DID YOU KNOW?
The Royal Hospital Chelsea isn’t a hospital in the way we think of hospitals. The historical meaning of the word is ‘a place of refuge and shelter.’ Today it provides sheltered accommodation and full nursing facilities.

THE ROYAL HOSPITAL CHELSEA

The Royal Hospital Chelsea was founded in 1682 ‘For the succour and relief of veterans broken by age and war’. Well over 300 years later it continues to serve this same purpose, caring for old and infirm veteran soldiers to whom the nation owes a debt of gratitude. In this way the Royal Hospital, and the famous scarlet coated Chelsea Pensioners who live within it, stand as the very embodiment of the military covenant made between the nation and those who serve in its army so selflessly, willing if necessary to make the ultimate sacrifice.

Today the Royal Hospital Chelsea is home to some 300 Chelsea Pensioners. It gives them a new life within a vibrant community founded on the rock of comradeship: a home within which they will live and be well cared for until they die, certain that they will never be alone. That was our Founder’s enduring vision, and it is our intention to secure that vision for future generations.

In the following pages, we have tried to outline for you a little of the history of the Royal Hospital Chelsea and the ways in which it continues its long tradition of providing a fitting home for soldiers who once served our nation with courage and loyalty.

We hope you are inspired to help us in some way, whether by becoming a Friend, making a donation, leaving a legacy or hiring one of our beautiful settings for a special event.

Thank you for your interest in the Royal Hospital Chelsea.
DID YOU KNOW?

Every year, the Founder’s Day Parade is held to commemorate Charles II’s birthday. Only five Founder’s Day Parades have ever been cancelled, and they were during the First World War. During World War II, Founder’s Day was still held, although records suggest it didn’t take place at the Royal Hospital Chelsea and there are pictures of the event being held at Rudhall in Herefordshire.

‘BROKEN BY AGE OR WAR’

The story of today’s Royal Hospital Chelsea begins over 300 years ago in the reign of King Charles II. Aware that the army was supporting a growing number of soldiers who were no longer fit for active service, and inspired by L’Hôtel des Invalides in Paris, the king committed to create a welcoming and safe home for veterans who had fought for their country and who were now ‘broken by age or war’.

His vision for such a home was brought to life by Sir Christopher Wren, whose elegant buildings still stand majestically on the banks of the River Thames in the heart of 21st century London.

But it’s not just the buildings that have survived into modern times. Charles II’s understanding that the country owes a debt of gratitude to its old soldiers shapes the spirit of the Royal Hospital today. The residents of the Hospital, known the world over as Chelsea Pensioners, have all served as soldiers in the British Army and now, in their later years, find a warm welcome as well as excellent care within a community which has comradeship at its core.
Today’s Chelsea Pensioners come from across the United Kingdom and have served in conflicts from World War II to the Falklands. They all understand what it means to be a soldier and the potential sacrifice that signing up entails.

Anyone who is over sixty-five and has served as a regular soldier, who has no dependent spouse or family, who finds themselves in need and who is “of good character” can apply to become one of the world famous Chelsea Pensioners. Former officers must have served at least 12 years in the ranks before receiving a commission.

As well as a warm welcome among fellow veterans, the Royal Hospital Chelsea provides meals, accommodation and activities for all its residents. The purpose-built Infirmary with its specialist dementia ward cares for veterans as they face the increasing challenges and trials of old age.

For more information about how to become a Chelsea Pensioner, please contact the Chelsea Pensioner Admissions’ Office:

T: 020 7881 5204  
E: admissions@chelsea-pensioners.org.uk

DID YOU KNOW?

Since 2009, women have been admitted to the Royal Hospital Chelsea, although there is evidence that in the past they have disguised themselves to get in!
VISITING THE ROYAL HOSPITAL

TOURS
For the best overview of the history of the Hospital, plus captivating insights into life as a Chelsea Pensioner today, why not book one of our daily tours? These last around ninety minutes and are always led by one of the Chelsea Pensioners, who will take great pride in showing you around their fascinating home. All tours must be booked at least four weeks in advance for a minimum of four people. To book:

T: 020 7881 5516
E: tours@chelsea-pensioners.org.uk

Small groups (fewer than ten people) and individuals can simply drop in and visit the beautiful grounds and see the impressive Chapel and Great Hall for free, although many visitors feel inspired to leave a donation to support our charitable work. Groups with ten or more people will be charged a group entry fee, payable in advance when booking your tour.

MUSEUM
In many ways the entire Hospital is a living museum, but we also have a dedicated museum with some of the more unusual items on display. Entry is free for groups under ten and is also included as part of the guided tour.

SHOP
Looking for an unusual gift? Want to take home something to help you remember your visit? The Royal Hospital Chelsea Shop and Post Office has a wide range of interesting gifts and souvenirs to suit all budgets.

Visit the website for times and prices

DID YOU KNOW?
Several Chelsea Pensioners still work within the hospital as, among other things, tour guides, postmen and research assistants.
MAKING A DONATION

The Royal Hospital is an independent charity funded in part by a grant in aid from Government. However, the balance - including all expenditure on capital projects - has to be raised through income generating activities and charitable donations.

In recent years, we have successfully raised sufficient to fund an extensive programme of modernisation to make sure the care facilities and accommodation remain fit for purpose. But much remains to be done if we are to secure the future for tomorrow’s veterans who will need our help in the years to come, including those young men and women who have served so bravely in Iraq and Afghanistan.

If you share our vision you may wish to help, either by making a donation or otherwise raising funds via a sponsored activity. There are many ways in which this can be done and if you would like further information, please request a copy of our Fundraising brochure by giving us a call or visiting the website. Suffice it to say your support will make a real difference.

T: 020 7881 5324

You can donate online at
www.chelsea-pensioners.co.uk

EVEN THE SMALLEST GIFT CAN MAKE A REAL DIFFERENCE

£10 Specialist drinking mug to help those who have had a stroke
£20 Cutlery set for those who suffer from arthritis
£50 TENS machine for pain management
£50 Taking a dementia patient to the seaside for the day
£250 Basic wheelchair
£2,500 Specialist nursing armchair
For the past three centuries, the Royal Hospital Chelsea has been committed to providing a place of refuge and care in old age for those men and women who were prepared to fight for their country. It has also carefully preserved and maintained the beautiful buildings that were built in their honour.

For that work to continue, we need your help. If you believe that the very least we can do as a nation is to provide these exceptional men and women with comfort and companionship in their old age, then you may want to consider leaving us a gift in your will.

Such legacy gifts are a crucial part of our fundraising, on which, as an independent charity, we increasingly rely. Your gift will not only help improve facilities and living conditions for our current Chelsea Pensioners, it will also contribute to a future for those young soldiers who are today serving their country in far flung corners of the world and who one day may need our help.

If you are about to make or alter your will, and would like to know more about how your gift could help support the work of the Royal Hospital Chelsea, please don’t hesitate to contact us.

Your enquiry will be treated sensitively and in the strictest confidence. Our Legacy Brochure will also provide more information. If you would like further information or a brochure, visit the website or call:

T: 020 7881 5228
BECOME A FRIEND OF THE ROYAL HOSPITAL CHELSEA

Contrary to popular belief, the Royal Hospital Chelsea is neither owned by the government, nor by the army. It is an independent charity whose core aim is to provide long-term care for veterans who may otherwise face an old age marred by loneliness and isolation. To help cover day-to-day running costs, and in order to provide 21st century care and accommodation for the Chelsea Pensioners, the Royal Hospital relies on donations from its supporters.

If you would like to help repay the nation’s debt to these men and women in their old age, why not consider becoming a Friend of the Royal Hospital Chelsea? Membership starts from as little as £35 per year for Silver Friends and offers a range of benefits including invitations to Friends’ events throughout the year, plus priority booking for concerts.

Gold and Platinum Friends (£125 and £1,000 respectively) can also enjoy such benefits as eligibility for membership of the Sloane Club and a private preview of the Chelsea Flower Show (Platinum Friends only).

For more information about becoming a Friend of the Royal Hospital Chelsea, visit the website or contact the Friends’ Team:

T: 020 7881 5516
E: friends@chelsea-pensioners.org.uk
CORPORATE FRIENDS OF THE ROYAL HOSPITAL CHELSEA

As well as individual Friends, the Royal Hospital Chelsea also welcomes support from companies and organisations interested in preserving the living heritage of the Chelsea Pensioners.

In return, the Hospital offers an extensive number of high value benefits, including networking events, exposure within marketing communications, discounted venue hire and employee membership.

For more information about our Corporate Friends scheme, please contact the Commercial Department:

T: 020 7881 5228
E: corporatefriends@chelsea-pensioners.org.uk
On the banks of the River Thames, at the heart of one of London’s most fashionable districts, the Royal Hospital Chelsea offers a number of historic and beautiful spaces to hire, both inside and out, all of which are ideal for corporate events, private parties and wedding receptions.

However, the Royal Hospital can offer more than just a picturesque backdrop for your event. We can also provide private parking, on-site security, excellent approved caterers and an experienced and dedicated events team, who will do their utmost to ensure the success of your special occasion.

In addition, you will have the satisfaction of knowing that profits from venue hire at the Royal Hospital go towards securing a future both for the buildings themselves, and for the Chelsea Pensioners who live here.

If you’re interested in hiring one of our spaces contact our dedicated Events Team:

T: 020 7881 5305
E: RHCevents@chelsea-pensioners.org.uk
The largest of the spaces for hire is the Great Hall, a majestic room which can seat up to 250 people for dinner or accommodate up to 400 for a stand-up reception.

With its richly panelled walls, fine oil paintings and impressive Antonio Verrio mural, this beautiful room is little changed since Sir Christopher Wren first designed it more than 300 years ago.

For those looking for an adjacent outside area, the elegant Figure Court can be hired in conjunction with the Great Hall.

DID YOU KNOW?
The Great Hall is used on a daily basis as the main dining room for the Chelsea Pensioners’ breakfast and lunch.
The elegantly State Apartments have a prestigious history of entertaining monarchs and other notable figures since the late 17th century. Designed by Sir Christopher Wren and later embellished by Robert Adams, these beautiful rooms feature paintings by Kneller and Lely.

Today, the Council Chamber and Ante-Room are both available for event hire. The adjacent rooms can accommodate 250 guests for a drinks reception and 96 for a seated meal.

Looking for outdoor space as well? The beautifully peaceful Cannon Gardens are accessed directly from the State Apartments and can be hired at the same time.
RANELAGH GARDENS

Ranelagh Gardens is one of London’s hidden gems. Tucked away in the extensive grounds of the Royal Hospital, these magical gardens provide an ideal outdoor space for a whole host of events, from theatrical performances and children’s parties, to summer drinks receptions, with capacity for up to 300 guests.

THE CHAPEL

The beautiful Chapel in the heart of Wren’s original buildings is ideal for concerts, music recitals and carol services. The Chapel, which features an impressive mural of The Resurrection by Sebastiano Ricci, is home to a professional choir whose services can also be engaged for events. The Chapel seats 400.

CONFERENCE FACILITIES

Whilst on the outside, the Light Horse Court building remains faithful to Sir Christopher Wren’s original design, the inside has been transformed into a bright and functional conference centre and provides an ideal venue for anyone looking to host meetings or conferences at a prestigious central London location.

The large conference room can seat up to 40 delegates (theatre style) and is fully equipped with audio visual equipment and wi-fi connection. An adjacent ante-room can be used for refreshments throughout the day.

Catering packages and bespoke tours of the historic Royal Hospital can be arranged for conference clients on request. Please speak to our Events Team for further information:

T: 020 7881 5302
E: RHCevents@chelsea-pensioners.org.uk

DID YOU KNOW?

The Light Horse Court was bombed in both the First and Second World Wars. The current building was reconstructed in the mid-1960s to Wren’s original design.
WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS

The past is important to all of us here at the Royal Hospital Chelsea, and we are proud of our history, both in terms of the architectural heritage of the buildings themselves, and the personal stories of the Chelsea Pensioners who live here.

However, in order to be able to write the next chapter in the Hospital’s extraordinary narrative, we are constantly reviewing and improving the services we offer to veterans and to the wider community.

CURRENT PROJECTS INCLUDE:

● An ongoing programme of modernisation of our facilities, to ensure disabled access for the increasing number of veterans who have lost limbs during active service.

● Upgrading the accommodation, in keeping with the expectations of current members of the Armed Forces.

● Development of our nursing home facilities to accommodate the increasing number of veterans with dementia and other age-related illnesses.

● In association with Veterans Aid, Chelsea Pensioners make regular trips to Tedworth House to visit young soldiers who have suffered life changing injuries whilst bravely serving their country.

● An outreach programme to support soup kitchens run by the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea for London’s homeless.

● A volunteer project which helps Battersea Dogs and Cats Home look after their four-legged friends.

For over three hundred years, the Royal Hospital Chelsea has provided a welcoming home and a way of life for thousands of soldiers in their old age. We have also preserved for the nation the architectural legacy left to us by King Charles II and Sir Christopher Wren. Today, our commitment to the Chelsea Pensioners and their beautiful home remains undiminished. With your help, we are looking forward to the next three hundred years.