNOW...

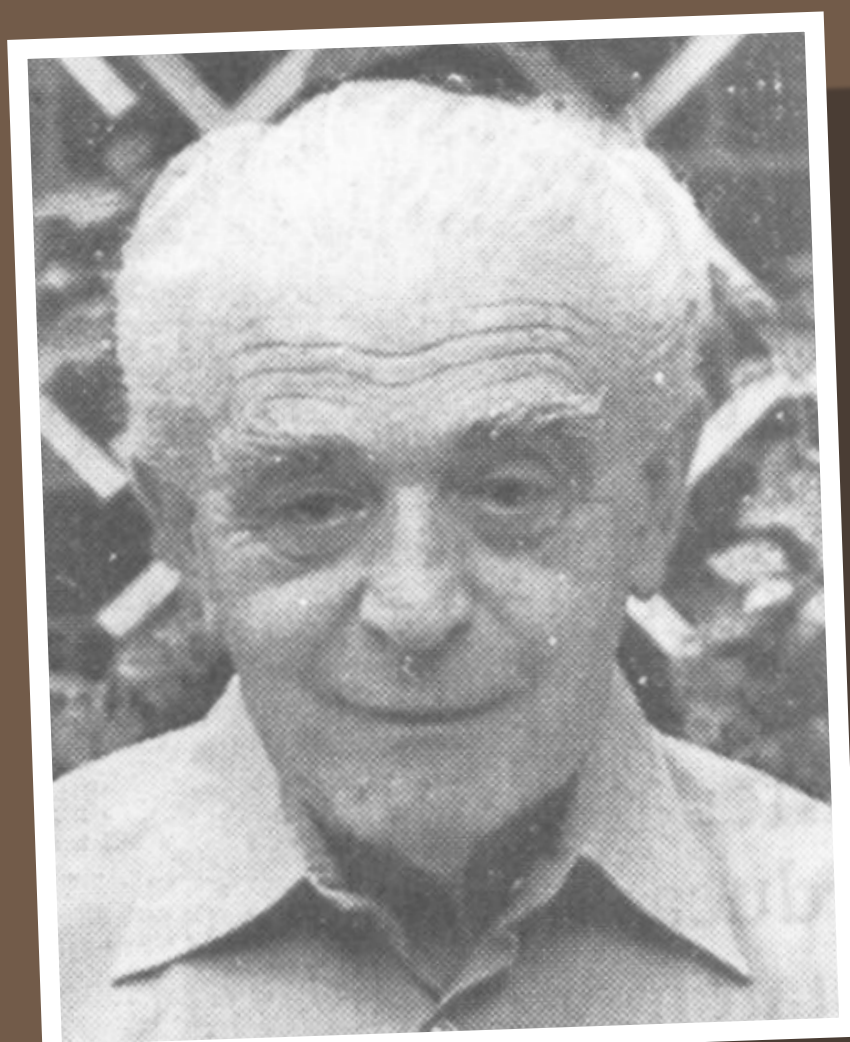
Major surgery on the heart and lungs – such as during a transplant – requires the use of an 'ECMO' heart-lung machine that takes over the body's blood circulation and oxygenation functions. Our specialism in this kind of work proved life-saving for many during the COVID-19 pandemic.





# World class, worldwide

Harefield Hospital's origins were international: it was set up to care for Australian troops, many receiving life-changing injuries in World War One.



Eugene Nassau

In World War Two, pathologist Eugene Nassau fled to Harefield from Czechoslovakia in 1939. His work led to the World Health Organisation commissioning him for groundbreaking work in India.

Over the decades, our staff have become ever more diverse. By 1973, they came from so many countries that we were chosen for a study on patterns of friendship between races.



## DID YOU KNOW...

In 2023 we celebrated the 75th anniversary of the arrival of the Empire Windrush that brought 1,000 passengers from the West Indies to the UK. Many joined the NHS which launched just two weeks later.



From disabled soldiers in World War One to our diverse staff today, Harefield's cricket pitch is still a popular draw for bringing teams together

Today our diverse workforce has particularly large communities from the Philippines, India, Nigeria and Portugal. We have lively staff networks representing different ethnicities, sexual orientation and gender and disability.

“ There were Jamaicans here and Antiguan and Ghanaians and Trinidadians, Barbadians, English and everybody. I got friendly with these two Irish nurses and we studied together. ”

*Jamaican nurse Delores Smith  
who trained at Harefield in 1961-63*



In 1971 Hollywood brought diversity to Harefield when 'Raging Moon' was filmed in our wards. It features Malcolm McDowell and Nanette Newman falling in love after becoming wheelchair users



Nurses Olusanga, Ngoka and Oshodi at the Harefield summer fete in 1966, selling Nigerian leather goods

