

Royal Hospital Chelsea—Wednesday 29th April 2026—£25.



The Royal Hospital Chelsea was established over 300 years ago, during the reign of King Charles II, to provide a home for soldiers "broken by age and war." In 1682, the King commissioned Sir Christopher Wren, one of Britain's most celebrated architects, to design this sanctuary for veteran soldiers. By 1692, the Royal Hospital opened its doors, welcoming the first 99 Chelsea Pensioners, and by the end of that year, several hundred veterans had made this their home.

Wren's design, inspired by the Hôtel des Invalides in Paris, originally housed 412 veterans plus officers. As the need grew, Wren expanded his design to include Light Horse Court and College Court. The Hospital's early funding came from deductions from Army pay, its main source of revenue until 1847.



The Royal Hospital's historic buildings, the Great Hall and the Long Wards, have been meticulously restored. The Great Hall, with its impressive mural painting of Charles II on horseback, and Wren's original Figure Court remain central to the Royal Hospital's identity. The Arts Society Gade Valley have arranged a private guided tour led by a Chelsea Pensioner who will help us explore some of the most stunning historic buildings in London and gain an insider's perspective on what life is like as part of this unique community. The tour begins at 11am and will last approx. 1.5 hour after which you can then visit the Heidi Café and explore the Grade II* listed Soane Stable Yard.

Make your own way there, no transport included. The cost of the private tour is £25 each. Please email Maggie MaCrimmon: maggie_mac@btinternet.com to book your place. Maggie will be in touch regarding payment once you have contacted her. For further details click on this link: <https://chelsea-pensioners.co.uk/>