

Florence Nightingale

Florence Nightingale, 1820–1910: leading our past, inspiring our future

*Free exhibition in the Royal College of Nursing UK Library
to celebrate the legacy of a legend*

August - October 2010



A legend begins

Florence Nightingale was born in Italy in 1820, in the city which inspired her name, to a wealthy and intellectual English family. Despite (or perhaps because of) her privileged upbringing in Hampshire, as a young woman she passionately wanted to help the poor.



Portrait of Florence Nightingale by Hilary Bonham Carter, 1854.

While travelling in Europe in 1847 and 1848, Florence visited convents and witnessed the care given to the sick by nuns. She had found her calling. On her return to England, she studied hospital administration by herself and began to work at the Institute for Sick Governesses in Distressed Circumstances in Harley Street. The Crimean War broke out in March 1854 and news of the terrible conditions of the wounded soon reached Britain. Florence volunteered to help and arrived in November with a party of 38 nurses. A few days after they reached Scutari in Turkey the wounded from the Battle of Balaclava flooded the hospital and the nurses were faced with four miles of patients in conditions rife with disease.

Florence quickly took control. Acting as quartermaster, she sorted out supply issues and brought in a chef from London to revolutionise nutrition in the hospital. Back in Britain, she captured the public imagination as the “Lady with the Lamp”, a selfless figure offering hope to the hopeless. The frustration she felt at the terrible conditions of the soldiers and at the interference of others was less famous, but informed the rest of her life’s work.

A tireless reformer

When the war ended in June 1856 Florence returned to England ready to take on the establishment to ensure that the tragedy of Crimea would never be repeated. However, she became very ill, probably due to an infection she contracted during the war. So began twenty years of campaigning from her sickbed. Florence used her contacts to get a Royal Commission to look at military medical services, and contributed to the report. In her own report, *Notes on matters affecting the health, efficiency and hospital administration of the British Army*, she used a device of her own invention – the polar-area diagram – to display mortality figures. In this way she clearly showed that the majority of deaths were caused by disease rather than battle wounds, and that death rates dropped after improvements were made to sanitation.

These statistical skills were also used in her extensive work on improving conditions for British troops in India. But her focus was not just on the military – the plight of the poor continued to occupy her time. She devised pioneering schemes for the training of nurses and midwives, and for nurses working in the home (inspiring what became known as district nursing).

Hospital design was another passion and she also campaigned to improve health care in workhouses resulting in the Metropolitan Poor Law Act 1867. Remarkably, these tremendous achievements were made through writing letters and asking people to visit her – including such notables as Prime Ministers and Viceroys of India. Ironically, her health improved as she reached old age but her influence began to wane. She died at home on 13 August 1910 at the age of 90.



Florence Nightingale with nurses in 1867.

The legacy continues

One hundred years after her death, Florence Nightingale continues to be an inspirational figure in nursing throughout the world. Her work to reform health care and establish nursing as a reputable profession with an educated workforce has been continued by organisations like the Royal College of Nursing, leading to the introduction of registration in Britain in 1919. Military nursing was changed forever by her campaigns and the key role played by nurses during the First World War is testament to this.



Representatives of the American Nurses Association at the Florence Nightingale memorial, St Thomas Chapel, 1948.

International Nurses' Day is celebrated every year on 12 May, Florence's birthday, to pay tribute to the work of nurses. The annual memorial service on this day at Westminster Abbey includes a ceremony in which a lamp is handed from nurse to nurse to represent the passing down of knowledge, showing her direct link with the present.

She has lent her name to the Florence Nightingale International Foundation, the educational foundation of the International Council of Nurses, and even graced the Bank of England's £10 note from 1975 to 1994. The "Lady with the Lamp" is the enduring image of Florence Nightingale. However, her greatest legacy is her tireless later efforts to improve health, which required intelligence, stubbornness and tenacity as well as caring. The results of this work can still be felt to this day.

Catalogue

Case A	
1.	<p>Special commemorative envelopes and postcard celebrating the first day of issue of the Florence Nightingale stamp (British, 9d) on 1st April 1970, the 150th anniversary of her birth.</p>
2.	<p>A letter written by Florence Nightingale acknowledging a gift:</p> <p>Page 1:</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Barrack Hospital Scutari July 21st '56</p> <p>Sir, I beg to acknowledge with my best thanks the receipt of six sets of Draftsmen, which you have kindly sent for the use of the soldiers.</p> <p>Page 2: They shall be appreciated as you desire & will be very acceptable.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">I have the honour to be Sir Your obed[ient]t Serv[an]t Florence Nightingale</p>
3.	<p>One of only 25,000, uncirculated £2 coins issued by the Royal Mint in 2010 to mark the centenary of the death of Florence Nightingale.</p>
4.	<p>Small prayer book entitled, <i>The Diamond Catholic Manual; containing Spiritual Exercise and Devotions with the Ordinary of the Mass in Latin and English</i>, London 1850s. The inscription on the inside cover reads, "Presented by Florence Nightingale to John Mickman during the Crimean War".</p>
5.	<p><i>Holy Bible</i> given to Florence Nightingale in 1892 and annotated by her in pencil.</p>

6.	<p>Small prayer book entitled <i>Pietas Quotidiana, Prayers and Meditations for Every Day in the Week and on Various Occasions; being a collection from the Eminent Divines and Moral Writers</i>, London 1823.</p> <p>The inside cover is inscribed, "Montagu Burgoyne to his friend Frances Smith Aug 27 1824". Miss Smith became Mrs Nightingale, Florence's mother. This was donated to the RCN by her great-great-neice, Miss Bonham Carter.</p>
7.	<p>Barrack Hospital, Scutari</p> <p>Sir</p> <p>I am truly rejoiced to be able to inform you that your brother, John Hindle, of the 33rd, who was wounded at Inkermann, is gone home to England.</p> <p>I remain Yours truly, Florence Nightingale</p>
8.	<p>Portrait of Florence Nightingale from an unknown publication. The image has been coloured after printing and the paper is raised around the central cameo.</p>
9.	<p>Long white leather gloves, circa 1890s.</p>
10.	<p>Pamphlet entitled, <i>The Crimean War The British Army and Miss Nightingale</i>, by Charles Shrimpton, MD, Paris 1864. A translation from the original French edition.</p>
11.	<p>Pamphlet entitled, <i>The Sanitary Conditions of the Army</i>, by The Right Honourable Sidney Herbert, MP, London 1859. This pamphlet was published following the Sanitary Commission report on the Army, presented to parliament the previous year (1858) and was reprinted from the <i>Westminster Review</i> from January 1859.</p>
12.	<p>Pamphlet entitled, <i>Reply to Sir John Hall's "Observations" on the Report of the Sanitary Commission, despatched to the seat of war in the east 1855-56</i>, by John Sutherland, MD, late member of the Commission, London 1857. Dr Hall of the Medical Department of the Army objected to the implied inadequacy of the medical care.</p>
13.	<p><i>The London Illustrated News</i> from the 24 February 1855, showing an engraving of Florence Nightingale with her lamp. The preceding page</p>

	has an article on Miss Nightingale, stating that "...as her slender form glides softly along each corridor, every poor fellow's face softens at the sight of her".
Case B	
14.	A typical Crimean War lamp. The lamp is made of canvas supported internally by a spring-shaped wire. The whole lamp could be folded into a metal case formed by the metal fittings at the top and bottom for storage or carrying when not in use. When opened the lamp would extend to form a chimney for the lamp wick in the base. The top fitting was hung from a hook on a long pole so it could be raised above the head. Since the rise of the "lady with the lamp" imagery, the roman oil lamp (the "Aladdin" lamp) has been adopted as a symbol of nursing and is shown here on the bronze statuette.
15.	A leather chatelaine, commonly used by nurses in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a holder for small items in regular use for hospital duties. Tools such as scissors or a thermometer would be contained in the chatelaine, hanging from the nurses' belt.
16.	The image shown here is an early photographic portrait of Miss Nightingale taken sometime shortly after her return from the Crimean War.
17.	A souvenir album created for the World Premiere of the 1951 Anna Neagle film, <i>The Lady with a Lamp</i> , about the life and work of Florence Nightingale, also starring Michael Wilding and a host of British stars.
18.	A memorial service booklet and invitation from St Paul's Cathedral for the memorial service of Miss Nightingale, Saturday 20 August 1910. The service included the hymns 439, "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life" and 197, "The Lord is my Shepherd". The lesson read was 1 Corinthians xv. 20.
19.	A photograph of the annual memorial service at Westminster Abbey honouring the memory of Florence Nightingale.
20.	The International Florence Nightingale medal issued by the League of Red Cross Societies. This one was awarded to Dame Sarah Swift, co-founder of the College of Nursing, 12th May 1929.
21.	Fundraising leaflets for the Florence Nightingale International Foundation, founded in 1932 by the League of Red Cross Societies and the ICN to support post-graduate nursing education internationally as a living memorial to Miss Nightingale. The League of Red Cross Societies,

	Bedford College for Women (University of London) and the College of Nursing had established such courses in 1920.
22.	Florence Nightingale became known worldwide during her lifetime and after, partly through her prolific writing. Biographies of Miss Nightingale have been written by many authors from around the world.
Case C	
23.	Florence Nightingale’s personal copy of her <i>Notes on Matters Affecting the Health, Efficiency and Hospital Administration of the British Army</i>, 1858. Her polar-area diagrams (also known as rose diagrams) clearly show that deaths from preventable infections (in blue) far outnumbered those from wounds (in red) during the war.
24.	<p>A letter handwritten to Col. T. S. Young from Florence Nightingale mentioning her illness in 1899:</p> <p>Page 1:</p> <p style="text-align: right;">London Oct. 27/99</p> <p>Dear Sir</p> <p>I am so extremely happy that you are going out to South Africa as Commissioner for Aid to the Sick & Wounded. I envy you & I envy them to have such an able helper. It is a sad & painful business. & how much of evil there has been in it. But how much of</p> <p>Page 2:</p> <p>good it has called forth! And I hope, nay we trust that the nurses & every one will prove themselves worthy of the great opportunity afforded them by God's goodness. Each may be a good Samaritan. Each may humbly & vigorously and</p> <p>Page 3:</p> <p>“leaning hard” on God be a helper in His work. What an honour to be God's helper! That honour you have been chosen for. And may they all rival one another in the same. That is a holy rivalry.</p> <p>I wish I would go; but I am chained to my room by illness</p> <p>Page 4:</p> <p>Nevertheless I shall be with you all in spirit three cheers for you wherever you go. There will be hearty cheers. But they must strengthen & not disturb the sick ever, dear Sir,</p> <p style="text-align: center;">yours faithfully Florence Nightingale</p> <p>Col. T. S. Young</p>
25.	An extract from a handwritten letter to Major Young from Florence Nightingale about providing proper supplies for soldiers in Egypt, 1885:

	<p>Page 4:</p> <p>2. <u>Pajamas</u> & flannel shirts</p> <p>For the men not in Hospital:- the Commanding Officers will certainly not let them wear their pajamas except in the very early morning but would they not let the men wear <u>flannel shirts</u> (without jackets) with their Regimental trousers? And might not these flannel shirts be made <u>not</u> of the Regulation flannel but of some thinner softer lighter flannel, tho' of the same grey colours? Their own flannel shirts must be worn out & torn to pieces, if, as we hear, their trousers are.</p>
26.	Florence Nightingale's <i>Introductory Notes on Lying-in Institutions</i>, 1871, which included proposals for midwifery training and detailed plans for a maternity hospital.
27.	A first edition copy of the much reprinted <i>Notes on Nursing</i>, by Florence Nightingale, 1859.
28.	Two glass sand-timers in metal cases, used by nurses for timing 1/4 and 1/2 minutes, as marked on the casing.
29.	A bronze statuette of Florence Nightingale designed by the late sculptor, A. G. Walker. The statuette was a miniature reproduction of the statue in Waterloo Place. Mr Walker assigned the design rights to the College and so these small versions were produced for nursing associations around the world.
30.	A Christmas card from the International Council of Nurses, and signed by Daisy Bridges, showing a photograph of the original bronze statue by Mr Walker.
31.	Promotional material from the Royal College of Nursing celebrating Nurses Day, the annual international celebration of nursing, which falls on Nightingale's birthday, 12 May.