1970s: nurses with model of new Charing Cross Hospital
When my great, great grandfather Benjamin Golding, aged 20, opened two rooms in his private house in Charing Cross to tend to sick, poor local people for no payment, little did he know that he was planting a seed that would develop over 200 years to treat many millions of people and forge the pathway for one of London’s major acute hospitals with its modern technology and services.

He was the youngest of 16 children, half of whom died in infancy. His father was an Essex tanner impoverished by his father’s gambling debts. There is no evidence of any medical background in his family. He was single minded and motivated by his desire to improve the lot of his fellow human beings, especially the poor ones.

He travelled to Edinburgh aged 18 to begin his medical training and returned two years later to start his life’s mission by ministering to the poor every morning and furthering his studies at St Thomas’s Hospital in the afternoon and evening. By the time he was 25 in 1818 the seeds of his combined hospital and medical school were firmly rooted – not bad going!
In the first half of the 20th century the hospital in the Strand coped with casualties from the two world wars. In World War I, Matron Mary Cochrane created a calm environment in terrible times and provided sisters to supervise six nearby shelters. They received the terribly injured from the Café Royal and Berwick Street Market bombings.

As a charitable hospital, funding was a constant problem. Philip Inman, who joined in 1921 as Hospital Secretary, proved invaluable in raising funds from near and far to ensure its financial security. By 1948, when the hospital became part of the newly created NHS, it was debt free.

Charing Cross Hospital had been training its own nurses from 1887 and was at the forefront of developing the profession and nurse education. Initially, education was shared with medical students but gradually the hospital established its own school of nursing which continued to attract highly able students. In the 1990s, with Project 2000, nurse education became university based.

The demands on services showed the need for a bigger site and the new Charing Cross Hospital in Fulham Palace Road was formally opened by HM Queen Elizabeth II in May 1973.
To celebrate 200 years of Charing Cross, Imperial Health Charity has undertaken a very special project to build an anniversary garden for patients and staff. Carefully designed to benefit patients with dementia and other neurological conditions, the garden will provide a peaceful place for patients to go outside the hospital doors and a safe space for activities that enhance the recovery process.

To find out more about the Charing Cross Anniversary Garden, visit www.imperialcharity.org.uk/gardenappeal

Imperial Health Charity supports Charing Cross Hospital and the other four hospitals of Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust through grants, arts, volunteering and fundraising. By funding improvements to the hospital environment, research and medical equipment, the charity’s work enables the Trust to go above and beyond to provide outstanding care for our patients.

In the last few years, the charity has made particular efforts to invest in the future of Charing Cross.

The charity’s largest ever grant has paved the way for a full refurbishment of the hospital’s outpatients department, while a £1 million investment has enabled surgeons to treat many more patients at the Riverside Theatres. The charity has expanded the hospital art collection and arts engagement programme, helping to create a warm and welcoming environment. Meanwhile the charity’s Trust-wide volunteering programme supports around 100 volunteers at Charing Cross alone.

To find out more about the charity’s work and how you can get involved, please visit www.imperialcharity.org.uk
The future of patient care at Imperial College Healthcare feels more exciting than ever for me as a clinician.

At Charing Cross, we share with local people a great pride in our hospital. There is a wide range of development underway across the hospital – from A&E to wards.

Our stroke and interventional radiology teams are leading with a new thrombectomy service, improving outcomes for hundreds of stroke patients a year. We are introducing state of the art LINAC radiotherapy machines to support our cancer care. And we are improving diagnosis and advancing prostate treatment that avoids the need for invasive surgery and reduces the risks of side effects.

We are also developing new, more integrated models of care, such as our older person’s rapid assessment clinic. As health and care needs continue to change, we will change with them, as we have for the past 200 years.

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Research and innovation has underpinned patient care at Charing Cross Hospital since its founding. Our partnership with Imperial College – with its education and research facilities sharing the hospital site, keeps us set for the future.

Researchers at Imperial College developed the iKnife, an intelligent knife that can tell surgeons immediately whether the tissue they are cutting is cancerous or not, first tested at operating theatres in Charing Cross.

John Astley Bloxam, a surgeon at Charing Cross, paved the way for facial plastic surgery in the 19th century. His work was dedicated to treating sufferers of syphilitic ulceration and he performed transplants on patients to reform the nose from a part of the finger and was published in the Lancet in 1888.

Dr Herbert Barrie developed the only dedicated neonatal ambulance in the country, which collected babies requiring intensive care from other hospitals and transferred them to Charing Cross.

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The actors’ hospital

In the Strand, Charing Cross was known as the actors’ hospital, because of its links to West End theatre. It treated many of the poorer actors, dancers, singers and stage technicians and received the patronage of prominent theatres and actors in return.

1897
Leading actors including Sir Squire Bancroft and Sir Henry Irving gave public readings to endorse the appeal to extend the hospital – Irving was elected to the Council of the hospital with a bed endowed in his memory.

1899
The Charing Cross Hospital Bazaar was held at the Royal Albert Hall to raise money for the hospital.

1920s/30s
The actor-manager Sir Gerald du Maurier was a member of the hospital Council. He was a regular visitor to Charing Cross, raised money on its behalf and made personal donations of money as well as gifts of chocolate and cigarettes for the patients.