

Sir Frederick Treves, 1st Baronet, GCVO, CH, CB, b. 15 February, 1853; d. 7 December, 1923

Surgeon; author; "Discoverer" of the Elephant Man, Joseph Merrick; saver of the King's life.

Treves, one of the most renowned surgeons of the late 19th and early 20th centuries and the author of several works of medical interest (including *"The Elephant Man and Other Reminiscences"*), is best known for his acquaintance and subsequent friendship with "Elephant Man" Joseph Merrick. Specializing in abdominal surgery, he performed the first appendectomy in England in June 1888 and maintained a successful medical career.

Treves's relationship with Merrick came about following an exhibition by showman Tom Norman close to the London Hospital where Treves practiced. In 1886, he brought Merrick to the privacy and seclusion of the London Hospital, where he lived until his death in 1890. In David Lynch's 1980 film adaptation of the 1977 Bernard Pomerance play "The Elephant Man", Treves is played by Anthony Hopkins and, interestingly, his great-nephew, Sir Frederick Treves plays the character of Alderman.

Following service in the Second Boer War, Treves was appointed an Honorary "Serjeant Surgeon" (sic) to King Edward VII; and was knighted in 1901. Two days before his Coronation, the King was diagnosed with appendicitis. A relatively insignificant operation today, at the turn of the 19th Century it carried a high mortality rate and the King-to-be opted not to undergo surgery. Treves pointed out that unless the operation was conducted, there would likely be a Royal funeral rather than a Royal Coronation; and the King acquiesced. Treves and British surgical authority, Lord Lister, performed what was at that time a revolutionary new procedure, draining the appendix through a small incision in the King's abdomen rather than opening him up in a major operation; and thus ensured that the Coronation could proceed. As a result, this type of surgery became a mainstream procedure in the United Kingdom.

Treves continued as a Royal surgeon until the King's death in 1910.