



The History of Neurosurgery in Newcastle-upon-Tyne (est. 1937)

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Wingrove Hospital

1937



Mr A.R.D. Pattison FRCS Eng.
Appointed 1937-1940

Neurosurgery in Newcastle-upon-Tyne emerged in the early 20th century, when most neurological conditions were managed by generalists, with specialist services concentrated in only few major UK centres. The North East, despite significant industrial demand, lacked a dedicated neurosurgical service.

In 1937, A.R.D. Pattison was tasked with establishing the city's first neurosurgical unit, bringing specialist expertise having trained under Harvey Cushing in Boston. He introduced both operative and academic neurosurgery to the North East, helping to legitimise the speciality locally. Although his career was cut short by his death in 1940 at age 34, Pattison's work laid the foundations for the region's future neurosurgical development.

1941



Mr G.F. Rowbotham FRCS Eng.
Appointed 1941-1964

G.F. Rowbotham rebuilt Newcastle's neurosurgical service after Pattison's death, working under severe wartime constraints with limited resources, dispersed facilities, and high trauma demand. Despite these challenges, he stabilised and expanded the service, eventually developing a regional referral network. He successfully advocated for a dedicated Regional Neurological Centre, which opened in 1962, integrating surgery and diagnostics. His academic work, including Acute Injuries of the Head, and commitment to translational research established Newcastle as a leading neurosurgical and training centre within the UK.

1948



SBNS Presidency - Rowbotham (1962-1964)

1970s



Mr R.M. Kalbag FRCS Eng.
Appointed 1964-1991

In the 1970s, Newcastle's Regional Neurological Centre entered the era of Hankinson, Kalbag and Betty, who together developed its subspecialty and academic identity. Hankinson solidified university links with increased academic activity, with Kalbag and Betty expanding specialist work in spina bifida, hydrocephalus, paediatric brain tumours, spinal surgery and head injury outcomes, and advocating for rehabilitation services. Their combined leadership made Newcastle a nationally recognised centre for neurosurgical training and subspecialisation.

1962



Opening of the Regional Neurological Centre at Newcastle General Hospital

The Regional Neurological Centre at Newcastle General Hospital opened in November 1962, formally bringing neurosurgery, neurology, and radiology into a single purpose-built facility. It provided dedicated operating theatres with improved lighting and ventilation, specialised EEG and imaging suites, outpatient consulting rooms, and integrated library, conference, and laboratory spaces. Opened by Sir Harold Himsworth, then Secretary of the Medical Research Council, it realised Rowbotham's post-war vision of a centralised regional neurological centre serving the North East.

1972



Prof J. Hankinson FRCS Eng.
Appointed 1962-1984

In 1972, John Hankinson was appointed to the inaugural Chair of Neurosurgery at Newcastle University, formalising neurosurgery as an academic discipline locally. The chair strengthened ties between the Regional Neurological Centre and the medical school, providing institutional research support and developing postgraduate education within the department, giving Newcastle an emerging reputation as one of the UK's most active neurosurgical units.

1980s



Mr R.P. Sengupta OBE FRCS Eng.
Appointed 1978-2011

In the 1980s and 1990s, Sengupta, Crawford, Strong and Mendelow continued shaping the departments identity. Sengupta built an unparalleled aneurysm and subarachnoid haemorrhage practice, placing the unit on the international neurovascular map. Crawford and Strong expanded complex spinal, paediatric and pituitary surgery, while Mendelow's appointment in 1987 launched a landmark trauma and intracerebral haemorrhage trials programme, culminating in the STICH family of trials.



SBNS Presidency - Hankinson (1980-1982)

2000s



Prof A. David Mendelow FRCS (SN)
Appointed 1987-2018

STICH Trials

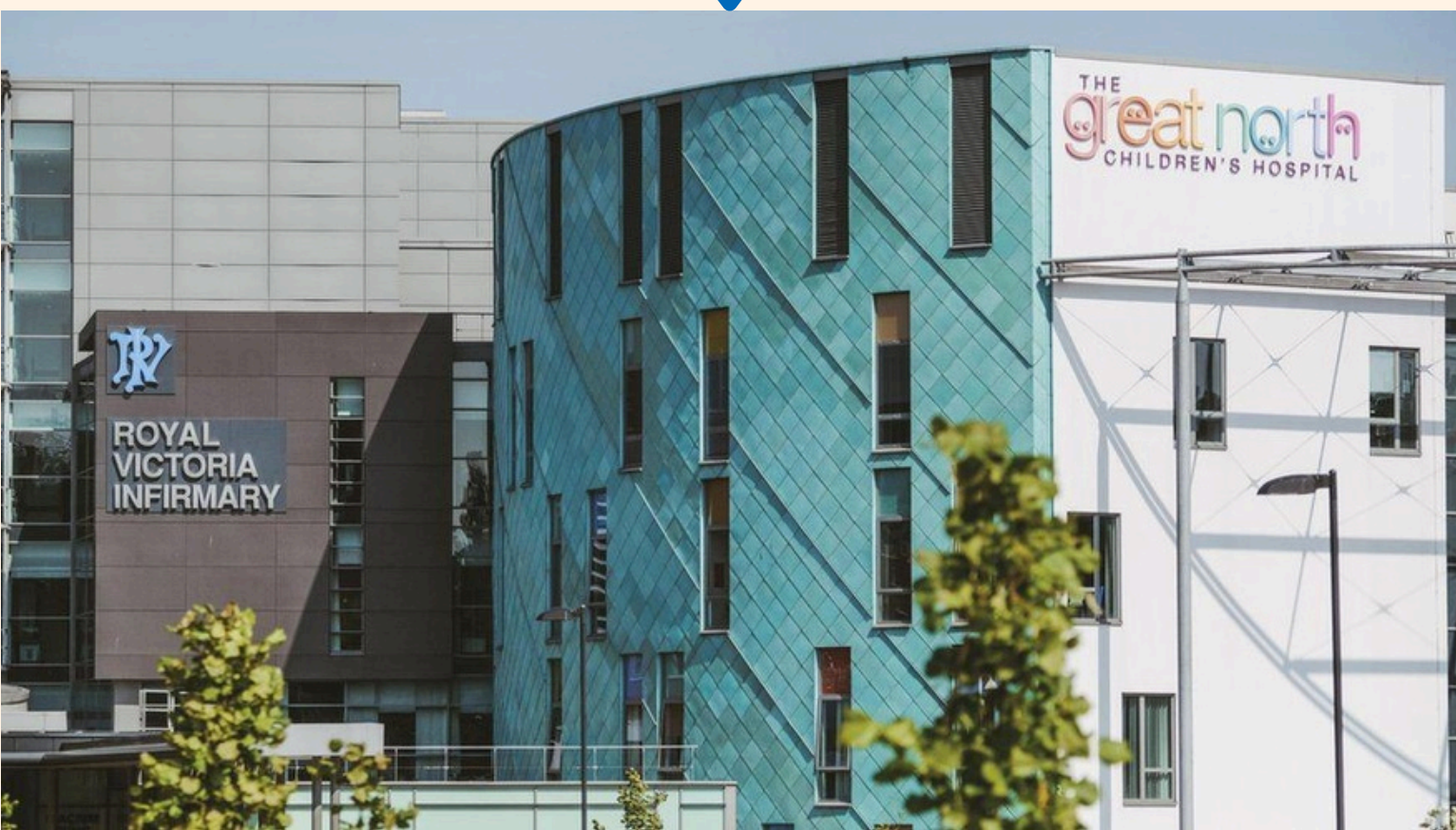
In the 2000s, Newcastle's neurosurgical trials unit, headed by Professor Mendelow, led the STICH trials that defined modern evidence on surgery for intracerebral haemorrhage. STICH and STICH II, enrolling patients from dozens of centres worldwide, clarified when early evacuation offers meaningful benefit, particularly for selected superficial lobar haematomas. A related STITCH Trauma trial extended this work to traumatic ICH, demonstrating mortality and functional gains with early surgery, influencing neurosurgical practice worldwide.

SBNS Presidency - Jenkins (2020-2022)

2020s

Royal Victoria Infirmary

2010s



Move from Newcastle General Hospital to the Royal Victoria Infirmary

In 2010, Newcastle's neurosurgery service moved from the ageing Regional Neurological Centre at Newcastle General Hospital to the New Victoria Wing of the Royal Victoria Infirmary. The new site provided purpose-built operating theatres, a dedicated neurocritical care unit with level 2-3 capacity, expanded ward and day-unit space, and integrated imaging infrastructure. This relocation enabled growth in subspecialties including neuro-oncology, skull base, paediatric, spinal, functional neurosurgery, and neurotechnology, aligning the department with contemporary tertiary care standards.

2037

The department will celebrate it's centenary in 2037

In 2025, Newcastle became home to the UK's National Centre for Neurotechnology and Neurorestoration, integrating advanced neuromodulation, brain-computer interfaces, and experimental neurorehabilitation within the neurosurgical service, as well as developing ties with Newcastle University. Expanded trial infrastructure and closer industry collaboration are expected to drive new device-based therapies and data-led outcome tracking, further solidifying Newcastle's role as a leading neurosurgical hub.

National Centre for Neurotechnology and Neurorestoration Part of Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals

