

# History of Highland Hospitals case study

Creating an audio walking trail around Inverness city centre



## Background:

Father and son team Jim and Steve Leslie have been independently researching the history of Highland healthcare since 2009, beginning with a general survey that found over 60 establishments built to provide medical care. In the years since they have built an extensive body of research, published six books on the subject, and delivered over 70 talks. This research is ongoing, and they invite members of the public with any additional knowledge to share this with them. One motivation for the project is to emphasise the value of our current NHS system by comparing it with the uneven and sketchy healthcare provision available in the past.

HHH were keen to present some of their knowledge in a new way and bring it to new audiences, including tourists. They joined forces with CRTR to curate and publish an audio trail, and to carry out publicity around this.

## The project:

- To promote Highland medical heritage to new audiences, including tourists and local communities who may have little understanding of this history right on their doorsteps.
- To enhance the profile of HHH and signpost trail users to their website and book offerings.
- To enhance understanding of the dearth of medical provision in the past compared to now and celebrate our national health service.
- Potential income generation for HHH as users of the trail are signposted to their website, which acts as an engine for book sales.

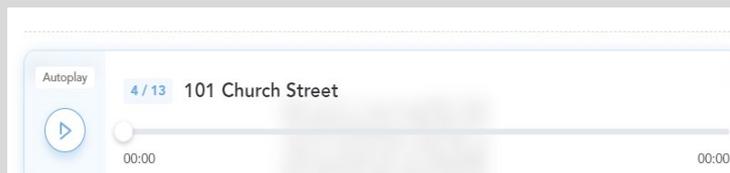


## Initial meetings between CRTR and HHH

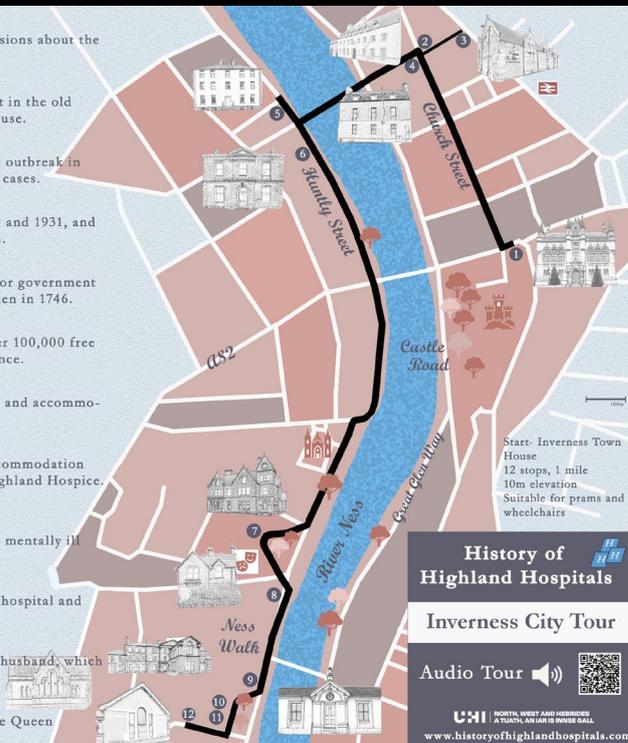
- Introduced HHH to the Geotourist platform website and app
- Discussed self-guided trails and what would work for the project aims, considering accessibility etc.
- It was decided to concentrate on creating one really high-quality walking trail focused on Inverness city centre.
- HHH tested out ideas for the city trail, potential stops and how the route could work.
- Considered content needed for the trail – audio, text and images.

## Jan/Feb 2024 Creating content

Steve Leslie recorded the audio to capture his passion for the subject, with CRTR helping with guidance and editing. CRTR then uploaded the audio to Geotourist and worked with Jim and Steve on sourcing images. Collages of historic and current images were created in Canva. Both parties worked on editing text and tour in Geotourist.

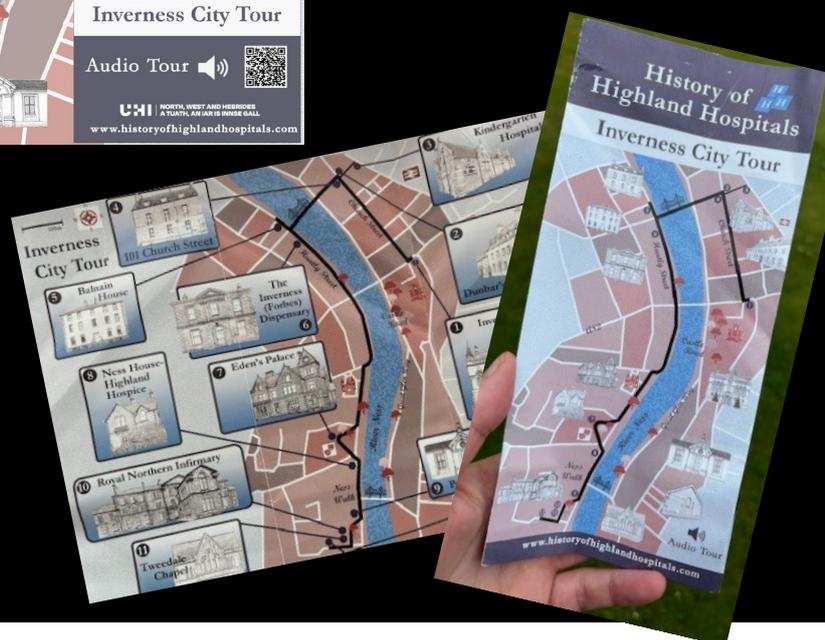


- 1 **Inverness Town House**  
Start at the grand Town House, the site of many discussions about the provision of health care.
- 2 **Dunbar's Hospital**  
Dunbar's Hospital is often called our first hospital, but in the old sense of the word, which means a poorhouse or almshouse.
- 3 **Kindergarten Military Hospital**  
This was used as a temporary hospital during a measles outbreak in late 1914, when local hospitals were overwhelmed with cases.
- 4 **101 Church Street**  
This house was used as a maternity home between 1919 and 1931, and was so popular they needed to move to bigger premises.
- 5 **Balnain House**  
Balnain House was used as a temporary field hospital for government soldiers wounded during the infamous Battle of Culloden in 1746.
- 6 **The Inverness (Forbes) Dispensary**  
This was the local dispensary, which delivered well over 100,000 free treatments to local people over its hundred-year existence.
- 7 **Eden's Palace**  
A theatre today, this was once used as a nursing school and accommodation for nursing students.
- 8 **Ness House- Highland Hospice**  
This has been the Ness House Nursing Home, staff accommodation for the nearby hospital, and, finally, from 1987, the Highland Hospice.
- 9 **Porter's Lodge**  
The hospital porter was an extremely important position with a range of duties, including looking after mentally ill patients.
- 10 **Royal Northern Infirmary**  
Opening in 1804, this was the Highland's first general hospital and the main one until Raigmore Hospital expanded.
- 11 **Tweedmouth Chapel**  
Lady Tweedmouth gifted this chapel in memory of her husband, which opened in 1898.
- 12 **York Ward**  
This was the children's ward and is named after the late Queen Elizabeth, who was the Princess of York.



## Feb 2024 Creating the map & leaflet

Staff at CRTR designed a leaflet with input from HHH and liaised with printers Grover Print and distribution company Landmark Press to have it placed at key sites around Inverness. Additional leaflets were printed for HHH to distribute elsewhere and for use at events.



### Lessons learnt

- Sharing examples of other trail leaflets that both HHH and CRTR liked, or thought would be suitable was a helpful part of the process.
- The design, print and distribution process was a bit longer than expected due to relying on external companies. More time factored in for that in future would be beneficial.

March 2024  
Press contact and promotion

4 NEWS

# Tours will reveal hidden secrets of Highland hospitals



HEALTHY INTEREST: Walk narrators Jim and his son, Professor Steve Leslie. Picture by Sandy McCook.

BY JOHN ROSS

Every time cardiologist Steve Leslie does his hospital rounds he's taking a journey into the past.

With his father, Jim, he is helping people to learn more about forgotten parts of Inverness.

After 15 years studying the history of healthcare facilities in the Highlands, they have launched a free audio walking trail of hospitals in the city centre to add to their books and lectures on the subject.

Prof Leslie, a consultant cardiologist at Raigmore Hospital, and his father, a retired geography teacher, aim to raise awareness of the important roles played by the buildings.

They include some whose medical past will be unknown to many Invernessians.

In particular, they hope a heritage plaque can be erected detailing the history of the former Forbes Dispensary at 44 Hundly Street.

It opened in 1832 "for bestowing medicines gratuitously to the sick poor pre-NHS.

It helped people including tradesmen and labourers who risked including vaccinations and minor operations.

In its first year it carried out 1159 treatments, rising to 300,000 by 1925.

It was eventually overtaken by the NHS in 1948 and the resultant free prescriptions.

The building was sold in 1905 to the Red Cross which occupied it until 2014 and is now offices.

Steve and Jim started the History of Highland Hospitals project in 2008.

A two-year research programme was supported by the NHS Highland Endowment Fund and the Centre for History at the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI).

It documented more than 60 institutions, including fever hospitals, poorhouses and maternity homes, many of them long forgotten.

The walking trail is an extension of the project. It will take people on a 45 to 60-minute walk around nine sites using the Geotourist app.

A formal launch is planned in May.

Prof Leslie said: "People are interested in how healthcare has changed.

"There is a lot of negativity about healthcare, but it's probably better than it's ever been.

"If you look back 100 years it was woeful."

He added: "We hope the walking trail will be of interest to locals and tourists alike."

The pair can often make new discoveries via members of the public sharing information.

Recently, they heard from a man in America researching his family. He discovered a Pt MacAsky of the Cameron Highlanders died in 1945 of measles and pneumonia in the Kindergarten Hospital, Academy Street.

It turned out the Kindergarten Hospital opened for just a few months, specifically to deal with a measles outbreak among the regiment.

Its name came from the Kindergarten School that previously occupied the building.

Other featured buildings include the former Dunbar's Hospital in Church Street, now a cafe, and the Ida Merry Maternity Home, named after one of its founders in 1909, which was converted from a house in Church Street.

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## Where were the Kindergarten Hospital and Forbes Dispensary in Inverness? Find out on new walking trail

Father and son's project will raise awareness of forgot

by John Ross

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Jim Leslie (left) and his son Prof Steve Leslie at the old Royal Northern



History of Highland hospitals self-guided trail + If you find yourself at a loose end in Inverness, sign up to this self-guided audio trail created by Steve Leslie, a cardiologist at Raigmore Hospital, and his dad Jim along with researchers from UHI Centre for History and UHI NWH Centre for Recreation and Tourism Research thanks to funding from UHI's Knowledge Exchange Tourism Challenge Fund. More information on the trail in a recent article in The Press and Journal:

- To access the trail:
    - Download the 'Geotourist' app to follow the trail around Inverness city centre
    - Find the trail online <https://rb.gy/mlo11z>
    - Or through [www.geotourist.com](http://www.geotourist.com)
- #ThinkUHI #UHIResearch #Inverness



Where were the Kindergarten Hospital and Forbes Dispensary in Inverness? Find out on new walking trail

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CRTR facilitated meetings between HHH and journalists from the Inverness Courier and The Press and Journal. This led to the publication of an article in the Press and Journal on 3rd March 2024. This coverage was shared across the P&J, UHI, UHI North, West & Hebrides, and the CRTR social media accounts.



### History of Highland Hospitals

104 likes • 108 followers

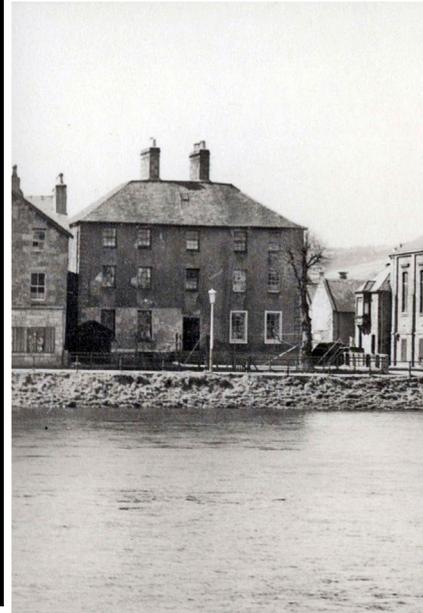
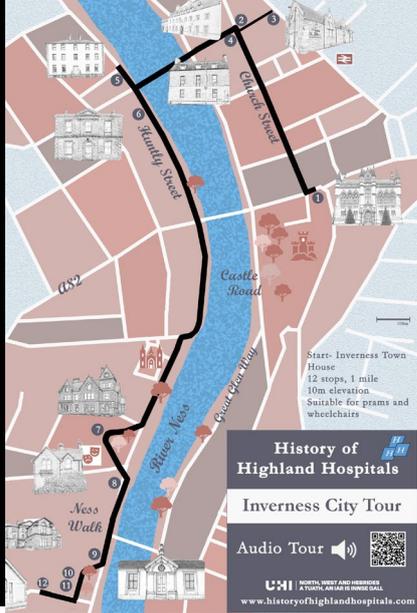
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CRTR helped HHH reactive its Facebook page and schedule posts ahead of time. It also advised on content ideas, sharing posts, tagging organisations and engagement with the public for future research and knowledge sharing.



## The trail

**Creation of an audio city tour of Inverness and leaflet**

## Partnership



A lasting partnership has been created between UHI and HHH, with future collaboration in health humanities already being discussed

The audio trail was launched on the 22.02.24. The views (as at late April 2024) are nearing 600, and feedback so far has included anecdotal positive comments from users, including local walking groups

## Profile

A positive marketing campaign showcasing the trail and work of HHH

The trail was promoted and showcased as a different way to see Inverness City Centre and learn about the history of the buildings



## Awareness

Awareness was raised of the hospital history of Inverness amongst potential visitors and local community

## **Project Outcomes**

Skills and knowledge exchange promoting how trails and digital mapping can be used to promote HHH's work



Positive and strong working links between UHI North, West and Hebrides, UHI and HHH were established, with an event being arranged and the potential for future collaborations



Awareness was raised of the work and expertise of UHI North, West and Hebrides through the trail, press coverage and collaborations

## Connected

