

On 25 August 1736 Scotland's first hospital, in the modern sense of the word, was granted a Royal Charter by His Majesty, King George the Second. Founded in 1729, it was first known as the Infirmary, or Little House, or Physicians' Hospital. The Charter conferred the more familiar title of The Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh by which it has been known ever since.

As well as extending royal patronage to the hospital the Charter made it into a corporation. This gave it legal rights to use a common seal, to perpetual succession, to sue and be sued, to own lands and erect properties upon them, to lend money and to make bye-laws, rules and regulations, on condition they were consistent with the laws of the land, and with the institution's charitable purpose of caring for the sick poor.

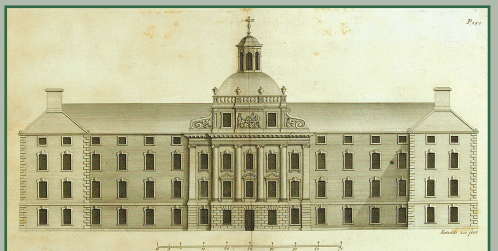
The Charter also specified how the Infirmary was to be run. Twenty named managers were nominated in it, drawn from Edinburgh Town Council, the law, the church and the medical profession. They were given the right to elect their successors annually. Charitable contributors who had given five pounds sterling or more were made into a general court, which was empowered to make and amend managers' regulations.

Originally in English, the text was translated into Latin by the noted Scottish classicist Thomas Ruddiman (1674-1757). It was then inscribed onto parchment and The Great Seal of Scotland was attached by means of intertwined blue and pink silk threads. The wax relief shows King George in military uniform, mounted on a rearing stallion and overlooking the City of Edinburgh. An idealised but still identifiable panorama of the Castle, the church and tenement buildings of the Royal Mile and Salisbury Crag, can be seen behind the horse's legs.

The Seal was originally kept in a metal tin (not shown) and had broken into several pieces. The subsequent repair and restoration work, carried out by the National Archives of Scotland, can be clearly seen in the illustration, which is approximately life size. The Charter consists of four sheets of parchment folded to make eight pages, four sides of which are blank. As it was kept in its original leather pouch for over 250 years, the parchment had to be relaxed and flattened prior to the Charter, restored Seal and pouch being permanently housed in a specially made box.



Coat of Arms 1914



Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh 1741-1879



Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh 1879-2003



Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh 2002-

Charter of The Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh