



# SIGH FOR A NIGHTINGALE

*The very first requirement in a hospital is that it should do the sick no harm.*

Florence Nightingale (1820–1910)

There are £24 billion worth of outstanding claims against the NHS at the time of writing (2015), one quarter of its annual budget in England and Wales. Either it, or the legal profession, will have to be wound up eventually.

St Thomas's Hospital was an ancient foundation in Southwark, even in 1215. It was named after St Thomas á Becket. Originally an order of Augustinian monks and nuns, it provided for the welfare of the poor and the sick. The Lord Mayor of London, Richard Whittington (and his cat) founded there what would now be called a mother and baby hostel, in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The monastery was closed during the reformation under King Henry VIII but reopened four years after his death in 1551, under King Edward VI. It was rededicated to St Thomas the Apostle in view of the earlier problem with St Thomas á Becket. One of the governors, Sir Thomas Guy, founded Guy's Hospital in St Thomas's Street in 1721 to take those who could not be cured by St Thomas's Hospital. These would now be called bed-blockers. The beds are still blocked. Guy's Hospital remained there but St Thomas's left Southwark in 1862 for Lambeth, to make way for the construction of London Bridge station.

In 1871 the hospital opened on its present site on the Thames embankment opposite the Houses of Parliament. It was not a good place to be during the