

Institute of Physics – London & South East Branch – Retired Members Section

The Old Operating Theatre and the Florence Nightingale Museums on Thursday 9 February 2017

This visit has been organised by Tony Colclough.

Description: We visit two medical museums illustrating our difficult transition from early 19C surgery and nursing to that of the modern post-anesthetics age. They are the Old Operating Theatre and Herb Garret opposite Guy's Hospital and the Florence Nightingale Museum in the grounds of St Thomas' Hospital.

The Operating Theatre and Herb Garret is found in the attic of an 18th century English Baroque Church.



This placement may seem bizarre, but the wards of the South Wing of the old St. Thomas' Hospital were built around St. Thomas' Church now standing under the shadow of the Shard.

Dorcas Ward was the women's surgical ward. Before 1822 women were, distressingly, operated on in the ward itself among other patients. In 1815 the Apothecary's Act, which required apprentice apothecaries to attend at public hospitals, meant that many students crowded in to watch operations.

Placing the Theatre in the Herb Garret of the Church provided a separation from the ward. It gave a separate entrance for students, and afforded a measure of sound proofing.

The operating theatre was built to maximise the light from above, with a large skylight. Although not heated or ventilated, it provided an ideal, albeit small, area for demonstrating surgical skills.

Until 1846, surgeons had no recourse to anaesthetics and depended on swift technique (surgeons could perform an amputation in a minute or less), the mental preparation of the patient and alcohol or opiates to dull the patient's senses. Thereafter ether or chloroform started to be used. The Operating Theatre had closed down before antiseptic surgery was invented. The majority of cases were for amputations or superficial complaints as, without antiseptic conditions; it was too dangerous to carry out internal operations.

The **Florence Nightingale Museum** celebrates the life and work of the world's most famous nurse. Located on the banks of the River Thames opposite the Houses of Parliament, the museum attracts visitors from many countries who want to learn more about the Lady with the Lamp and her Victorian world. It also bears witness to Florence's legacy, her influence on nursing today and the continuing relevance of her work. Her voice speaks to us from another age and can be heard at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ax3B4gRQNU4> .



Where and when to meet: Assemble at the Old Operating Theatre at 9a St Thomas Street, London, SE1 9RY. The Florence Nightingale Museum is at St Thomas' Hospital, 2 Lambeth Palace Road, London SE1 7EW

Getting there. The Old Operating Theatre is a short walk from London Bridge Rail and Underground Station served by the Northern and Jubilee lines. See map. To get to the Florence Nightingale Museum after lunch we walk back to nearby London Bridge Station and take the Jubilee line one stop west to Waterloo.

Lunch: To be decided on the day.

Timetable (approximate times)

10:30	Assemble at the Old Operating Theatre.
12:00	Walk to lunch
13:30	Walk to London Bridge Station and take the tube to Waterloo. Then walk to the Florence Nightingale Museum
14:00	Arrive at the Museum
17:00	Museum closes

Size of party: 20 max

Cost £12.00. Members pay for their food and travel.

Contacts Before the day: contact Tony Colclough at tonycolclough@tiscali.co.uk or on 020 8398 0766. On the day: call 07930 171 307.

Late arrivals Call Tony on 07930 171 307 who will advise you to catch up with the programme.

