



Devon Family History Society
Joint Project Publication with
Devon Record Office



WEST OF ENGLAND EYE INFIRMARY

1841

DRO Reference – 1299F add/HR1

DFHS Book Reference - D006

The West of England Eye Infirmary was the first eye hospital in the provinces, founded in 1808 'for the cure of diseases in the eye' - it was the second hospital in Great Britain founded for that purpose. It moved from Holloway Street in Exeter to premises in Magdalen Street in 1813. It was enlarged and extended in 1865, 1881 and over the years 1889 to 1910. In 1901, a new hospital building was erected after the demolition of an old one.

In 1850, White's Directory of Devon stated that the Infirmary was supported by annual subscriptions, donations, and the dividends from £3574 invested in Consols, which had been purchased at various periods with benefactions & savings of income. It generally had from 200 to 300 patients in the years of the mid-19th century, and the total number admitted since the opening of the Infirmary in 1808, amounted to more than 27,000, of whom about 25,500 were cured, and the rest benefited by treatment. Of those cured, about 440 had been blind from cataract, and 82 of them had been in darkness from birth or infancy. Sir H R F Davie, Bart, was president; the Rev J Bartholomew, vice-president; and Mr Thomas Morrish was secretary. Messrs. De-la-Garde, Edye, & Barnes were the surgeons and Dr Blackall was the consulting physician.

The old Infirmary building in Magdalen Street has been transformed into the *Hotel Barcelona* and the Infirmary is now a unit within the Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital, Exeter.

G.L. Cantrell's book *West of England Eye Infirmary, Exeter, 1808 - 1992* (published Exeter, 1992) describes the history of the Eye Infirmary.

The records indexed here are held in Devon Record Office (DRO), together with others from the West of England Eye Infirmary, in collections 1299F and 1299F add/. The indexed records are from a section of the Register of Patients, dated 1841 (ref: DRO 1299F add/HR1).