



## NURSING HISTORY NOW

SPRING 2019



Royal College  
of Nursing  
History of Nursing Society



Mrs Ethel Gordon Fenwick (R) and Dame Alicia Lloyd Still pictured at Waterloo before boarding a boat train to the International Council of Nurses congress in Montreal, 1929 (Image credit: RCN Archive)

## RCN History of Nursing Society

In existence for more than 30 years, the History of Nursing Society (HoNS) provides members with an opportunity to share their enthusiasm for nursing history and the importance of preserving and celebrating its rich heritage.

The committee members reflect a range of nursing disciplines and geographic diversity. Over the past six months members have continued to assist in event and exhibition planning, conducted oral history interviews and worked with the library and heritage team in conserving pamphlets, documents and books.

For more information about the society or to join, contact the chair Dr Claire Chatterton at [c.s.chatterton@open.ac.uk](mailto:c.s.chatterton@open.ac.uk)

Front cover: RCN Fellow Dame Catherine Hall attends a meeting at Downing Street. In her 25 years as general secretary, the RCN registered as a trade union and she fought government ministers for nurses' rights and pay rises (Image credit: RCN Archive)

# Editor's letter

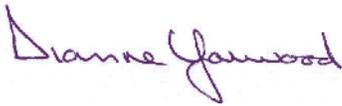
**W**elcome to the spring 2019 issue of *Nursing History Now*

When reflecting upon significant anniversaries, it struck me that 1919 was a time of new beginnings. Although the armistice was agreed the previous November, the formal ending of hostilities came with the signing of the Treaty of Versailles in June 1919. That same summer saw the end of the flu pandemic.

The year before, some women had gained the vote and among active supporters of women's suffrage was Mrs Ethel Gordon Fenwick (pictured left). When, after many years of campaigning, the nurses' registration act was finally passed at the end of 1919, she became SRN1 on the GNC register for England and Wales. Read more about the centenary of nurse registration in our autumn issue.

Here in 2019, we have an eclectic issue. Enjoy an account of collecting oral histories from nurses of the Royal London Hospital on page 4, memorials to Crimean war nurses on page 10, tales of chamber pot taxes on page 14 and a project to collect the papers and recollections of the RCN fellows on page 15.

We hope you enjoy this issue.



Editor



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**STORY  
TO  
TELL?**

We're always keen to hear from you about your work, thoughts and stories related to nursing history. Please feel encouraged to send us ideas and items for inclusion in future issues of *Nursing History Now* by emailing the editor, Dianne Yarwood, at [d.yarwood@ntlworld.com](mailto:d.yarwood@ntlworld.com)

# Mind into matter

Oral histories can connect us with the real lives of nurses past. Dianne Yarwood takes us inside the RCN's own oral history collection and we discover how another project led to a sell-out book

I was appointed, expecting to stay just two years up to retirement... but stayed eight years!

You could look up in to the sky and see the German bombers in the searchlights

I was developing new things for nurses in A&E

From an early age I said I wanted to be a nurse

**T**he RCN archive holds more than 700 oral histories from nursing staff across the UK. Recorded over many years, they include memories of people's time as students, ward sisters, community nurses, senior managers and chief nurses. When these nurses were approached to share their memories, quite often they believed that their own lives had been uneventful. But our archive shows many of their stories are both amazing and informative.

### Inside the RCN archive

In 2015 Sheila\*, then aged 98, shared memories of the 1942 bombing raids in Birmingham. At night, she cared for casualties in the basement of a department store. "We had to wear our tin hats and wellingtons and carry our shoes and clothes for 24 hours. Matron stood at the nurse's home door, shook our hands and said: 'Good luck nurse'. You could look up in to the sky and see the German bombers in the searchlights. All the patients had to be moved to various hospitals by 9am so that the shop could be opened again."

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“ We had to wear our tin hats and wellingtons and carry our shoes and clothes for 24 hours

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In 2014 Lucy\*, then six months short of her 100th birthday, spoke about clinical trials relating to the introduction of penicillin at the Radcliffe Infirmary, Oxford, in 1940. "We put powdered penicillin into mastoid cavities... then had to save the urine to get the penicillin back because it was so precious. Later it was given by injection into the calf... it was very painful and given every three hours. Then, it was only used for the forces or in fever hospitals to treat puerperal fever."

Amy\* was born in 1930, qualified as an SRN in 1952, then worked as a staff nurse, ward sister and community nurse. In the 1950s, she worked on a plastic surgery unit where Harold Gillies, who developed facial reconstruction techniques during World War One, was still engaged in clinical practice.



Dame Catherine Hall, RCN Fellow

### Recording our fellows

Since 2018, we have been focussing on the oral histories of the RCN Fellows.

John\* trained in the early 1970s and soon developed an interest in A&E: "In 1977 I was a charge nurse in A&E and we knew that the senior sister was soon retiring and assumed that the job would be advertised nationally, but it was only internal. I got the job. I began developing a range of new things for nurses in A&E and improving practice." He was later awarded a Nightingale Scholarship to travel to Canada and the USA investigating nursing and paramedic practice.

Carol\* trained at The Royal London Hospital in the early 1960s: "From an early age I said I wanted to be a nurse. I loved my training and I loved the East End. In the 1990s I was chief nurse [in West London] and oversaw many changes [hospital re-build and closure]. I was at the Department of Health when the chief nurse for England left and was asked for advice on her replacement, and then asked to apply. In 2004 I was appointed, expecting to stay just two years up to retirement... but stayed eight years!"

Once the individuals who share their memories are gone, so is their history. Share and record your memories, and keep those certificates, letters of appointment, school of nursing brochures and photographs safe – they are a valuable resource. ▶

### RCN Fellows

- Read more about the RCN Fellows Project on page 15.

\*First names have all been changed.



## Oral history in action

Sue Boase from The Royal London Hospital League of Nurses charts the journey from oral history project to published book

### 1940s

I started at The London at the end of the war when the doodle-bombs [flying bombs] were still falling... The east wing of The London had been hit by a bomb and so there was only half of that wing working. The third floors were not in operation and Croft Ward was used entirely for casualties... One of the first things that I had to do was to fill 16 stone hot water bottles and put them in those 16 beds ready for the casualties”

Marjorie

Members of The Royal London Hospital League of Nurses had discussed the idea of an oral history project years before it commenced. But by October 2018, we had captured 87 oral histories and turned them into a book – *Nursing Through the Years: Care and Compassion at The Royal London Hospital*.

Prompted in part by the move into new premises, memories of life as it used to be became increasingly poignant for nurses who had trained and worked at the hospital over the years. Affectionately known as “The London”, it was first established in 1740 to serve the East End, initially supported entirely by voluntary donations.

We began interviewing nurses around five years ago, capturing oral histories spanning more than 70 years from nurses and ex-nurses ranging in age from 24 to 96 years of age.

Great care was taken to ensure confidentiality for each participant, with the name of each person replaced with a decade-appropriate pseudonym.

Four of the team volunteered to work on the transcribed histories. Each took interviews from one particular decade, and over two years the authors put forward their findings

## 1950s

“Sunday afternoons were lovely, and Saturday afternoons, because you did the flowers. They used to buy the flowers from... the market stalls across the road. That smell of mimosa... that takes me right back

Marion



at regular meetings, gradually drafting each chapter.

We submitted a proposal and chapters to publishers Pen and Sword and were fortunate in finding a commissioning editor who saw the potential in our aim to share a part of history that might otherwise remain untold. Together, we planned to produce a book that would be both rigorous and readable, appealing to a wide audience.

It has been both fascinating and a privilege to work on this project. The paperback is now available and we hope it serves the purpose for which it was created: to capture an oral history that adds, in the words of Lewenson and Krohn Hermann, “balance to nursing history by using the experiences of ordinary nurses”. ■

- Sue Boase, Loretta Bellman, Sarah Rogers and Barbara Stuchfield are the authors of *Nursing Through the Years: Care and Compassion at The Royal London Hospital*

## 1970s

We had to be there the 3 January 1979... and I ... clearly remember it. It was the year... of great social unrest. There had been heavy snow and the Whitechapel Road was just full of horrible slush, and because... the dustmen, council were on strike, Whitechapel Road was full of black slush and rubbish and rats from the market, and I can remember... having come up from the seaside thinking... ‘What on earth have I done?’”

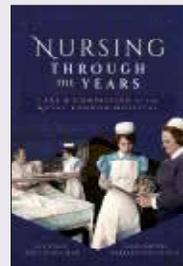
Julie



### BOOK REVIEW

#### ***Nursing Through the Years* reviewed by Dianne Yarwood**

This book covers the recent history of the Royal London Hospital, from 1940 to almost the present day. It is a richly illustrated and informative book, which will be appreciated by all who have an interest in the stories of nurses in the East End of London and I recommend it unreservedly.





EXHIBITION

# Wandering wombs and radical nurses

Frances Reed, from the RCN Library and Archive team, shows off some artefacts from an RCN exhibition that reveal the hidden history of women's health



## What's on?

### Aspects of Age

*Aspects of Age*, a new exhibition exploring two centuries of older people's nursing, has just opened at RCN HQ. Discover how we moved from the Victorian-era workhouse to the hospital, care home and into the 21st century.

11 April - 20 September 2019  
RCN Library and Heritage Centre

Or discover the exhibition online at [rcn.org.uk/aspectsofage](http://rcn.org.uk/aspectsofage)



In 1855, a special copy of *The Works of Aristotle the Famous Philosopher* (pictured left) was published. Although the cover promises Ancient Greek philosophy, the red binding hides something very different – content covering a variety of women’s health concerns, from labour and uterine dropsy to “testicles in women”.

More than 160 years later, publications on women’s health are widely available. The RCN’s pocket guide, for example, (pictured left) was produced in 2017 by the Women’s Health Forum.

Although few of us are now pouring over menstrual cycle diagrams on the train, women today don’t need to hide such reading material behind esteemed philosophers (we have kindles).

These two items are displayed alongside each other in our exhibition *The Wandering Womb: Women’s Health Nursing Past and Present*, which launched in May at RCN Scotland, following six months at the RCN Library and Heritage Centre in London.

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“Nurses played a vital role in providing empowerment for women, supporting them to make decisions about their health care

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Through items from our archive, as well as object loans from the collections at the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, the Royal Pharmaceutical Society and the Science Museum, the exhibition showcases the role of the women’s health nurse and explores how attitudes towards women’s health have changed.

Throughout history, men have made most of the decisions about women’s health. But nurses played a vital role in providing advocacy and empowerment for women, supporting them to make decisions about their health care. The RCN archive holds a wealth of material illustrating this, from pamphlets about the Women’s Health Information Centre, set up in the 1980s as part of the Women’s Liberation Movement (pictured above-right), to newsletters by the Radical Nurses Group. One

article, *Keep Women’s Health in Women’s Hands* from 1988, covers a campaign to save the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital as a service run by women for women. And among Jean Wilson’s diligent notes in her 1929 nursing notebook are meticulously drawn illustrations of female genitalia.



Photos by Justine Desmond

The exhibition has been met with acclaim, particularly in response to its tackling of issues such as miscarriage and gynaecological cancers. One visitor said: “So glad to see a public space on something forced to be private.” Another commented: “fascinating exhibition on a topic still not discussed openly”. The media loved it too, with articles on the BBC News website, an interview on BBC Radio London and a feature in an upcoming Audible podcast on hysteria.

It has been fantastic working with the amazing team of RCN members in the Women’s Health Forum and the History of Nursing Society. Our open conversations about women’s health will continue at RCN Scotland, with a series of events in Edinburgh, Stirling and Glasgow running alongside the exhibition. ■

### Find out more

- Explore the exhibition on our website: [rcn.org.uk/wanderingwomb](https://rcn.org.uk/wanderingwomb)
- Visit a pop-up version at RCN Wales until 29 June.
- See our Scotland events at [rcn.org.uk/whatson](https://rcn.org.uk/whatson)

# Beyond Florence: nurses of the Crimean War

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Dr Mike Hinton explores the few remaining memorials to nurses who died during the Crimean War

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One of the Sisters of Mercy, Sister Anastasia Kelly, who accompanied Florence Nightingale to the Crimea in 1854. (Image credit: The Wellcome Collection)

**T**he British army was in Turkey, Bulgaria and Crimea from April 1854 until July 1856, with the armed conflict in Crimea lasting from September 1854 until October the following year. More than 18,000 men died, but there are no official records of the numbers of British civilians attached to the army or how many of them lost their lives during the conflict. It's estimated that around 200 nurses went out and monuments were raised to some of those who died.

A survey of inscriptions on tombstones, wooden grave markers and regimental memorials in more than 130 cemeteries in Crimea, and the British military cemetery at Haidar Pasha (now Haydarpaşa) in Scutari (Üsküdar) was completed before the final evacuation of 1856. Almost all of these memorials have long been destroyed, and many of the cemetery sites are now derelict or were levelled and converted back to farmland, but we still have the survey results, published in 1857 as a "tribute to fallen gallantry".

This incomparable record allows us to learn a little about the work and fate of nurses who tended to British soldiers, and helps us find the memorials that are still intact.

### Crimea

The Roman Catholic Sisters of Mercy made

up the majority of nurses in Crimea. Two of the sisters, led by Mother Frances Bridgeman, were buried "on the side of the hill above the General Hospital" at Balaklava. The marble memorials reveal that Mary Elizabeth Butler died of fever on 23 February 1855, while Winifred Spry died of cholera on 26 October 1855.

Another nurse, Elizabeth Drake, died on 9 August 1855 and was buried near the main road "about half way between the stationary engine and Kadikoi" – a village just north of Balaklava.

### Turkey

Haidar Pasha Cemetery is on the Asian side of the Bosphorus about a mile from the Barrack Hospital where Florence Nightingale was based, and adjacent to the General Hospital which is still used by the Turkish Army.

Frances (Fanny) Margaret Taylor, a lady volunteer nurse, visited the cemetery and found it was: "beautifully situated just on the edge of the cliff – the sea lies spread before it."

Trees on the cliff top now impede the view of the Bosphorus but over 90, mainly contemporary, tombstones survive. The graves of First and Second World War casualties are also located here. ►



Hospital and the quarters of the medical staff, Balaklava harbour from a sketch by Julian Portch. (Image credit: *Illustrated Times*, 11 August 1855)

One of the first nursing casualties was Elizabeth Anne Smythe, who died of typhus at Kululi on 28 March 1855. Her gravestone was recorded as being near Kululi Hospital in a survey carried out during 1872 by Brigadier J. Ayde and Colonel C.G. Gordon, but it has not survived.

Mrs Sophia Walford, “a paid lady” who had been the matron at the barrack hospital from 24 May 1855, died of cholera on 30 August, aged 46. She was buried next to Sophia Barnes, about whom little is known, who died on 4 April. Florence Nightingale was saddened

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“ Florence Nightingale was saddened by the passing of Walford, whose tombstone epitaph read: ‘She hath done what she could’ ”

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by the passing of Walford, whose tombstone epitaph read: “She hath done what she could.”

Charlotte Willoughby Moore was the widow of Lieutenant Colonel Willoughby Willoughby Moore, 6th Dragoons, who died when the Europa caught fire shortly after sailing for the Crimean Peninsula. She was awarded a widows’ pension of £200 and subsequently went to Crimea “to organise and superintend a hospital for sick and wounded officers similar to those for men under Miss Nightingale”. She was assigned to the Palace Hospital and died of “dysentery of three weeks duration” on 22 November 1855. Nurse Mary Marks worked in the same hospital and died there some weeks before on 8 October. She was 47.

Martha Clough, a “tragic” and “enigmatic” lady nurse, went to Crimea early in 1855 and worked as the only nurse in the hospital of the 79th Regiment (Cameron Highlanders) on the Kamara heights. Falling ill in June, she died on 24 September 1855 on the voyage from Crimea to Scutari on Orinoco. Her burial in

### Baron Marochetti’s obelisk

In the summer of 1855 the British government entered discussions with sculptor Baron Carlo Marochetti about the design for a war memorial in Haidar Pasha Cemetery. The monument, using masonry prepared in the British Isles, was erected during 1858 for £17,500. The inscription on the plinth, in French, Italian and Turkish on the other three panels, reads: “To the Memory of the Officers and Men of the British Army and Navy who in the War against Russia in 1854, 1855, and 1856, Died for their Country. This monument was raised by Queen Victoria and her People, 1857.”

A plaque “To Florence Nightingale, whose work near the cemetery a century ago relieved much human suffering and laid the foundations for the nursing profession”, has since been affixed below the main inscription and was unveiled by the British Ambassador, Sir James Bowker, on 24 May 1954.



Haidar Pasha Cemetery looking southwards taken by Francis Bedford, May 1862 (Image credit: Royal Collection Trust/© HM Queen Elizabeth II 2019)

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“ Martha Clough, a ‘tragic’ and ‘enigmatic’ lady nurse, worked as the only nurse in the hospital of the Cameron Highlanders

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the Haidar Pasha cemetery was organised by Florence Nightingale, who also arranged for her possessions to be returned to England.

A photograph taken by Francis Bedford when the Prince and Princess of Wales visited the cemetery in May 1862 includes the graves of Clough, Marks and Moore, while a view taken by the author 150 years later also shows the locations of Barnes and Walford. ■

Nurses weren't the only British women in Crimea and Turkey during the conflict. It was still common for soldiers' wives to travel with their regiments, and there may have been as many as 1,000 women present.

In Crimea, there was a memorial to Margaret, wife of Private James Starrett, 95th Regiment. She “landed in the Crimea on the 14th Sept. 1854. This woman traveled with the Regt through the campaign until such time as it was pleased God to call her to himself out of this world to the next being in the 23rd year of her age”.

In Turkey, Jane and Purveyor Lucas Ward succumbed to cholera on the 3 and 1 January 1855 respectively and were buried in an impressive tomb “erected by the members of his department as a tribute of esteem and respect for an old and faithful public servant”.

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A view of the Haidar Pasha cemetery looking westwards towards the Bosphorus, June 2012. Photo by Dr Mike Hinton

# Early modern myths

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Claire Chatterton, Chair of the History of Nursing Society, shares fascinating details from the History of Nursing Colloquium

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**T**he UK Association for the History of Nursing holds an annual colloquium.

In 2018, the University of Chester hosted it, supported by volunteers from its Riverside Museum.

I organised a programme of nine papers, presented by speakers from the UK and beyond, including Ireland, Malta, Switzerland, Portugal and Canada.

One paper I found particularly interesting was *Nursing Well Before Nightingale: the Infirmary and Hospital Nurse Before 1820*, by Professor Alannah Tomkins, University of Keele.

As Florence Nightingale's bicentenary approaches, her contributions to nursing will rightly be celebrated. However, even in some recent books about her, the stereotype of pre-Nightingale nurses as disreputable and often drunk persists.

Professor Tomkins' work gives a more nuanced picture, based on her analysis of the records of eight provincial infirmaries founded in England between 1736 and 1780. She discussed the challenges of this research, including the difficulties of defining what constituted nurses' work in this period. She found that nurses were just as likely to leave employment of their own accord as to be

## Colloquium 2019

Taking place in Cirencester on 5 July, this year's colloquium is on the theme of *Histories of Humanitarian Nursing*.

Find out more at [ukahn.org/wp/ukahn-colloquium-2019](http://ukahn.org/wp/ukahn-colloquium-2019)



Early modern chamber pot  
(Image credit: Science Museum, London)

dismissed, and her survey of infirmaries' board minutes showed accusations of nurses being drunk were recorded relatively rarely.

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“Nurses exact[ed] payments from patients for a chamber pot when they were admitted

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One disreputable-sounding practice that she did discuss was of some nurses exacting payments from patients for a chamber pot when they were admitted, then again for emptying it. Nursing staff were forbidden by infirmary rules from taking presents or money from patients, but when this practice came to light in one hospital and was stopped, the nurses received payments to replace their lost income.

This work-in-progress was a fascinating insight into an often-unexplored era of nursing work. I look forward to finding out more when it is published. ■

# Fine fellows

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Teresa Doherty, Joint Head of RCN Library and Archive Services, tells us about a new project to record the lives and legacies of the RCN Fellows

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**S**ince 1976, RCN members have nominated people who make an outstanding contribution to nursing to become RCN Fellows. Usually, six fellowships are awarded each year. Selected from around 700,000 nurses in the UK, the fellows are an extraordinary group.

The Library and Archive team and History of Nursing Society (HoNS) decided it was time to ensure our fellows' history is represented in our collections – the RCN Fellows Project was born.



Jean Macfarlane, RCN Fellow

## Step 1

### Get to know our fellows!

In 2017 and 2018, 12 library staff set out to research and compile biographical profiles of more than 200 fellows. Nine of our team looked at a range of published sources and wrote short profiles.

## Step 2

### Check the library

Three members of staff added a publication list to each of the biographies and then checked for any gaps in our library collection.

## Step 3

### Share the profiles

Our fellows are now reviewing their profiles and publication lists to help us fill the gaps. Finished profiles are being made available via our archive catalogue at: [archives.rcn.org.uk/CalmView](http://archives.rcn.org.uk/CalmView)

## Step 4

### Have a chat

We're encouraging fellows to be interviewed by HoNS members. Our amazing oral history collection already contains more than 700 interviews, including many contributions from HoNS members, and the conversations with fellows will be a fantastic addition. ■

## Get involved

- Interested in helping with interviews? Contact [d.yarwood@ntlworld.com](mailto:d.yarwood@ntlworld.com)
- If you're a fellow who wants to find out more, email [rcn.library@rcn.org.uk](mailto:rcn.library@rcn.org.uk) with "Fellows project" in the subject line.

# Nursing at Northampton General Hospital

Sue Longworth charts the evolution of nurses – from housekeepers and servants to qualified professionals – through the Northampton General Hospital Historical Archive

## 1743

A town house was rented in George Row, Northampton, and opened with 30 beds. Mrs Esther White was the first matron and earned £10 per year, which included board, lodging and a tea allowance. The minutes tell us: “Matron – a discreet woman who has the charge of the house and furniture, keeps account of everything brought to and expended in the house, subjects the same to examination and direction of nurses and servants, and sees the diet and medicine administered according to order.” The role of matron was extremely hard and Mrs White died in post in 1751.



The nurses she directed, whose only qualification was to be hardworking and of a caring disposition, had to be single and aged over 30. They earned £5 per year, with an extra £1 if they behaved properly.

## 1793



The new infirmary was established with 106 beds on the hospital’s current site. The nursing staff included a matron, four nurses and three maidservants.

## 1889

“The wards are nice, but we are terribly undernursed



Nightingale Nurse Miss Winterton was appointed Superintendent of Nurses at Northampton. She sent regular reports to Florence Nightingale – in one of the first, she wrote: “The wards are nice, but we are terribly undernursed.”

## 🕒 1914-19

During World War One the hospital had two matrons. Miss Bryan resigned in 1916 – the reason was not recorded. Miss Elizabeth Atkinson took over and worked tirelessly both at the general hospital and surrounding “war hospitals”. When she died in 1918, a procession of nurses and soldier patients escorted her coffin from the hospital to the railway station. She was awarded the Royal Red Cross posthumously for services in military nursing.



## 🕒 1924

The General Nursing Council for England and Wales approved the first group of hospitals for training in July 1924. Northampton General was one of the provincial hospitals on that list.

The council stipulated the syllabus, but medical staff were not convinced and in 1921 wrote: “It was resolved that the Board express to the council their emphatic opinion that the syllabus is of so technical and advanced character as to make the application difficult, if not impracticable, in the majority of Provincial Hospitals.”

## 🕒 1983

Miss Eileen M Coombe retires – she was the last matron at Northampton General Hospital until the role was reintroduced in 2008. Matron Coombe was remembered as dedicated and imposing. During her tenure, she lived on the premises in a flat and had her own personal maid, Lillian.



## 🕒 1950s

The majority of the nursing section in the Northampton archive dates from the 1950s. With the two world wars dominating the first half of the 20th century, perhaps professional development was considered secondary until this decade. Or, with the NHS in its infancy, it could be the result of optimism in the new system feeding through to hospital workers.



## 🕒 2019

From the 1960s onwards, our local hospitals reflected the many changes in the nursing profession – the Salmon report, clinical grading, SEN conversion courses and Project 2000. Today, nurses are true professionals and no longer “hand maidens” to the medical staff! ■

Sue Longworth is a volunteer member of the Northampton General Hospital Historical Archive team



# Images of the Past: The District Nurse, a Pictorial History

By Susan Cohen, Pen and Sword books

Dianne Yarwood reviews a visual history of district nursing



Developed with the support of the Queen's Nursing Institute, Susan Cohen's extensively illustrated history of district nursing in the UK explores its development and challenges, from its earliest days to now.

Susan begins with an overview of the 1860 establishment of a district nursing service, funded by William Rathbone in Liverpool, which resulted in a Royal Charter in 1889 and the creation of the Queen Victoria Jubilee Institute for Nursing (QVJIN).

By the early 1900s, the QVJIN was established in Scotland, with similar schemes in Ireland and affiliated schemes in Wales. The costs were met by fundraising, philanthropic donations, subscriptions, provident contribution schemes for workers and their families and even grand charity balls.

Susan's numerous examples illustrate the challenges for a district nursing service across four time periods.

“ Many district nurses joined the services in the Second World War

During the First World War, many nurses left to engage in active service at home and abroad. Through personal quotes and official papers we gain insight into their work.

Between the wars, Spanish flu, tuberculosis, an increasing birth rate and the financial depression all had an impact on the work of district nurses.

Many district nurses joined the services in the Second World War, despite government discouragement. They became part of the home defence system, dealing with the results of bombing raids, storms and continuing to function in the Channel Islands under occupation.

## Q&A

### Dianne Yarwood speaks to author Susan Cohen

**DY: Why did you start writing books – in particular, what interested you about medical and nursing history?**

SC: I approached the publishers Shire Books with an idea on the history of tea. They had just commissioned something similar, but suggested I write about district nurses.

For my MPhil (Master of Philosophy), I researched Miss Martha Loane, who retired in 1905 having been a Queen's nurse since 1897. She wrote a number of social commentaries. With my academic supervisor we produced a re-print of her first commentary *The Queen's Poor* and Miss Loane is now included in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biographies*. As part of the research I got to know the Queen's Nursing Institute (QNI) and became familiar with their archive collection.

**DY: The subject of your PhD was Eleanor Rathbone. Was this influenced by your interest in Queen's nurses?**

SC: I wanted to write about an aspect of Anglo-Jewish history. My supervisor suggested Eleanor Rathbone MP, who was the architect of family allowance and supporter of refugees throughout the 1930s. It was only later that I found out she was the daughter of William Rathbone.

**DY: As with your previous books, this is richly illustrated. How do you find so many evocative images?**

SC: When I first began collaborating with the QNI it was assumed they had very few photographs. But when they re-located to the RCN's London headquarters, a vast collection of photographs were found. Also, old photographs are copyright free and the internet is an excellent source.

**DY: What are you working on next?**

SC: The next book is a history of nursing influencers and significant nurses. It's really a very small overview, intended for a general readership.



The post-war period saw many changes. In 1947, men became district and Queen's nurses. In 1948, district nursing became the responsibility of county authorities, providing a free service as part of the NHS. Technological developments such as availability of telephones, motor cars and car radio phones had varying effect on district nursing, as did the introduction of computerised record-keeping in 1973.

The QVIJN was re-named the Queen's Nursing Institute in 1973, and the title of Queen's Nurse was reintroduced in 2007 in England and Wales (2017 in Scotland) to continue to provide district nurses with professional support and development.

This book will appeal to a wide readership and prompt many to research further the lives of district nurses. I recommend it as a fascinating and valuable contribution to nursing history. ■

Image credit: The Queen's Nursing Institute

# Get involved

## New members

We are pleased to welcome two new steering committee members: Panos Poimenidis is a clinical nurse at Guy's and St Thomas' Trust in London and Judith Devine is a lecturer in mental health nursing at the University of Bradford. We look forward to working with them and drawing upon their skills and enthusiasm as the society continues to flourish.

Recruitment for four more steering committee vacancies opens at RCN Congress (19-23 May). The four-year positions begin in January 2020. One of the vacancies is for Society Chair, as Claire Chatterton's tenure ends in May. (The role will be covered by Alison O'Donnell until January.)

Find full details of the application process online at [rcn.org.uk/get-involved/forums/history-of-nursing-society](http://rcn.org.uk/get-involved/forums/history-of-nursing-society)

## The Monica Baly Bursary



Apply now! Bursaries of up to £1,000 are available to support scholarly activities relating to the history of nursing.

Applications close on 31 May 2019. Visit [renfoundation.org.uk](http://renfoundation.org.uk)

## Congratulations!

Alison O'Donnell was awarded an Honorary Fellowship by the Queen's Nursing Institute, Scotland (QNIS). This recognises her role as an activist volunteer and her contribution to the QNIS History Advisory Committee.

## Go online

Stay up to date with the History of Nursing Society pages on the RCN website where you can read our blogs and learn about current projects. And look out for *Nursing History Now* articles from this and past issues at [rcn.org.uk/magazines](http://rcn.org.uk/magazines)



## Next issue

# 100 YEARS

Along with the centenary of nurse registration, our autumn 2019 issue will explore the centenary of the first training scheme for learning disability nurses. We'll hear about the "Certificate of proficiency in nursing and attending on the mentally defective", first awarded by the Medico-Psychological Association in 1919.

If you would like to contribute, please email Dianne Yarwood: [d.yarwood@ntlworld.com](mailto:d.yarwood@ntlworld.com)